

The Flowering of New England

By Frank Mandosa

Title of Unit - "The Flowering of New England"
Name - Frank Mandosa
Duration of Unit - 2-3 weeks
School - Medfield High School
School City and State - Medfield, MA
Number of Lessons in Unit - 4
Subject(s) - American Literature
Related Subjects - Music Appreciation, Foods
Grade Level(s) - 11
Date Submitted - August, 2006

Short Abstract of Curriculum Unit (3-6 sentences):

For four years, I have taught American Literature to lower-level high school juniors with moderate to severe reading comprehension, writing, and/or critical thinking limitations, not to mention emotional and/or mental problems. Consequently, many Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) require the curriculum content to be simplified or delivered at a slower pace. When I teach the textbook unit entitled "The Flowering of New England," which focuses on Transcendentalist authors, I briefly cover Ralph Waldo Emerson but focus our energies on deeper coverage of Henry David Thoreau, primarily because a.) the textbook contains more of Thoreau's writings, and b.) beginning last year, the class goes on a field trip to Walden Pond. The four lessons included herein all focus on Thoreau's transcendentalist approach to life and *Walden, or Life in the Woods*, as well as a modern-day practical approach to public speaking skills and awareness of the wide availability of organic food in American society.

List of Reading Materials:

Adventures in American Literature, Pegasus Edition
Internet-retrieved biographical sketches of famous composers (Pachelbel, Berlioz, Beethoven, et al.)

List of Equipment (i.e. technology, scientific measurement tools, etc.):

student laptops
art supplies (cardboard, glue, rulers, scissors, colored pencils/markers, etc.)
CDs of classical symphonies
CD player
loupes
individual pieces of outside nature (twigs, leaves, pebbles, weeds, etc.)

Lesson 1

Name - Frank Mandosa
Unit Title - "The Flowering of New England"
Lesson # - 1
Lesson Title - "Using Loupes To Examine Nature's Fine Details"
Lesson Duration - one (1) 45-minute period

Abstract (2-5 sentences):

After a PowerPoint slideshow introduces the unit to the students (see attached), we read the excerpts from *Walden, or Life in the Woods* that are provided in the textbook. As notes are given along the way and readings may be interrupted for additional clarification, completion may take from 1 to 2 45-minute class periods. Class discussion and a brief videotaped segment of TV's *Chronicle* on Thoreau and Walden Pond further reinforce the major concepts of transcendentalism and Thoreau's work. For the first lesson, students will gain a deeper appreciation for and understanding of Thoreau's concentration on nature, especially the war between the black and red ants, in using loupes to examine in more detail everyday objects that they may think they know everything about, and then use their writing skills to record their findings using the text as evidence.

Goals/Objectives:

The goals for this lesson are as follows:

- To be able to use scientific equipment (loupes) to become more observant of everyday nature
- To be able to gain a deeper appreciation for and understanding of Thoreau's emphasis on the natural world
- To be able to sharpen and hone writing skills to record any insight gained
- To be able to use Thoreau's writings as evidence of student understanding

Procedure:

This lesson should take no longer than one (1) 45-minute period. At the beginning of class, each student receives a specific piece of outdoor nature, such as a twig, a leaf, several weeds, a pinecone, or an acorn to examine with a loupe. Ideally, if the weather is conducive, this activity will be done outside in order to have students more physically connected with the outside world. Students will have twenty (20) minutes to write down *in complete sentences and in proper single-paragraph form* three to five (3-5) different observations or ideas that they never noticed or knew before about the object, no matter

how common or everyday it may be. Sketching the object in detail will be strongly encouraged, but not required. Physical characteristics and memories or images that the objects evoke are examples of what students could write down.

Next, students will individually present to the class their particular natural object and what their observations were. Everyone will be encouraged to offer their own associations, if any, with each object as everyone speaks. I will collect the paragraphs and offer feedback on writing mechanics, although they will not be graded. Lastly, a closing discussion that reemphasizes the omnipresence of nature not only in Thoreau's world but also our own completes the class period.

As a homework assignment, students will answer a prompt for a journal entry that will be graded. (The rubric that I use for assessment is attached.)

The prompt is as follows:

How can a closer examination of the natural world around us relate to our everyday lives? Indicate where in the excerpts from Walden, or Life in the Woods you see examples of Thoreau closely scrutinizing nature around him.

Journal Entry on Purposes of Examining Nature

Teacher Name: **Mr. Mandosa**

Student Name: _____

CATEGORY	4	3	2	1
Grammar & Spelling (Conventions)	Writer makes no errors in grammar or spelling that distract the reader from the content.	Writer makes no more than 3-5 errors in grammar or spelling that distract the reader from the content.	Writer makes no less than 6-8 errors in grammar or spelling that distract the reader from the content.	Writer makes more than 8 errors in grammar or spelling that distract the reader from the content.
Capitalization & Punctuation (Conventions)	Writer makes no errors in capitalization or punctuation, so the journal is exceptionally easy to read.	Writer makes no more than 3-5 errors in capitalization or punctuation, but the journal is still easy to read.	Writer makes no more than 6-8 errors in capitalization and/or punctuation that catch the reader's attention and interrupt the flow.	Writer makes more than 8 errors in capitalization and/or punctuation that catch the reader's attention and greatly interrupt the flow.
Word Choice	Writer uses vivid words and phrases that linger or draw pictures in the reader's mind, and the choice and placement of the words seems accurate, natural and not forced.	Writer uses vivid words and phrases that linger or draw pictures in the reader's mind, but occasionally the words are used inaccurately or seem overdone.	Writer uses words that communicate clearly, but the writing lacks variety, punch or flair.	Writer uses a limited vocabulary that does not communicate strongly or capture the reader's interest. Jargon or clichés may be present and detract from the meaning.
Accuracy of Facts (Content)	All supportive facts relating to Thoreau are reported accurately.	Almost all supportive facts relating to Thoreau are reported accurately.	Some supportive facts relating to Thoreau are reported accurately.	NO facts relating to Thoreau are reported OR most are inaccurately reported.
Sequencing (Organization)	Details are placed in a logical order and the way they are presented effectively keeps the interest of the reader.	Details are placed in a logical order, but the way in which they are presented/introduced sometimes makes the writing less interesting.	Some details are not in a logical or expected order, and this distracts the reader.	Many details are not in a logical or expected order. There is little sense that the writing is organized.
Recognition of Reader (Voice)	The reader's questions are anticipated and answered thoroughly and completely.	The reader's questions are anticipated and answered to some extent.	The reader is left with one or two questions. More information is needed to "fill in the blanks".	The reader is left with several questions.

Lesson 2

Name - Frank Mandosa
Unit Title - "The Flowering of New England"
Lesson # - 2
Lesson Title - "Thinking and Building and Applying, Oh My!"
Lesson Duration -one (1) 90-minute block period and one (1) 45-minute period

Abstract (2-5 sentences):

After an opening class discussion that reiterates the major concepts of Thoreau's experiment of living in the wildness, students will reflect on what their own personal place of choice would be if they were to withdraw for a certain limited amount of time into a daily life of self-reflection and self-exploration. Using provided art supplies, they will construct a diorama or model of their ideal place, no matter how practical, far-fetched, or impossible. Examples could range from living in a tree house in their backyard for a summer to living in a space capsule orbiting the earth for a year. Personally selecting and applying passages from *Walden, or Life in the Woods* to their own experiment will aid in further comprehension of the text.

Goals/Objectives:

The goals for this lesson are as follows:

- To be able to use art supplies to conceive, design, and physically construct a personal version of a hypothetical secluded dwelling in a personal space
- To be able to recognize the potential for artistic activities to create a physical manifestation of an abstract, inferential concept
- To be able to demonstrate a correlation between a personal vision of a "retreat" and Thoreau's version through a diorama and verbal explanation
- To be able to analyze passages from *Walden, or Life in the Woods* and apply them to an individualized adaptation of his experiment
- To be able to locate or create graphics that symbolize personal feelings, goals, or desires

Procedure:

Students will take one (1) 90-minute block period and one (1) 45-minute period to conceive, design, and build a physical model of their own personal dwelling if they were to live as Thoreau did for a limited amount of time. Using cardboard, scissors, glue, markers/colored pencils, and other art supplies, students will apply their understanding of Thoreau's preference of living in the wildness to their own vision of a retreat to mature into self-actualization. I will use the attached rubric to assess the quality of their work.

In addition to building a diorama or model, students will refer to the textbook's excerpts from Thoreau's writing and select three to five (3-5) passages that speak to them, that strike a chord with them as they ponder their own hypothetical retreats. They will copy these passages onto poster board along with sketches, photographs from magazines or the Internet, or illustrations that symbolize what they would hope to gain from their retreat, whether it is time to reflect on an argument with a family member or friend, time to perfect dancing moves, time to complete components of the college application process, or time to reflect on self-image. All sources of any borrowed graphics must be cited on the poster board. I will use the attached rubric to assess the quality of the poster board.

At the conclusion of the project, students will individually present to the class their models, why they chose the location that they did, and the meaning behind just one of their graphics. As with lesson 1, everyone is urged to offer their own observations, comments, and thoughts on each student's work.

Diorama/Model

Teacher Name: **Mr. Mandosa**

Student Name: _____

CATEGORY	4	3	2	1
Construction - Materials	Appropriate materials were selected and creatively modified in ways that made them even better.	Appropriate materials were selected and there was an attempt at creative modification to make them even better.	Appropriate materials were selected.	Inappropriate materials were selected and contributed to a product that performed poorly.
Construction - Care Taken	Great care taken in construction process so that the structure is neat, attractive, clear, and detailed.	Construction was careful and accurate for the most part, but 1-2 details could have been refined for a more attractive product.	Diorama is neat and attractive but appears either rushed or to be lacking details that could have resulted in a more attractive product.	Construction appears careless or haphazard. Many details either need refinement or are missing for a strong or attractive product.

Thoreau Passages and Graphics on Poster Board

Teacher Name: **Mr. Mandosa**

Student Name: _____

CATEGORY	4	3	2	1
Use of Class Time	Used time well during each class period. Focused on getting the project done. Never distracted others.	Used time well during each class period. Usually focused on getting the project done and never distracted others.	Used some of the time well during each class period. There was some focus on getting the project done but occasionally distracted others.	Did not use class time to focus on the project OR often distracted others.
Attractiveness	The poster is exceptionally attractive in terms of design, layout, and neatness.	The poster is attractive in terms of design, layout and neatness.	The poster is acceptably attractive, though it may be a bit messy.	The poster is distractingly messy or very poorly designed. It is not attractive.
Graphics - Relevance	All graphics are related to the topic and make it easier to understand. ALL borrowed graphics have a source citation.	All graphics are related to the topic and most make it easier to understand. All borrowed graphics have a source citation.	Some graphics are not too related to the topic.	Graphics do not relate to the topic OR borrowed graphics do not have a source citation.

Lesson 3

Name - Frank Mandosa
Unit Title - "The Flowering of New England"
Lesson # - 3
Lesson Title - "Musical Connections"
Lesson Duration - EITHER one (1) 90-minute block period and one (1) 45-minute period OR one (1) 90-minute block period

Abstract (2-5 sentences):

Ideally in conjunction with the choral director and/or school band conductor from the Music Department of the high school, this lesson will take classical symphonic music pieces from the likes of Berlioz, Bach, Beethoven, and/or Pachelbel for analysis and application to the mood and spirit of both Thoreau's retreat and each student's hypothetical retreat. If collaborating with colleagues is inconvenient or difficult due to scheduling conflicts or other matters, classical selections played in my classroom on CD will suffice.

Goals/Objectives:

- To be able to sharpen and hone stream-of-consciousness writing skills to record any insight gained into the tone and mood of classical music
- To be able to use classical music selections as springboards for personal analysis of inner thoughts and ideas in contemplating hypothetical personal retreats
- To be able to use classical music selections as springboards for personal analysis of the tone and mood of Thoreau's own retreat at Walden

Procedure:

After the completion of the diorama/poster board project, students will be given time for further personal reflection on and consideration of their individual goals for their hypothetical personal retreats. Additional discussion/review of Thoreau's *Walden, or Life in the Woods* may prove useful and logical. They will take ten (10) minutes to write nonstop any idea, thought, or concept that pops into their mind about their retreats, paying no heed to grammar, spelling, or coherence. This is to be personal reflection time, and their work will not be collected. Once they finish, if scheduling and practicality allow, they will spend a block day in the auditorium or music room listening to choral and/or band students perform selections from famous classical symphonies or other pieces, led by the choral director and/or band conductor. The idea is that students will listen to the music and select which piece best fits the tone and mood of both the retreat that they fantasize having and Thoreau's retreat. For example, is each retreat, do they feel, slow-paced and pensive? Energetic and possibly

chaotic? Mellow and perhaps sad? Discordant and confusing? Triumphant and celebratory? Examples of possible music pieces include Pachelbel's *Canon in D*, Hector Berlioz's *Symphonie Fantastique*, Carmen's *Les Toreadors* (a.k.a. the theme to the motion picture *The Bad News Bears* from the 1970s), and Beethoven's *Moonlight Sonata*. If collaboration with the Music Department is not an option, then the music can be presented to the students on CD in my classroom.

After listening to each piece, students' homework assignment will be to look on the Internet or in print sources to obtain brief biographical information on the composer of the piece that they selected as the best match for the mood of both retreats. Required information will include the composer's name, date of birth and death, and significant events from his or her life that contributed to the quality of/flavor of their body of work. **All sources of information must be cited in order to avoid plagiarism.**

Students will prepare a brief oral presentation that not only offers information about the composer's life and how it may have affected his or her music, but also explains how their music selection fits the mood of EITHER their interpretation of Thoreau's retreat or their own. (To avoid putting students on the spot or forcing them to divulge personal information publicly, they have the option of discussing Thoreau.) The rubric used for assessing the oral presentations is attached.

Musical Connections with Your Walden-Like Retreat

Teacher Name: **Mr. Mandosa**

Student Name: _____

CATEGORY	4	3	2	1
Stays on Topic	Stays on topic all (100%) of the time.	Stays on topic most (99-90%) of the time.	Stays on topic some (89%-75%) of the time.	It was hard to tell what the topic was.
Preparedness	Student is completely prepared and has obviously rehearsed.	Student seems pretty prepared but might have needed a couple of more rehearsals.	The student is somewhat prepared, but it is clear that rehearsal was lacking.	Student does not seem at all prepared to present.
Time-Limit	Presentation is 4-5 minutes long.	Presentation is 3-4 minutes long.	Presentation is 2-3 minutes long.	Presentation is less than 2 minutes OR more than 5 minutes.
Required Elements/Interpretation	Presentation includes the required information about the composer and clearly applies personal interpretation of the mood of the piece to the retreat in an exceptionally direct, logical manner.	Presentation includes the required information about the composer and clearly applies personal interpretation of the mood of the piece to the retreat.	Presentation includes only some of the required information about the composer AND/OR applies personal interpretation of the mood of the piece to the retreat that could use more depth of thought.	Presentation does not include the required information about the composer AND/OR does not show effort or interpretation of the mood of the piece to the retreat.

Lesson 4

Name - Frank Mandosa
Unit Title - "The Flowering of New England"
Lesson # - 4
Lesson Title - "Thoreau and the Modern-Day Supermarket"
Lesson Duration - three (3) 45-minute periods and one (1) 90-minute block period

Abstract (2-5 sentences):

Ideally in conjunction with the Foods teacher from the Wellness Department of the high school, this lesson will incorporate the basics of organic foods in modern society with a role-play involving Thoreau in a 21st-century supermarket. By the time this lesson begins, students will have already been studying Thoreau, so knowledge of his bean fields will be in place. The Foods teacher can deliver content regarding the differences between organic and inorganic foods, including the benefits, the typical costs, and the availability. From there, students will separate into groups of four (4) or five (5) and think creatively to write a skit in which an American family meets Henry David Thoreau at their local supermarket.

Goals/Objectives:

- To be able to comprehend and explain the benefits, costs, and availability of organic foods in modern-day America
- To be able to develop and hone creative writing skills using synergy within a small group
- To be able to use the Internet for research on the modern-day food industry
- To be able to draw connections between Thoreau's attitude toward gardening in nature and food and our own lives in the 21st century
- To be able to have the opportunity to enjoy nutritious, organic snacks amidst a fast-food, instant gratification-driven society

Procedure:

After reading excerpts from *Walden* and learning about Thoreau's inclination towards gardening and agriculture, the Foods teacher could deliver content regarding the benefits, costs, and availability of organic foods in our current society. The product that students will create to convey their understanding of these concepts is a creative writing piece that could translate into a videotaped presentation. The creative writing piece can be begun during class time to ensure that students' thoughts and the skit's purpose remain on track. The skits should revolve around a modern-day family running into Thoreau at their local supermarket, or perhaps after they arrive home from the supermarket. After rough ideas become more solidified, students will then complete the skits by a certain due date. They may also use class time to research their own supermarkets' web sites for additional information about the organic food sections. For the skits, dialogue can involve

disagreements within the family over whether to purchase organic food, Thoreau's referencing his bean fields and what he tends to eat, or even the dangers of modern-day pesticides. I would encourage them to compare prices of organic foods to inorganic and even to purchase some on their own time. I might also provide a brochure or a printout of a homepage of the CSA web site for optional further study.

The skits will be performed in class on a day when students are encouraged to bring in organic snacks and drinks. As a final "fact check," students will not be able to take a bite of anything until each individually offers just one fact that he or she learned about Thoreau, the food industry, or agriculture from this project. Ideally, if permission slips are returned, I would videotape the skits so that different sections of the same course can view the others' work. I will collect the scripts and use the attached rubric for assessment.

Thoreau and the 21st Century Supermarket

Teacher Name: **Mr. Mandosa**

Student Name: _____

CATEGORY	4	3	2	1
Historical Accuracy	All historical information appears to be consistently accurate.	Almost all historical information appears to be consistently accurate.	Most of the historical information was accurate.	Very little of the historical information was accurate.
Role	Point-of-view, arguments, and solutions proposed were consistently in character.	Point-of-view, arguments, and solutions proposed were often in character.	Point-of-view, arguments, and solutions proposed were sometimes in character.	Point-of-view, arguments, and solutions proposed were rarely in character.
Knowledge Gained	Can clearly explain several ways in which his character "saw" things differently than other characters and can clearly explain why.	Can clearly explain several ways in which his character "saw" things differently than other characters.	Can clearly explain one way in which his character "saw" things differently than other characters.	Cannot explain one way in which his character "saw" things differently than other characters.
Required Elements	Student included more information than was required.	Student included all information that was required.	Student included most information that was required.	Student included less information than was required.

Date Created: **Aug 08, 2006 08:20 pm (CDT)**