

Unit: Opposing Views: A Course on Critical Thinking

SubUnit: Getting, Recording and Reporting the Facts

Section: This is My Place

By Pat Bonnet, Lexington High School

Title of Unit - This is My Place
Name - Patricia Bonnet
Duration of Unit - year long, but 3 lessons present here (Section "This is My Place") are jumpstarting the unit
School - Lexington High School
School City and State - Lexington, MA
Number of Lessons in Unit - Three (3)
Subject(s) - AIM program students (with learning and/or emotional disabilities)
Date Submitted - August, 2006

Opposing Views: A Course on Critical Thinking

Purpose. The purpose of this yearlong course is to develop the critical thinking skills of AIM students through systematic implementation and practice using a cognitive hierarchy. (AIM is a special education program for high school students who have been unsuccessful in school due to learning disabilities and/or emotional disabilities.)

Goal. The objective of this course is for each student to be able to accurately analyze and to thoughtfully prepare arguments from opposing views on various issues.

Objectives. The objective for this course is for each student to establish a portfolio of work that demonstrates development of higher order thinking as demonstrated in the parts and the whole of sound argument. The portfolios will include graphic presentation of facts and ideas, paragraphs, reports and essays, analysis, oral presentations, and posters or other audio-visual presentation. At the end of each semester, Q2 and Q4, each student will present a project on a controversial issue of choice. The project will include: a paper detailing the arguments, an oral presentation, and a poster presentation.

Texts. The text material for this course comes from numerous sources, many sources to be determined ad hoc depending upon the direction and interest of the class. Readings from the following authors are scheduled: Thoreau, Brothers Grimm, O.H. Henry, Picoult. Videos (possible): "Twelve Angry Men", "Thousand Pieces of Gold", and "A Civil Action." (Text for writing development EmPower™, by Singer and Bashir.)

Quarter

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Goal:	observation, reporting	categorization, compare/contrast	relationships, sequences	cause & effect
Objective:	observation reports, oral written	organizing information, types, ideas, features	identifying, explaining, relationships, sequences	accurate understanding of relationships in terms of qualitative variables and time.
	distinguish observation (fact) from opinion, analogy, metaphor	use of analogy, metaphor, ideas in describing and ordering information	description of processes, transitions	answering Why? supporting claims of truth critiquing and writing claims of truth

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LESSON 1 - Observing My Place

Purpose:

Establish importance of observation as a discipline in understanding the world

Goals:

* Develop an appreciation for one's own place

*Develop skills of observation and reporting of fact

Objectives:

*Each student will make one or more appropriate contributions to group discussion

Each student will complete one graphic form in class

Procedures:

Teacher demonstration of observation and recording using graphic form

*Student observation and recording using graphic form (portfolio)

*Discussion, What is fact; what is not?

Homework: Make an observation of a place at home; record the facts on graphic form. (portfolio)

* graphic forms adapted from EmPower™

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LESSON 2 – Telling About My Place

Purpose:

*Establish importance of disciplined communication of observed facts.

Goals:

* Develop confidence and skill in oral and written reporting

*Develop ability to accept and give constructive critique

Objectives and Procedures:

*Each student will show and give oral report of observations included in his/her homework graphic

*Each student will write a 1-paragraph report of his/her observation of place. (portfolio)

Homework:

*Read handout copy of first passage from “Economy”, Walden, by Henry David Thoreau. (Modern Library, 1937, pp. 36-37)
[attachment 1]

*Fill in graphic form attached. (portfolio)

* graphic forms adapted from EmPower™

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LESSON 3 – Writing About My Place

Purpose:

- *Establish importance of disciplined, factual report writing

Goals:

- *Increase skill in reading literature
- *Develop appreciation for skilled use of descriptive language.
- *Get to know Henry David Thoreau
- * Develop confidence and skill in oral and written reporting
- *Develop ability to accept and give constructive critique

Objectives and Procedures:

- *Discuss with students their homework; what things did they include in their graphic form?
- *Read Thoreau passage aloud
- *Discuss specific observations

Homework:

- *Read handout copy of second passage from “Economy”, Walden, by Henry David Thoreau. (Modern Library, 1937, p. 76) [attachment 2]
- *Fill in graphic form attached. (portfolio)

[Through out the quarter a variety of readings and activities will be used. At the end of the quarter, as part of a transition to the study of compare/contrast, the class will work on the “Ant War” from “Brutal Neighbors” in Walden, [attachment 3] Also, in the last quarter portions of “On Civil Disobedience” will be used.]

* graphic forms adapted from EmPower™

READINGS

ATTACHMENT 1

From "Economy", Walden, Henry David Thoreau, Modern Library, 1937. pp. 36-40

"Near the end of March, 1845, I borrowed an ax and went down to the woods by Walden Pond, nearest to where I intended to build my house, and began to cut down some tall, arrowy white pines, still in their youth, for timber. It is difficult to begin without borrowing, but perhaps it is the most generous course thus to permit your fellow-men to have an interest in your enterprise. The owner of the ax, as he released his hold on it, said that it was the apple of his eye; but I returned it sharper than I received it. It was a pleasant hillside where I worked, covered with pine woods, through which I looked out on the pond, and a small open field in the woods where pines and hickories were springing up. The ice in the pond was not yet dissolved, though there were some open spaces, and it was all dark-colored and saturated with water. There were some slight flurries of snow during the days that I worked;...They were pleasant spring days, in which the winter of man's discontent was thawing as well as the earth, and the life that had lain torpid began (p.36) to stretch itself...On the 1st of April it rained and melted the ice, and in the early part of the day, which was very foggy, I heard a stray goose groping about over the pond and cackling as if lost, or like the spirit of the fog." (p. 37)

ATTACHMENT 2

From "Where I Lived, and What I Lived For", Walden, Henry David Thoreau, Modern Library, 1937, p. 76.

"When first I took up my abode in the woods, that is, began to spend my nights as well as days there, which, by accident, was on Independence Day, or the Fourth of July, 1845, my house was not finished for winter, but was merely a defence against the rain, without plastering or chimney, the walls being of rough, weather-stained boards, with wide chinks, which made it cool at night. The upright white hewn studs and freshly planed door and window casings gave it a clean and airy look, especially in the morning, when its timbers were saturated with dew, so that I fancied that by noon some sweet gum would exude from them. To my imagination it retained throughout the day more or less of this auroral character, reminding me of a certain house on a mountain which I had visited a year before. This was an airy and unplastered cabin, fit to entertain a travelling god, and where a goddess might trail her garments. The winds which passed over my dwelling were such a sweep over the ridges of mountains, bearing the broken strains, or celestial parts only, of terrestrial music. The morning wind forever blows, the poem of creation is uninterrupted; but few are the ears that hear it. Olympus is but the outside of the earth everywhere" (p.76).

ATTACHMENT 3

From “Brute Neighbors”, Walden, by Henry David Thoreau, Modern Library, 1937, pp. 206 – 208

“...One day when I went out to my wood-pile, or rather my pile of stumps, I observed two large ants, the one red, the other much larger, nearly half an inch long, and black, fiercely contending with one another. Having once got hold they never let go, but struggled and wrestled and rolled on the chips incessantly. Looking farther, I was surprised to find that the chips were covered with such combatants, that it was not a *duellum*¹, but a *bellum*, a war between two races of ants, the red always pitted against the black, and frequently two red ones to one black. The legions of these Myrmidond covered all the hills and vales in my wood-yard, and the ground was already strewn with the dead and dying, both red and black. It was the only battle which I have ever witnessed, the only battle-field I ever trod while the battle was raging; internecine war; the red republicans on the one hand, and the black imperialists on the other. On every side they were engaged in deadly combat, yet without any noise that I could hear, and human soldiers never fought so resolutely. I watched a couple that were fast locked in each other’s embraces, in a little sunny valley amid the chips, now at noonday prepared to fight till the sun went down, or life went out. The smaller red champion had fastened himself like a vice to his adversary’s front, and through all the tumblings on that field never for an instant ceased to gnaw at one of his feelers near the root, having already caused the other to go by the board⁴; while the stronger black one dashed him from side to side, and, as I saw on looking nearer, had already divested him of several of his members. They fought with more pertinacity⁵ than bulldogs. Neither manifested the

least disposition to retreat. It was evident that their battle-cry was “Conquer or die.” In the meanwhile there came along a single red ant on the hillside of this valley, evidently full (p. 206) of excitement, who either had dispatched his foe, or had not yet taken part in the battle; probably the latter, for he had lost none of his limbs; whose mother had charged him to return with his shield or upon it. Or perchance he was some Achilles, who had nourished his wrath apart, and had now come to avenge or rescue his Patroclus. He saw this unequal combat from afar, - for the blacks were nearly twice the size of the red, - he drew near with rapid pace till he stood on his guard within half an inch of the combatants; then, watching his opportunity, he sprang upon the black warrior, and commenced his operations near the root of his right fore leg, leaving the foe to select among his own members; and so there were three united for life, as if a new kind of attraction had been invented which put all other locks and cements to shame. I should not have wondered by this time to find that they had their respective musical bands stationed on some eminent chip, and playing their national airs the while to excite the slow and cheer the dying combatants. I was myself excited somewhat even as if they had been men. The more you think of it, the less the difference. And certainly there is not the fight recorded in Concord history, at least, in the history of America, that will bear a moment’s comparison with this, whether for the numbers engaged in it, or for the patriotism and heroism displayed. For numbers and for carnage⁶ it was an Austerlitz⁷ or Dresden⁸. Concord Fight! Two killed on the patriots’ side, and Luther Blanchard⁹ wounded! Why every ant was a Buttrick¹⁰, - “Fire! For God’s sake fire!” – and thousands shared the fate of Davis and Hosmer¹¹. There was not one hireling there. I have no doubt that it was a principle they fought for, as much as our ancestors, and not to avoid a three-

penny tax on their tea; and the results of this battle will be as important and memorable to those whom it concerns as those of the battle of Bunker Hill, at least.

I took up the chip on which the three I have particularly described were struggling, carried into my house, and placed (p. 207) it under a tumbler on my window-sill, in order to see the issue. Holding a microscope to the first-mentioned red ant, I saw that, though he was assiduously gnawing at the near fore leg of his enemy, having severed his remaining feeler, his own breast was all torn away, exposing what vitals he had there to the jaws of the black warrior, whose breastplate was apparently too thick for him to pierce; and the dark carbuncles of the sufferer's eyes shone with ferocity such as war only could excite. They struggled half an hour longer under the tumbler, and when I looked again the black soldier had severed the heads of his foes from their bodies, and the still living heads were hanging on either side of him like ghastly trophies at his saddle-bow, still apparently as firmly fastened as ever, and he was endeavoring with feeble struggles, being without feelers and with only the remnant of a leg, and I know not how many other wounds, to divest himself of them; which at length, after half an hour more, he accomplished. I raised the glass, and he went off over the window-sill in that crippled state. Whether he finally survived that combat, and spent the remainder of his days in some Hotel des Invalides, I do not know; but I thought that his industry would not be worth much thereafter. I never learned which party was victorious, nor the cause of the war; but I felt for the rest of the day as if I had my feelings excited and harrowed by witnessing the struggle, the ferocity and carnage, of a human battle before my door" (pp. 206-208).

¹ *duellum* – duel

² Myrmidons – troops who sailed with Achilles to Troy; legend says they were created from ants

³ internecine – mutually destructive struggle within a group

⁴ “go by the board” – 17th century phrase; finished with, as in thrown overboard

⁵ pertinacity – holding firmly to a purpose; stubbornly persistent

⁶ carnage – massive slaughter

⁷ Austerlitz – Napoleon’s 1805 victory in Czechia

⁸ Dresden – Napoleon’s 1813 victory at Dresden, one of his last

⁹ Luther Blanchard – Minuteman, fifer wounded in the Battle of Lexington and Concord

¹⁰ John Buttrick, – Minuteman, leader at the North Bridge during the Battle of Lexington and Concord

¹¹ Isaac Davis and Abner Hosmer – Minutemen, early fatalities at the Battle of Lexington and Concord