Finding our Place in Pepperell:

Analyzing Language, Nature, and History to determine what makes Pepperell Unique

Kristen Hall

Seventh Grade Language Arts Teacher

Nissitissit Middle School

33 Chase Avenue

Pepperell, Massachusetts 01463

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Abstract

As I entered the Walden Woods Project on my first day, I expected to be learning solely about Thoreau. I was pleasantly shocked by the cross-curricular nature of the seminar and the way in which sense of place had a profound impact on both our focused writer, but also myself. I had never previously considered focusing on Pepperell as a place, for what reason, I am not sure. This experience opened my eyes to staying present and asking my kids to do the same; the goal is to see beauty around us and delve into our past so that we can truly know ourselves, our history, and how to bring about a better future.

This unit I have constructed on “Finding our Place in Pepperell” will be completed in April or May. This will allow for MCAS work to subside and for the snow to disappear so that we may integrate more outdoor components into the class. This will tie in beautifully with our unit on figurative language and poetry. The unit will pick up right after students have completed figurative language vocabulary and found examples of figurative language in song. Prior to the start of the unit, they will also have dabbled in writing their own poetry, whether concrete poems, free writes, limericks, or haikus. This unit begins with a study of poetry.

I have chosen two authors of the Northeast (Robert Frost and Emily Dickinson) in order to bring about a focus on the area in which we live. Students will first read works by these authors that focus on the beautiful natural components of our societies. We will analyze the writing for theme, figurative language, and then draw a picture based upon what each student sees in the imagery. The following day, students will be asked to go outdoor and observe for an hour and then construct a poem using various forms of figurative language. We are fortunate enough to have vernal pools and woods in the immediate vicinity of the school, so students will truly be in a very natural setting. This is the day we will also begin our string journals. On the third day, I will connect some of my own family history into the curriculum before students head off to the Lawrence Library of Pepperell to do some research on the town that many have lived in for the duration of their lives. They will also do specific research on founding families in Pepperell, many of whom still have relatives in the school system. On the fourth day, students will construct paragraphs based upon their research and share with partners. Finally, students will construct a cube from large paper sheets (something that they have learned in art class) and will cover the sides with information on themselves and information that they have gained from this week to give a complete picture of their environment. These will be presented to the class upon completion for a project grade (which makes up 35% of the trimester grade). In this short unit, students will delve into nature, literature, and history and ideally learn about where they come from and why the place that many of them seem to want to flee from as soon as possible could truly be invaluable in their growth.

Classroom Dynamics

I teach four seventh grade sections in Pepperell, Massachusetts. This is a small town with no street lights and it is about twenty minutes from the nearest highway. This town is very insular and students are often not exposed to much outside of their small community. Each of my seventh grade sections is composed of approximately twenty-five students; two of these four sections are inclusion classes. About one third of my students are on IEP’s or 504 plans for various reasons such as ADHD, anxiety disorders, language-based disabilities, behavioral struggles, and many students on the Autism spectrum. It is my constant focus to make sure that my curriculum is accessible to all of my students and thus easily-modifiable for my high-level learners as well as my inclusion students. Each of my classes is approximately one hour and we meet daily. Days always begin with a “Do Now” activity that usually incorporates writing. We then move onto the objectives and agenda points and close the class with either an exit ticket or a homework assignment.

Unit Timeline

The unit that will be presented is meant to be about 3.5 weeks. The first week and a half will cover figurative language and poetry writing, whereas the pieces presented here will follow that and cover more local poetry analysis, as well as a sense of place. The unit will culminate with the cube project and presentations.

Unit Objectives

By the end of this unit, students will be able to:

* Integrate various modes (art, research, poetry) to demonstrate knowledge of the community.
* Understand what components make up a place.
* Use proper research techniques to find information on the town and its inhabitants in order to present accurate facts to classmates.
* Show ability to properly apply figurative language techniques in creating a poem about Pepperell’s natural environment.

Essential Questions

* What aspects make up a place?
* How has Pepperell shaped our lives?

Weights for Semester Grades

(Takes into consideration this unit as well as *The Giver* that will be done in May/June)

* Quizzes (not present in this unit)-25%
* Do Now Activities/Journals-10%
* Participation-10%
* Projects-30%
* Homework/Exit Tickets-25%

Grade 7 Standards

Reading Standard Grade 7 3. Determine the meaning of wrods and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of rhymes and other repetitions of sounds (e.g. alliteration) on a specific verse or stanza of a poem or section of a story or drama.

Reading Standard Grade 7 MA.8.A. Interpret a literary work by analyzing how the author uses literary elements (e.g., mood, tone, point of view, personification, symbolism).

Writing Standard Grade 7 2. Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

Writing Standard Grade 7 MA.3.A. Write short narratives, poems, scripts or personal reflections that demonstrate understanding of the literary concepts of mood, tone, point of view, personification, or symbolism.

Writing Standard Grade 7 4. Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

Writing Standard Grade 7 7. Conduct short research projects to answer a question, drawing on several sources and generating additional related, focused questions for further research and investigation.

Writing Standard Grade 7 8. Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, using search terms effectively; assess the credibility and accuracy of each source; and quote or paraphrase the data and conclusions of others while avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.

Writing Standard Grade 7 9. Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

Speaking and Listening Standard Grade 7 1. Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions with diverse partners on grade 7 topics, texts, and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly.

Speaking and Listening Standard Grade 7 5. Include multimedia components and visual displays in presentations to clarify claims and findings and emphasize salient points.

Speaking and Listening Standard Grade 7 6. Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.

Unit Outline

Lesson 1 (Day 1)

* Do Now: In your journals, write at least 7 sentences as to why figurative language is important in writing. Consider examples from music and poetry.
* In class
  + We will discuss the Do Now and touch upon how important it is to have both imagery and vivid vocabulary in writing. Figurative language allows writers to further connect with their readers and make their writing illustrative.
  + We will then go on to read Emily Dickinson’s “Two butterflies went out at noon” and Robert Frost’s “Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening.” We will analyze these poems in terms of their natural themes and also figurative language components. In these pieces, we will find personification, alliteration, rhyme, onomatopoeia, and repetition.
  + I will then separate the class in half, with each having one of the two poems discussed. Each student will illustrate the poem using only their interpretations the poem and no outside resources.
  + To close class, we will have a gallery of the artwork and discuss what similarities and differences we see. We will also discuss how figurative language played into our images and individual interpretations.
* Exit Ticket: Create your own examples of alliteration, simile, metaphor, and personification. Pass this in before you leave.

Lesson 2 (Days 2 and 3)

* Do Now: In your journal, write 7+ sentences on the following prompts:
  + Why do you think Frost and Dickinson were inspired by nature?
  + What inspires you?
* In class
  + We will discuss the Do Now. I am looking for the children to say that nature is diverse and beautiful. It is ever-changing and somewhat magical in the way plants die and are reborn. I am also interested in what students say inspires them. I am expecting many to be inspired by people and technology, but I will be pleasantly surprised if some are inspired by history, their town, or the world around them.
  + I will introduce the string journal assignment. I will modify it to be one page in the journal. I will provide students with an example of my own string journal that was completed at the Walden Woods Project as a jumping off point.
  + We will go outside for a half hour and students will pick a silent spot to study nature. We are surrounded by woods and vernal pool areas, so students have quite the expanse in which to spread out. Students will go out and write silently about what they are experiencing in nature. They may touch on the woods, animals, sounds, etc.
  + After returning from the woods, we will discuss our experiences. What was similar and different? Was this inspiring for you? What did you find to be difficult and what was easy? I will also ask students to share some of what they wrote.
  + Students will then be asked to create a free write poem based upon this experience. It must include three figurative language elements and be illustrated. (The majority of this will be done in school but if it is not finished, it will be completed for homework after the second class day.)
* Homework
  + String journal 1 due in 1 week. Finish illustrated free verse poem.

Lesson 3 (2 days)

* Do Now: Check homework and allow students to come to the front of the room to share poems if they so choose.
  + In your journal, write at least seven sentences on whether or not you feel proud to live in Pepperell. Why or why not? If you could live somewhere else, where would you go?
* In class
  + I will discuss my own youth in Lowell. I will explain my feelings on this place, which are quite complex to say the least. I love Lowell for its history, the family and friends that live there, its proximity to highways, the areas I used to play soccer, and the games of manhunt my neighbors and I used to play in the summers. However, I also hate Lowell due to its bad reputation, rampant drug use, lack of parking, and decaying outdoor spaces.
  + We will then discuss how students feel about Pepperell. They will move to the left of the room if they are proud and to the right if they are not. We will have a debate of sorts in which students can freely share their thoughts and try to convince those on the other side why or why not Pepperell is an ideal place.
  + Give students Sense of Place worksheet. Explain the three components of sense of place (location, locale, sense of place)
    - I will have completed a sheet on Lowell as a means to demonstrate what I am looking for in this activity.
    - Have students complete this sheet based upon their understanding of Pepperell. I have maps around my room that include geographic and topical information of Pepperell. I also have a piece from *The Boston Globe* that students can use for further information. Otherwise, students will be able to work in seated groups to help them grasp what Pepperell truly is in these 3 different senses.
* Homework
  + : Finish sense of place worksheet
* Day 2 Do Now: Grab a Chromebook from the front of the room and browse the histories of Dickinson and Frost. Write down any similarities or differences to the society that you live in today.
* In class
  + Discuss the Do Now activity to get students thinking about society in the past and present.
  + Share the story of my grandfather. Born in 1930, he lived in Lowell for his whole life. Touch on low prices of goods, lack of technology, early marriage age (20 for him and 18 for my grandmother who have now been married 65 years). Also show pictures of Lowell as a Mill Town and today as well as the lack of green space now there.
  + Compare the story of my life to the story of my grandfather. We grew up less than a mile apart in the same town, but our experiences differ so much. Why is that? How can the history help shape the present? (We will discuss these.)
  + Students will then pack up and head to the Genealogy and History Room at the Lawrence Library in Pepperell. This is approximately a five minute walk. This room is filled with primary sources on Pepperell and its inhabitants. There are even complete genealogies of approximately 60 founding families of Pepperell
  + Students will have to complete the Pepperell People Worksheet using solely primary sources found in this room (NO COMPUTERS!). This will be a wonderful way for students to truly dig for information and cite sources appropriately. We will spend the rest of the day in the library to complete this task
* Homework:
  + Ask your parents about their history with Pepperell. Write at least two paragraphs describing what you learned and how this differs or is similar to the family that you researched today.
  + Bring in a photo of you in Pepperell. It can be at any point in your life. Make sure it is one you are willing to share.

Lesson 4: (1 day)

* Do Now: Take our your written homework and discuss with a partner what you have learned. Then, make a three-circled Venn Diagram to show the overlap amongst your families and one of those that you studied yesterday.
* In class
  + Discussion of similarities and differences. Take special note of what has remained the same in Pepperell and what has changed. Why have these changes taken place? Are they positive or negative? When would you have liked to be alive?
  + In order to bring a sense of place full circle, students will create a gallery of their photos. We will walk around and view them all, asking questions and making comments as we go.
  + Then, students will be tasked with writing a poem of at least 10 lines describing their photo. They must include two types of figurative language. This can be a narrative, rhyming, abstract, free verse poem but must discuss their photo, its importance and how it relates to Pepperell and their sense of this place.
* Exit ticket
  + Has your view of Pepperell changed throughout this project? Explain your answer in at least 3 sentences.

Lesson 5 (3 days)

* Do Now: Take out all elements of your place project. Complete a think & pair (of a think, pair, share) with a partner regarding whether or not you are proud to live in Pepperell now that we have completed this assignment.
* In class
  + Share pride in Pepperell question with the class. May again do a debate with students on each side of the room if time permits.
  + Begin culminating cube project.
    - Students will create a paper cube as they have learned in art class. I will also go through this with an internet tutorial for anyone that may be struggling. Students will then be tasked with covering their cube with the work from this week to create an artistic expression of their sense of place.
    - The handout will cover exactly what is to be put on the cube which includes:
      * A drawn map of Pepperell
      * The nature poem
      * At least five facts on Pepperell
      * At least five facts about the family they researched
      * Their picture and name
      * The poem relating to their picture
    - Students will have the remainder of class today and tomorrow to work on their cubes. They should use proper grammar and spelling, color and artwork, and demonstrate proper research
    - On the third day of this lesson, students will present their cubes to the class in a 3 minute presentation discussing their poems, facts, and what they learned from this project.
  + Exit ticket: What did you like about this project? What would you change about it? Why did we do it?

We will begin the next class discussing these reflections and how our sense of place has changed. This will continue to be prevalent in the remainder of the curriculum as we do string journals as well as analyze the culture of a dystopian society and how it differs from our newfound understanding of Pepperell.

Materials Necessary

* Literature text book (includes poetry readings)
* Chromebook Computers
* Handouts
* Permission slips for the library walk
* Primary sources (newspapers, collages, recordings, documents)
* Art supplies and blank paper

Readings

* “Two butterflies went out at noon”-Emily Dickinson
* “Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening”-Robert Frost
* “Emily Dickinson”-*Biography* (A&E Network)
* “Robert Frost”-*Biography* (A&E Network)

**Emily Dickinson Poem**

**Part 2: Nature**

**XVIII**

Two butterflies went out at noon

And waltzed above a stream,

Then stepped straight through the firmament

And rested on a beam;

And then together bore away

Upon a shining sea,-

Though never yet, in any port,

Their coming mentioned be.

If spoken by the distant bird,

If met in ether sea

By frigate or by merchantman,

Report was not to me.

Robert Frost Poem

**Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening**

Whose woods these are I think I know.

His house is in the village though;

He will not see me stopping here

To watch his woods fill up with snow.

My little horse must think it queer

To stop without a farmhouse near

Between the woods and frozen lake

The darkest evening of the year.

He gives his harness bells a shake

To ask if there is some mistake.

The only other sound’s the sweep

Of easy wind and downy flake.

The woods are lovely, dark and deep,

But I have promises to keep,

And miles to go before I sleep,

And miles to go before I sleep.

**Exit Tickets**

Place Lesson 1

Name:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Date:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Block:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Figurative Language Exit Ticket**

Provide one example of each of the following:

1. Alliteration
2. Simile
3. Metaphor
4. Personification

Make sure to place this in the bin by the door before you leave! Have a great day ☺

Place Lesson 4

Name:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Date:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Block:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Your Place in Pepperell Exit Ticket**

Has your view of Pepperell changed at all through this project? Explain your reasoning in at least 3 sentences.

Make sure to place this in the bin by the door before you leave! Have a great day ☺

Place Lesson 5

Name:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Date:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Block:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Reflecting on Place Exit Ticket**

Answer each question with at least 2 complete sentences.

1. What did you like about this project?
2. What would you change about this project? Consider the time line, activities, information, etc.
3. Why did we do this project? What was its purpose?

Name:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Date:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Block:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**String Journals**

After sitting outside and reflecting on nature’s beauty, it is your chance to delve more deeply into your own natural habitat. This could be a space around your home, in a park, or even one around school. Pick a place that you can visit often and one that brings you some kind of peace. This is an individual project, so do not choose something simply because your friend is choosing it; doing so will ruin your focus and reflection.

The goals of this activity:

* To develop your powers of observation
* To find inspiration in nature
* To develop your writing skills

Procedure

* Tie your string into a circle
* Bring your string outside to a location you can visit easily and often
* Secure your string to this place. It will be your space until the end of the year-and longer if you like ☺
* Every week you will visit your string for a minimum of 20 minutes.
  + You must go outside to visit your string. Checking out your string from the comfort of your warm bedroom does *not* mean the assignment criteria.
* Every Friday you will submit a journal entry of 1 to 2 pages that is based on your reflections that you made while visiting.
  + This must be in your journal. If it is not, you will lose 10 points.
* If your string goes missing in the snow or gets eaten by an animal, you should still visit your space!

Rules of submission:

* Journals are due at the start of the period.
* Journals must have a proper MLA format heading.
  + Without proper heading, you will lose 5 points.

Grading

* All well-done entries will receive a B.
* An entry that shows amazing depth of thought will receive an A. This could be due to reflection, language, imagination, etc. *Simply because an entry is long, does not mean it is an exceptional piece.*.
* An entry that does not meet expectations will receive a D.
* Entries that are not done will receive a 0. Entries that are late will be deducted 10 points per day.
* At the end of the term, all of your string journals will be averaged together along with in class journals to make up 10% of your semester grade.

**Lesson 2 Homework**

Name:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Date:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Block:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Pepperell Poetry: Getting in Tune with Nature**

Today, we spent some time outdoors. We reflected on the beauty around Nissitissit and the importance of nature in our lives. Tonight for homework, you will use your reflections to create poetry.

It’s time to make some **FREE VERSE!** Remember, free verse is a poem without rules. You can do whatever you like. Be creative! ☺ *However, Ms. Hall always has to add a few additional rules.*

For this assignment, you must

* Include **3** figurative language elements
* Illustrate your poem
* Be ready to present it to the class tomorrow

**Lesson 3 Sense of Place Worksheet**

Name:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Date:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Block:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**What’s so Special about a Place?**

Many of you have lived in Pepperell for your whole lives. You were born here, grew up roaming these streets, and now go to school here. However, have you really thought about this place?

**Three** elements truly make up a place.

**Location**: Where a place falls on the map. This could include latitude and longitude, surrounding cities and towns, states, etc.

Location of Pepperell:

**Locale:** The setting of a place. This discusses where people carry on their lives. This includes the roads, schools, buildings, natural elements, etc. in this environment.

Locale of Pepperell:

**Sense of Place**: Your attachment to this specific place. This includes your feelings on your time in this place, your emotional attachments an experiences here.

Sense of Place of Pepperell

**Bonus**: Which of these 3 topics is an *individual* reflection?

**Culminating Project**

Name:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Date:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Block:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Community Cube:**

**Bringing Together Your Views of Pepperell**

Throughout this unit, we have come to find a sense of place. Today it is your job to use all of the skills and assignments to make a final art project that will be coupled with a presentation.

This project will be handed in as a cube

* You may make one from memory *(You did learn it in art class if you weren’t paying attention ☺)*
* You may use the directions found here:
  + <http://www.instructables.com/id/How-to-make-a-paper-cube/>

Your project will include 6 components (one on each side of the cube)

* + - * A hand-drawn map of Pepperell
      * Your nature poem
      * At least five facts on Pepperell
      * At least five facts about the family you researched
      * Your picture and name
      * The poem relating to your picture

Upon completion, you will present your cube to the class in a **3** minute presentation.

Your presentation should include

* Individual poems
* Researched facts
* Explanations for the illustrations and choices you made
* What you learned about this project

You will have numerous materials available to you including

* Chromebook computers
* Paper in various sizes
* Markers, colored pencils, scissors, glue sticks, etc.
* Dictionaries and thesauruses
* Additional resources from the Lawrence Library

You will have approximately **2** days to complete your project. This should be a simple task as long as you use your time wisely! You may work on this both at home and in school during class time.

Please see the attached **rubric** for grading instructions.

* All projects will be deducted 10 points per day that they are late

**Community Cube Rubric**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Exceptional  (4 points) | Well Done  (3 points) | Satisfactory  (2 points) | Needs Improvement  (1 point) |
| Presentation includes explanation of individual art as well as research. |  |  |  |  |
| Presenter makes eye contact and does not read directly from cube. |  |  |  |  |
| Facts demonstrate adequate research on family & Pepperell. |  |  |  |  |
| Art work is detailed, colored, and relates to the poems/research. |  |  |  |  |
| Poems are original and include figurative language elements. |  |  |  |  |
| All directions have been followed. |  |  |  |  |
| There is mastery of spelling and conventions. |  |  |  |  |

Total: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_/28 Deductions:

Final percentage:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Comments:

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