



Information, Please!

Unit: Henry as Author

Topic: Informational writing

Thoreau Quotation

“It is remarkable how closely the history of the Apple-tree is connected with that of man...Tacitus says of the ancient Germans, that they satisfied their hunger with wild apples (*agrestia poma*) among other things...The apple-tree has been celebrated by the Hebrews, Greeks, Romans, and Scandinavians. Some have thought that the first human pair were tempted by its fruit. Goddesses are fabled to have contended for it, dragons were set to watch it, and heroes were employed to pluck it.”

—“Wild Apples”, *The Atlantic Monthly*, Vol X., No. LXI. (November, 1862)

Background

Henry David Thoreau provided a lot of information in his writing and yet he was able to keep our interest. In “Wild Apples”, quoted above, he provides some historical information about the apple tree, but writes it to keep our interest through word choice and connecting it to the history of humans. This lesson is intended to have the students provide information on a topic and to keep it interesting rather than just listing out facts.

Objectives

1. Research a topic.
2. Write an informational/explanatory piece.

Method

Each student will research a topic of his or her choice and write an informational/explanatory piece that is also interesting to read.

Time Required

3-5 hours over multiple days

Materials

- Internet
- Paper or computer

Procedure

1. Introduce the concept of informational/explanatory writing, explaining that you can still tell a story while also conveying information. Introduce the 5Ws and 1H—Who, What, Why, When, Where and How. The quote at the beginning of the lesson is a good example of telling the story of the history of the apple tree but keeping our interest through word choice and the facts he shares. Additionally, you can use the quote to explore the 5Ws and 1H and another example of using the 5Ws and 1H is included in the “Additional Resources”.
2. Tell the students they will be researching and writing a magazine or newspaper article about a topic of their choice (you may want to give a topic area at least, e.g. nature, sports, a country, etc.) that conveys information about that topic to their classmates. Have each student pick a topic and research the 5Ws and 1H.
3. Once they have identified the 5 W’s and 1H, they will write a magazine or newspaper article that includes all 6 components. Remind them that they will need to elaborate or tell a story using the 5Ws and 1H as the foundation of the story.
4. Upon completion of the article, have the students exchange their stories. Each student will read and then identify the 5Ws and 1H of the exchanged article.

Reflect and Explain

- Did you find that identifying the 5Ws and 1H of your topic made it harder or easier to write the story?
- Were you able to make the story interesting, like Henry did with the history of the wild apple trees, by telling a story rather than just stating facts? Was this easy or hard? Explain that sometimes everyone gets stuck when writing and it may be hard to write an interesting story, but often if we give it time, we will find a way to write it in an interesting way.

Extensions

1. If a single topic area was selected, take time for the students to revise the articles into a final draft. Then compile them into a magazine and self-publish the magazine.
2. Have them develop a news segment or informational brochure on their topic.

Additional Resources

<https://www.walden.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Wild.pdf> - the full article is found here

<http://blog.journalistics.com/2010/five-ws-one-h/> - an example of the 5Ws and 1H using the story of the 3 little pigs

Common Core Standards

English Language Anchor Standards (all grades)

- [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.2](#)
Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.
- [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.4](#)
Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
- [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.5](#)
Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach.
- [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.6](#)
Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and to interact and collaborate with others.
- [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.7](#)
Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.
- [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.8](#)
Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, assess the credibility and accuracy of each source, and integrate the information while avoiding plagiarism.
- [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.9](#)
Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.
- [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.10](#)
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 audiences.
- [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.L.1](#)
Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.
- [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.L.2](#)
Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.
- [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.L.3](#)
Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.
- [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.L.4](#)
Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases by using context clues, analyzing meaningful word parts, and consulting general and specialized reference materials, as appropriate.

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.L.5
Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.L.6
Acquire and use accurately a range of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when encountering an unknown term important to comprehension or expression.