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**Thoreau and the Art of Journaling**

**Unit Plan: Honors English, Grade 12**

In order to become a strong writer, students need to learn how to develop their “voice” and to begin to feel confident in the ability to have something worth saying and expressing. Journaling provides students with ample opportunity to hone the skills associated with developing their persona, their voice, their writing style in a format that is more creative, more stream of conscious, and less formulaic than formal essay writing. With this in mind, this unit will use both the journals of Henry David Thoreau and his piece entitled “Walking”, as vehicles to reveal to students the value of journaling and being attentive to the world around them, for both personal and educational reasons. Additionally, this unit will provide students with opportunities to read some of Thoreau’s less- read works, with opportunities to feel and discover a bit about Thoreau’s sense of place, and with opportunities to use the works of Thoreau as springboards to learning more about the writing process, more about the art and purpose of journaling, and more about themselves as participants in the overall human experience.

**Duration of Unit**

A 7-day time period. (Dates can begin whenever teacher desires to introduce journaling.?

**Massachusetts DOE Standards Addressed**

1.

Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

2.

Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.

3.

Analyze how and why individuals, events, or ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

4.

Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning and tone.

6.

Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific

sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text relate to each other and the whole.

7.

Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

8.

Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.

9.

Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches authors take.

10.

Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.

11.

Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

12.

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

13.

Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details and well-structured event sequences.

14.

Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose and audience.

15.

Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach.

16.

Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audience.

**Unit Outline**

**Essential Questions:**

What personal and educational value does journal keeping have?

What should the process of journaling entail?

How can frequent and reflective journal writing enhance our ability to write powerfully and with more detail?

How can we use Thoreau’s journals and the process he used to complete them as guides for improving and refining our own writing style and journal keeping?

What themes and motifs can we identify in the writings of Thoreau that help us grasp what he valued and held as essential to powerful writing?

How can we connect Thoreau’s journals and our own journals to improving our skills as overall readers and writers?

**Outline**

Day 1: Introduction to Journaling

Day 2: Reading and analyzing “I to Myself”

Day 3: Taking a closer look at Thoreau’s manuscripts and personal writing process and theories

Day 4: Creating field notebooks and journals for use over the school year

Day 5: Reflections on excerpts from “Walking”

Day 6: Field trip to Thoreau Institute (if possible) or walk school grounds

Day 7: Share final journal from “field study” and discussion on how process can be used for all reading and writing

**Lesson Details**

*Day 1:*

As class begins, students will begin a “Do Now” activity, responding to the following prompts provided via overhead or shared document.

* Do you keep a journal?
* What comes to mind when you think of creative, spontaneous, stream of consciousness, or free writing?
* How do you think regular journaling could improve your overall skills as a writer?
* As we begin our journaling journey, generate 3-5 topics you would appreciate having the opportunity to discuss in writing. *(20 minutes)*

Students will read, analyze, and annotate Thoreau’s journal that matches the date when we begin unit. As students read, they will be annotating notable/clear themes, identifying key concepts and points, noting and describing Thoreau’s unique style and voice. These journals can be found on the following website: [*http://thoreau.library.ucsb.edu/writings\_journals.html*](http://thoreau.library.ucsb.edu/writings_journals.html)

*(20 minutes)*

As a class, students will share their insights into Thoreau’s journal writing and discuss how his journal does and does not reflect their notion of what constitutes a journal. *(10 minutes)*

\*Students will assigned a long-term reading assignment on this day:

pgs. 555-560 and pgs. 578-589 of “Walking” in *The Portable Thoreau. This assignment and the guided reading questions that accompany the assignment can be found on the worksheet entitled Guided Reading Questions on “Walking”.*

*Day 2:*

Students will read excerpts from “I to Myself” (pgs. xv-xx and xxix) in small groups, each taking a turn reading paragraphs in a pattern decided upon in each group. As students read, they will be expected to discuss and respond to the guided reading questions found on the worksheet entitled: “I to Myself” Guided Reading Questions. *Questions regarding the reading can be answered as a group, but the Personal Reflection and Connection questions must be completed individually.*

*Day 3:*

In a Think-Pair- Share format, students will discuss and explain their group and individual responses to previous day’s reading. *(10 minutes)*

In the same groups, students will read “The Journal” from *The Portable Thoreau*, pgs. 165-173, focusing on dates entries that focus on writing. As students read, they will need to make a list of 6-8 guidelines and suggestions” Thoreau offers to writers. *(25 minutes)*

Students will share their list with group members, then as a class we generate a final list that encompasses the class’s insights and topical overlapping. (15 minutes)

*Day 4:*

Using their iPads, students will use the website: <http://thoreau.library.ucsb.edu/writings_handwritingP.html> to investigate, peruse, and examine the handwriting and manuscripts of Thoreau. Students will engage in an all- class discussion to questions: how would you describe Thoreau’s handwriting? How does the content of the transcript illustrate Thoreau’s powers of observation and attention to detail? (15 minutes)

Students will spend the remaining class period constructing and designing their personal journals, which will be used for the school year. While these writing journals can be either paper or digital, all and journals must include students’ name, their class period, the school year, and at least 5 quotations and 5 illustrations that they find powerful and inspiring. Once completed, students will work on their forst prompt.

The first entry in the journal will include the following prompts:

Why did you select this particular format?

What is so significant about the quotes and illustrations you have selected?

How is this journal a reflection of you and your journey as a writer?

*Day 5:*

Students will clarify, examine, and discuss their insights and responses to the guided reading worksheet for “Walking”. (15 minutes)

Students will Skype with Jeffrey Cramer of the Thoreau Institute, asking questions they developed as a component of the guided reading preparation. (30 minutes)

Class will respond to and offer feedback regarding Skype session with Jeffrey Cramer. (10 minutes)

*Day 6:*

Students will complete a walk around the school grounds, using the field notebook technique as conveyed in the link previously provided (<http://www.gpgrieve.org/PDF/How_to_write_Field_Notes.pdf>) to tell, list, describe, illustrate, assess, and examine the school grounds, composing and taking note of at least 10 observations and during their walk While on this guided-walk, students will be encouraged to put into practice the principles of Thoreau’s beliefs and writing practices, thus being active, focused observers of their surroundings.

*\*Homework on this day will be to ponder, reflect on, and analyze their field notes, then create and compose a complete a (1-page minimum) journal entry which retells and examines their outdoor experience and observations with detail and elaboration.*

*Day 7:*

As an all-class connection activity, students will use the website: <https://wordsworth.org.uk/daffodils.html> to compare and describe how the process of converting field notes, observations, or moments of insight into pieces of literature is a common process used by writers. Students will read and examine Wordsworth’s poem ‘Daffodils’ and the origins of his inspiration for the poem. (15 minutes)

Students will return to their reading groups for this unit and share both their field notes and their final journal assignments. Once group members have shared their journals, each group will need to generate, illustrate, and complete a reflection chart that conveys the benefits, drawbacks, hardships and ease with which they were able to convert their field notes into a completed journal entry. A final component of this chart will be to determine and examine how they can apply the process to formal reading and writing. Once charts are completed, students will have a final Think-Pair-Share session, where they explain and describe their charts to the class. (35 minutes)

**Grading and Assessments**

*Field notes into completed journal assignments will be collected and graded at the end of this class. Rubric is entitled “ Field Notes into Journal Grading Rubric”.*

**Materials Needed**

*“I and Myself” (Cramer)*

*The Portable Thoreau (Cramer)*

[*http://thoreau.library.ucsb.edu/writings\_journals.html*](http://thoreau.library.ucsb.edu/writings_journals.html)

*http://www.gpgrieve.org/PDF/How\_to\_write\_Field\_Notes.pdf*

[*https://wordsworth.org.uk/daffodils.html*](https://wordsworth.org.uk/daffodils.html)

**Assessments/Grading System**

\*see page entitled “Field Note into Journal Grading Rubric”

Name \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Grading Rubric: Field Notes Into Journal**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Criteria** | **Exemplary** | **Proficient** | **Developing** | **Needs Improvement** |
| **Completed field notes (15)** | 10 or more field notes completed | 8-10 field notes completed | 6-8 field notes completed | Less than 5 field notes. |
| **Specific and insightful observations notes (15)** | Field note observations reflect careful, focused, and responsive walking. | Field note observations reflect slightly unfocused or vague walking. | Field note observations are vague and lack evidence of detail-oriented walking. | Field note observations reveal lack of focus and not walking with intent. |
| **Journal content reflects elaboration of field notes**  **(30)** | Content of journal seamlessly elaborates field note observations with specific detail and explanation. | Content of journal elaborates some field note observations, using some detail and explanation. | Content of journal vaguely connects to field note observations and lacks detail and explanation. | Content of journal does note connect to field observations and is lacking in detail and explanation. |
| **Final journal submission retells field experience with creativity and reveals writers’ style and voice.**  **(40)** | Journal reveals strong voice and tone, incorporating enthusiasm and creativity. | Journal reveals voice and tone with some enthusiasm and creativity | Journal reveals inconsistent or vague voice and tone with minimal enthusiasm and creativity. | Journal does not reveal a developing voice and tone and does not reveal enthusiasm or creativity. |
| **Total Points** |  |  |  |  |

Name\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Guided Reading Questions on Thoreau’s “Walking”**

Directions: On a separate sheet of paper or as a Google Drive document, respond to each prompt in at least one complete sentence.

1. Define the word “saunter”.
2. Why does this word appropriately encompass Thoreau’s approach to walking?
3. How does Thoreau compare walking to a crusade? In effect, according to Thoreau, how is a walker similar to a crusader?
4. Thoreau says “what business have I in the woods, if I am thinking of something out of the woods?” What can this teach readers about the importance of limiting distractions and living more deliberately?
5. Explain 3-5 ways in which Thoreau values wildness- in people and in nature.
6. Thoreau claims we are weaned from embracing the value in nature at a young age. What does society appear to value more than nature?
7. What do you think Thoreau means when he says “we are all children of the mist” on pg. 584?
8. Why do you think Thoreau values living in the present moment and appreciating the now so intensely?

**Questions for the Curator**

Directions: As we wrap up our unit on Thoreau and the art of journaling, we also need to prepare for our Skype session with Jeffrey Cramer, editor of our reading selections and curator at the Thoreau Institute. In the space below, list three questions related to Thoreau’s life, his literature, and/or his style as a writer, that you would like to ask Jeffrey Cramer.

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| --- |
|  |

Name \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Guided Reading Questions on “I to Myself”**

**Directions:**  Read “I to Myself” aloud in your assigned reading group. Each group member should take turn reading, changing readers with each paragraph or page. Once reading is complete, on a separate sheet of paper or as a Google Drive document, each group should respond to each prompt in at least one complete sentence.

1. What is the “purpose” of Thoreau’s journal?
2. Why is Thoreau’s journal so popular and attractive to readers?
3. Explain the significance of the quote “If I am not I, who will be?” How does this quote reflect Thoreau’s preference for autobiography over biography?
4. How do Thoreau’s journals give us more insight into his life than his other works?
5. Explain and describe how a journal differs from a diary.
6. What is interesting about the timing in which Thoreau would occasionally write in his journal? What might be the benefits and drawbacks of taking a day to ponder and percolate before taking pen to paper?
7. What was personal “business” or “task” Thoreau desired to achieve through journaling?

**Personal Reflection and Connection**

**Directions: After you have answered the above questions in your group, individually respond to the following prompts in at least one complete sentence.**

1. Would you comfortable sharing your journal with classmates? What topics would be easier for you to share?
2. How do you think using Thoreau’s approach to journaling could potentially provide you more freedom as a writer?
3. As stated on pg. xxix, Thoreau often contradicts himself and did not hold a single role in society, but was a man of many interests and abilities. How do you feel about these characteristics of his? Is it OK to contradicts ourselves and to “wear many hats”?
4. How did you personally respond to the quote “the journal is the record of the journey?” To what journey might Thoreau be referring?