



Approaching Walden 2006

Documenting Medford

By Miranda Whitmore

Title of Unit - Documenting Medford
Name - Miranda Whitmore
Duration of Unit - Minimum 3 weeks but could take all semester
School - Medfield High School
School City and State - Medfield, Ma
Number of Lessons in Unit - 5
Subject(s) - English
Related Subjects - History, Art
Grade Level(s) - 11 th Grade American Literature
Date Submitted - August, 2006

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

Inspired by Thoreau's connection to his hometown of Concord, students will learn more about their hometown and pick "special" personal/communal/natural spaces to document through writing and photos. Given the knowledge that both cities and nature are constantly interacting and changing, students will venture to capture Medfield in its current shape and quality. Medfield is a small town that prides itself on its long history. Students will present their work together in a public space. It will serve as a gallery for their study of place and allow Medfield residents to share in the celebration of their unique town.

List of Reading Materials:

-Excerpts from Walden including:

-"Economy", "The Ponds", "Former Inhabitants; and Winter Visitors",
"The Pond in Winter"

-Essays "Life Without Principle", "Walking", "Civil Disobedience"

-Selected Quotes from Thoreau's Journals

-Students will also be encouraged to peruse the following three histories of Medfield:

History of the Town of Medfield, Massachusetts: 1650-1886 by William S. Tilden, *Medfield Reflections, 1651-1976*

History of the Town of Medfield, Massachusetts 1887-1925 by Richard DeSorgher.

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

Computer cart (for online research and word processing), Cameras (digital or traditional), Journals (for reflective writing), Posters (for presentation), Brilliant Adolescent Brains!!!!

Lesson 1

Name - Miranda Whitmore
Unit Title - Documenting Medfield
Lesson # - 1
Lesson Title - Getting to Know Thoreau
Lesson Duration - One 90 minute block period (hw assigned the night before)

Abstract (2-5 sentences):

Students will be broken into 3 groups of 7-8 and assigned different readings about and by Thoreau. The groups will be: "Biography of Thoreau", "Thoreau the Nature Writer", "Thoreau the Essayist" They will come together in a block period and share their information followed by a discussion about who Thoreau was and what he valued. The discussion should evoke ideas of place-based study.

Goals/Objectives:

The goal here is a general introduction to Thoreau, Transcendentalism, and sense of place/history. Students will read and research independently and work in groups to develop ways to share what they learned in an organized manner.

Procedure: Teacher Presentations and Student Activities Each Incorporating:

- **Timeline**
 - Students will be expected to annotate readings and/or take notes on online material the night before. Notes will be checked for credit at beginning of class and instructions will be given (approximately 10 minutes).
 - Students will have approximately 45 minutes to create presentations (probably posters, maybe PowerPoint).
 - Each Group will have 5-7 minutes to present their material
 - The final 10-15 minutes of class will be a whole group discussion. This may spill over into the next class if more time is needed.
- **Topic(s) Covered/Specific Readings**
 - “Bio of Thoreau” Group will be expected to find info about Thoreau’s life online or at the school/town library. They may assign topics however they choose.
 - 2-3 students from the “Thoreau the Nature Writer” Group will read each of the following chapters from Walden: “Economy”, “The Ponds”, “Former Inhabitants”
 - 2-3 students from the “Thoreau the Essayist” group will read each of the following essays: “Life Without Principle”, “Walking”, “Civil Disobedience”

- **Activities/Homework if any**
 -Procure a notebook to be used as a journal over the next couple weeks
 -Imagine if Thoreau had been born/lived in Medfield. What places around town might he have been drawn to and why? Draw up a short list.
- **Assessment/Rubric**

Making A Poster : Thoreau Research/Reading Presentations

CATEGORY	4	3	2	1
Use of Class Time	Used time well during the whole class period. Focused on getting the project done. Never distracted others.	Used time well during the whole class period. Usually focused on getting the project done and never distracted others.	Used some of the time well during the class period. Some focus on project but occasionally distracted others.	Did not use class time to focus on the project OR often distracted others.
Knowledge Gained	SUPERIOR analysis of the facts/texts explored. Not just recopied info. Student can accurately answer all questions related to poster.	STRONG analysis of the facts/texts explored. Not just recopied info. Student can accurately answer most questions related to facts in the poster.	SOME analysis of the facts/texts explored. Not just recopied info. Student can accurately answer some questions related to facts in the poster.	Primarily recopied info. Student appears to have insufficient knowledge about the facts used in the poster.
Thoreau As...	EXPERTLY shows Thoreau in the role assigned to your group. Views and analyzes him through a specific lens.	ADEQUATELY shows Thoreau in the role assigned to your group. Views and analyzes him through a specific lens.	ATTEMPTS to show Thoreau in the role assigned to your group. Doesn't fully view him through a specific lens.	No effort to show Thoreau in the role assigned.
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.
Presentation	EXCELLENT organization, projection, eye contact, and pacing.	STRONG organization, projection, eye contact, and pacing.	ADEQUATE organization, projection, eye contact, and pacing.	POOR organization, projection, eye contact, and pacing.

Lesson 2

Name - Miranda
Unit Title - Documenting Medfield
Lesson # - 2
Lesson Title - Reflecting on Medfield
Lesson Duration - one 45 minutes class period for presentation of assignment and creation of rubric, mostly completed outside of school (over about 2 weeks)

Abstract (2-5 sentences):

Having learned about Thoreau and his interest in place-based and natural study, students will begin to keep journals. They will choose a place (or places) that is valuable to them in Medfield (as natural setting, historical setting, personal setting, etc) and spend some time journaling there.

Goals/Objectives:

The goal is to have students become immersed in a local place like Thoreau was. Using Thoreau quotes as inspiration, students will endeavor to describe their connections to these places on many levels. They will also be encouraged to use analogies to link the details of their places to larger ideas. Sketching, mapping and poetry-writing will also be encouraged. These journal entries will be used as fodder for a final essay presenting their place to the public.

Procedure: Teacher Presentations and Student Activities Each Incorporating:

- **Timeline**
 - The journaling piece of the unit will be presented soon after the “Getting to know Thoreau” lesson.
 - Students will journal for at least a week, preferably more.
- **Topic(s) Covered/Specific Readings**
 - See the quotes selected on the attached handout.
 - Perhaps a reading on place-based study will be used if there is time.
 - “The Sense of Place” chapter from Where the Bluebird Sings and the Lemonade Springs: Living an Writing in the West by Wallace Stegner, Random House Inc., 2002.

- **Activities/Homework if any**
 - Students will refer to the list they have already created of places Thoreau might enjoy
 - They will be encouraged to speak to parents or other residents about potential “spaces” to study, but ideally the setting is one that is already important to them personally
 - Students will be asked to journal daily in this spot for at least ½ hour at a time
- **Assessment/Rubric-**

Students will generate a rubric together in class after the assignment has been given and discussed. Importantly, it should not be too prescriptive. It should focus on general elements like completeness, reflectiveness, depth and connectiveness of thought, willingness to use multiple intelligences etc.

See Journaling Handout Below



Documenting Medfield: Thoreau-Inspired Journaling



*I have traveled a good deal in Concord.
- Walden "Economy"*

*I will not talk about people a thousand miles off, but come as near home as I can.
- "Life Without Principle"*

As we have learned through our studies and discussions about Thoreau, he was very committed to Concord. He loved nature of course, but he also loved his hometown and the wildness that was a part of it. He studied both its natural and cultural history deeply. Medfield is a town rich in history and nature. Let's get to know it.

Your Tasks:

- 1) Choose a spot in Medfield that is meaningful to you. It can be the front steps of Town Hall, the local library, Hospital Hill, your backyard, Metacommet field...anything. Your space doesn't have to be outside, but it would be great if your space involved a bit of nature, even if it is only a view of it through a window. You can choose it because it has historical value, it's beautiful, you have a special memory there, or all of the above.
- 2) You will journal in this spot for the next couple weeks. That means sitting quietly and observing closely. It also could mean sketching, mapping, or writing poetry about your spot.

Prompt#1: Nature will bear the closest inspection. She invites us to lay our eye level with her smallest leaf, and take an insect view of its plain. –Journal
Practice close observation. Pick one part or aspect of your space and describe it in intense detail. Use all your senses. Act like a scientist.

Prompt#2: I frequently tramped eight or ten miles through the deepest snow to keep an appointment with a beech-tree, or a yellow birch, or an old acquaintance among the pines. -Walden "Former Inhabitants: and Winter Visitors"
What does Thoreau mean when he describes keeping an appointment with or making the acquaintance of a tree? How can a place feel like an old friend?

Prompt#3: All change is a miracle to contemplate; but it is a miracle which is taking place every second.-Walden "Winter"
As you observe your space over a period of time, does any piece of it change in any way? Record any change you can discover.

Prompt#4: All perception of truth is the detection of an analogy. -Journal
Try to think of analogies and metaphors as you consider your space. What can you compare it to and what can you compare to it? Here's an example of Thoreau's:

A lake is the landscape's most beautiful and expressive feature.

It is Earth's eye; looking into which the beholder measures
the depth of his own nature.

from the chapter "The Ponds" in *Walden*

Prompt#5: Cultivate reverence. It is as if you were so much more respectable
yourself. -Journal

Try to figure out what it is about this that makes it so special Why do you hold it in such esteem?

Prompt#6: Nay, be a Columbus to whole new continents and worlds within you,
opening new channels, not of trade, but of thought-Walden "Conclusions"
As you sit in your space let you thoughts turn inward for once. Let the setting fall to the background briefly and explore your own thoughts.

Prompt#7: You only need sit still long enough in some attractive spot in the woods
that all its inhabitants may exhibit themselves to you by turns.

-Walden "Brute Neighbors"

Does anyone or anything else inhabit your space? Write about it.

Prompt#8: It took me by surprise, though I had found so many arrowheads, and
convinced me that the Indian was not the invention of historians and poets.

-Journal

Do you know anything about the history of your space before your lifetime? If not, try to guess, then find out later by looking it up or asking someone older

Lesson 3

Name - Miranda
Unit Title - Documenting Medfield
Lesson # - 3
Lesson Title - History of Medfield
Lesson Duration - one 45 minutes class period or short fieldtrip (taking bus to various sites)

Abstract (2-5 sentences):

In the interest of having the students learn more about their town, I will invite the American history teacher, who is also a local historian, in to do a presentation on Medfield History. I will also ask him to add an element of natural history to his presentation if he can, or at least direct us to some resources on that topic. This knowledge can inform students about the town as a whole and help them imagine the history of the particular spaces they've chosen to highlight.

Goals/Objectives:

Students will learn about local history. They should take notes and include historical aspects in their final essay. Hopefully, they will also come with questions and engage in a discussion with the history teacher.

Procedure: Teacher Presentations and Student Activities Each Incorporating:

- **Timeline**

This lesson can take place at any point, but would probably be best in the early part of their journaling process because hopefully this historical information will color their view of their spaces.

- **Topic(s) Covered/Specific Readings**

-Selections from the following works:

History of the Town of Medfield, Massachusetts: 1650-1886 by William S. Tilden,
Medfield Reflections, 1651-1976

History of the Town of Medfield, Massachusetts 1887-1925 by Richard DeSorgher

- **No homework or assessment for this lesson**

Lesson 4

Name - Miranda
Unit Title - Documenting Medfield
Lesson # - 4
Lesson Title - Photography Basics
Lesson Duration - one 45 minutes class period for photography presentation and some time during a later class to share first round pictures.

Abstract (2-5 sentences):

At his point in the unit, students should begin thinking about their final projects. In addition to their essays about place, the presentations should also contain photos. The photography teacher will be invited into the classroom to give a basic lesson on the elements of artistic photography.

Goals/Objectives:

Students will learn how to present their places artfully. They will learn how to take pictures that are inviting to a viewer, that imply meaning, and that capture different aspects of a space.

Procedure: Teacher Presentations and Student Activities Each Incorporating:

- **Timeline**

This lesson should take place closer to the end of the unit, but it should leave adequate time for students to take photographs and prepare prints for their presentations.

- **No readings for this lesson**

- **Homework/Assessments**

After learning about photography, student will be asked to take a first round of pictures and bring them in. They will meet in small groups to discuss and share. Hopefully, they can help and inspire each other to take even better photos next time around.

Lesson 5

Name - Miranda
Unit Title - Documenting Medfield
Lesson # - 5
Lesson Title - Final Project
Lesson Duration - One 45 minute period for presentation and discussion, then as much time for in-class work as needed/available, can mostly be completed at home.

Abstract (2-5 sentences):

Now students should have plenty of ideas and raw material for putting together a presentation about their space. They will write an essay and create a photo collection presentation of their space. The projects will be exhibited publicly. The school, local library, and town hall would all be potential exhibit spaces.

Goals/Objectives:

Because the students will have chosen different spaces to present, when the exhibit comes together, it will show the many different sides of Medfield. The exhibit will serve to document the town as it is today so that future generations can appreciate what it was like and current residents can see their town in new ways. Hopefully, through close communing with spaces in their town and hard work putting together a high-quality exhibit, the participating students will feel a new pride in their town and feel a stronger desire to protect and contribute to it.

Procedure: Teacher Presentations and Student Activities Each Incorporating:

- **Timeline**
Students should have at least a week to put their presentations together including some time in-class to work on them.
- **No readings for this lesson**
- **Assessment**

See Handout Below

Documenting Medfield

Your Final Project!!!!

Okay, you've been working very hard and you've been immersed in Medfield spaces for weeks now. Here's your culminating assignment:

Requirements:

Essay- This essay is an expository one and should feel mostly descriptive in nature. However, it should not be purely descriptive. Using Thoreau as a model, try to capture your chosen space in several ways. *Peel away its layers of history. Show its natural gifts. Describe what makes it special to you personally and to the town as a whole. Share inspired thoughts and feelings you've had in connection to this place.*

I know this assignment is not very prescriptive. Yikes!!!! Because I'm asking to do so much here, each one of these essays is going to be very different. Don't worry about that too much. Just focus on capturing the magic of your spot!☺

- This essay should be at least 800 words.
- You may, of course, write in first person.
- Yes, spelling and mechanics count.
- This is important:** Don't create a list of observations and facts. Use **figurative language** to jazz up your essay and make sure that you have some kind of **organizing theme or idea** that connects all the parts of your essay.

Presentation- Find away to present your photos of your space meaningfully and artfully. Here are some ideas: Mount them in a specific way, order them progressively, make a collage, put a quote next to each one, intersperse them with poetry...whatever works best for you. **Your photo presentation should work together with your essay to convey your message about your space.**

This project is worth _____ points and is due _____.

(See rubric on back of this page).

Documenting Medfield: Final Project	Bravo! Well-done!	Adequate	Needs Improvement
Theme -Essay is artfully tied together by a meaningful theme that sends a clear message about the place. This message should combine historical, natural, communal, and/or personal views of the space.			
Organization -Essay is well organized. It has some kind of a hook in the intro and a clear conclusion. Each body paragraph is coherent and contains excellent idea progression.			
Style - Author's voice is clear. Strong vocabulary. Smooth transitions. Enriched by figurative language.			
Spelling/ Mechanics- No errors in mechanics or spelling that distract the reader.			
Photo Presentation- Photos follow basics rules of photography and are organized attractively.			
Connections- Photos and essay share and integrity of theme. They compliment each other beautifully.			

*Note: This final grade will be combined with your process points, which include your Thoreau group presentation and your journal. You will also receive a general grade for in-class effort and contribution during this unit.