

Thoreau/Walden Lesson Plans

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Grade 11

Abstract/Summary:

This unit will introduce students to Transcendentalism and the works of Henry David Thoreau. The unit will be prefaced by a PowerPoint presentation of my trip to Walden Pond and a brief lecture on my experience. The unit is designed to expose 11th grade students to Thoreau and Transcendentalism. These lessons would be an addition to the lesson plans already in place for Thoreau and Emerson, including the reading of Civil Disobedience and Nature. These lessons push students more toward critiquing, formulating big ideas, and more evaluative writing whereas previous lessons stressed more reading and comprehension of text.

Essential Questions:

What is the difference between “self-reliance” and “conformity”?

What does it mean to “live deliberately”?

What is our relationship with Nature?

How does one define “sense of place”?

What is the role of the individual in a society?

What is Transcendentalism?

Standards:

LAFS.1112.RL.1.1 Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.

LAFS.1112.RI.3.7 Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words in order to address a question or solve a problem

LAFS.1112.SL.1.1 Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 11–12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

LAFS.1112.SL.1.2 Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) in order to make informed decisions and solve problems, evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source and noting any discrepancies among the data.

LAFS.1112.W.1.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

LAFS.1112.W.3.9 Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

LAFS.1112.SL.2.4 Present information, findings, and supporting evidence, conveying a clear and distinct perspective, such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning, alternative or opposing

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perspectives are addressed, and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and a range of formal and informal tasks.

Lesson 1: Walden

Objective:

Students will be able to:

- Read various excerpts from the text
- Listen to various excerpts from the text
- Evaluate the text by choosing an appropriate word, phrase, quote
- Determine other excerpts that were similar or different
- Compare/contrast excerpts by discussing with a partner
- Synthesize the text by writing an essential question

Material:

Walden text

Procedure/Activity:

Each student will be given an excerpt from one chapter in Walden.

The students will read it for homework.

The students will choose one word, one phrase, and one quote from the selection that they best think defines the meaning of the excerpt.

In class, the students will read aloud/listen to the excerpts.

The students will then present their word, phrase, quote.

The students choose a partner that either mirrored what they said or was the complete opposite.

The students will write an essential question that captures the similarity or the difference.

Evaluation:

The students will choose an essential question to answer by writing an expository essay and using their quote to explain the meaning of the text.

Lesson 2: Where's Your Walden? – Sense of Place and Nature

Objective:

The students will be able to:

- Create a visual representation of the quote and how it applies today
- Critique other students' visual displays and explain why it was chosen to best represent Transcendentalism.

Materials:

iPad, Walden text

Procedure:

The students will use their quote or one from another excerpt to serve as their inspiration.

The students will find a place in nature that inspires them.

The students will take six pictures using their iPad.

The students should consider perspective when taking the picture – different angle, different time of day, etc.

The students will choose the one picture that they feel best represents their “Walden”.

The students will write a descriptive paragraph using figurative language and imagery to describe their picture.

The students will incorporate the quote into the essay by explaining its meaning and how it relates to their location.

Evaluation:

The students will critique each other's and choose one photo/quote that they feel expresses the idea of “place” and write a critique to explain how it meets or lacks expression.

Lesson 3: Transcendentalism and Thoreau

Objective:

Students will be able to:

- Define Transcendentalism
- Explain Thoreau's role in the Transcendentalist movement
- Read and demonstrate the concepts of Transcendentalism in each excerpt
- Analyze how the quote best represents the Transcendentalism

Materials:

Walden text; Thoreau biography

Procedure/Activity:

Students will brainstorm a list of ideas that best describe the readings.

Students will read the biography of Thoreau and timeline.

https://www.walden.org/Library/About_Thoreau's_Life_and_Writings:_The_Research_Collections/A_Brief_Chronology

Students will discuss how these ideas are a reflection of Thoreau's life.

Students will define Transcendentalism.

Students will read the critique by Kathryn Schulz.

Evaluation:

Students will respond to Kathryn Schulz and use the perceptions of Thoreau and Transcendentalism to submit a rebuttal, including key points about Transcendentalism and the ideas of Thoreau.