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American Literature
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Finding Your Walden

Lessons are designed for 11th grade American Literature students, although they could be used for any high school grade. Length of lessons vary, but the time allotted is indicated at the top of each lesson. For the purpose of this project, class size will be twenty students.

The purpose of this unit is to build connections between literature, specifically the texts of Transcendental writers, and students. The stronger the connections between a piece of literature and the student, the stronger the ownership will be with the overarching messages and central ideas adopted by the writers. Students need to not just read a text and answer questions about that text, but delve into how the ideals purported by the time period and authors matter in their own lives, families, schools, and communities. Relevancy is the key to building bridges between the voices of the past and the lives of those living in the present.

This unit will follow directly after a two-week introduction to Transcendentalism in which students will learn about the major tenets and founders of the movement. Students will have already read excerpts from *Walden*, “Nature,” “Self-Reliance,” and “Civil Disobedience.” The unit will consist of five two-part lessons designed to take place over the course of two to three weeks. The following Montana Common Core ELA Standards will be covered over the course of the unit:

Montana Common Core ELA Standards

Reading:

RL.11-12.1 Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.

RL.11-12.2 Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text, including those by and about American Indians, and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account; provide an objective summary of the text.

RL.11-12.9 Demonstrate knowledge of eighteenth-, nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century foundational works of American literature, including American Indian works, including how two or more texts from the same period treat similar themes or topics.

Writing:

W.11-12.2.b Develop the topic thoroughly by selecting the most significant and relevant facts, extended definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples appropriate to the audience's knowledge of the topic

W.11-12.3.d Use precise words and phrases, telling details, and sensory language to convey a vivid picture of the experiences, events, setting, and/or characters.

W.11-12.9 Draw evidence from literary or informational texts, including those by and about American Indians, to support analysis, reflection, and research.

W.11-12.9.a Apply grades 11–12 Reading standards to literature (e.g., “Demonstrate knowledge of eighteenth-, nineteenth- and early twentieth-century foundational works of American literature, including how two or more texts from the same period treat similar themes or topics”).

W.11-12.10 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.

Speaking and Listening:

SL.11-12.1 Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 11–12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively. SL.11-12.1.a Come to discussions prepared, having read and researched material under study; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence from texts and other research on the topic or issue to stimulate a thoughtful, well-reasoned exchange of ideas

SL.11-12.1.d Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives, with specific attention to culture; synthesize comments, claims, and evidence made on all sides of an issue; resolve contradictions when possible; and determine what additional information or research is required to deepen the investigation or complete the task.

SL.11-12.4 Present information, findings, and supporting evidence, conveying a clear and distinct perspective, such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning, alternative or opposing perspectives are addressed, and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and a range of formal and informal tasks.

SL.11-12.5 Make strategic use of digital media (e.g., textual, graphical, audio, visual, and interactive elements) in presentations to enhance understanding of findings, reasoning, and evidence and to add interest.

Lesson One: “Where is Your Walden?”: Connecting to Your Experiences

Objectives: At the end of this lesson students will be able to demonstrate their ability to connect their experiences with those of Thoreau by completing a series of contemplative sentence starters.

Time: Two Sixty Minute Class Periods

Materials:

- A copy of *Walden* excerpts selected by the teacher. (I like to use a resource I bought on Teachers Pay Teachers created by Making Meaning with Melissa. Here is the link: <https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Product/Walden-Close-Read-Thoreau-Transcendentalism-High-School-1659156>. Due to copyright laws, I am unable to include this as a resource; however, any selections from *Walden* would work. The key is to choose a small representative number of excerpts that you feel students will connect with.)
- A copy of the sentence starters for each student OR project the sentence starters for the entire class from *Walden*.
- Sentence Starter Rubric

Activity: Connecting with Walden Day One

Choose a variety of excerpts from *Walden*. Have students number paragraphs in each excerpt.

After numbering, read the first paragraph together. Ask students to and pick one of the following prompts to use to respond to each passage.

- This makes me think...
- I can picture...
- This is like...
- This reminds me...
- The question I have...

Allow students to share their responses as desired. I generally ask for three people to share before we continue to the next numbered section. Continue reading and pausing, allowing students time to respond to each numbered paragraph, as well as time to share those responses with the class. Use the Sentence Starter Rubric to grade.

Day Two:

Ask students to choose one of the excerpts from *Walden* that they felt the biggest connection with. Ask them to sketch scenery or objects that illustrate that connection. Tell students they will be making a mosaic representing that connection. Then, they must write a paragraph that explains their creation and how it connects to *Walden*. I generally grade students primarily upon showing effort, using their time wisely, and portraying a connection to the literature selection through their artistic rendition and written paragraph. A simple rubric is attached below.

Materials:

- Construction paper scraps torn into small pieces no larger than a 1” X 1” square
- Long white construction paper
- Plastic gallon storage bags
- Glue
- Idea for this portion of the lesson came from material purchased from Teachers Pay Teachers by Selena Smith. A link to this resource can be found here:

Teachers by Selena Smith. A link to this resource can be found here:

<https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Product/Thanatopsis-A-Psalm-of-Life-2115055>

Due to copyright laws, I am unable to include this as a resource.

- Craftivity and Paragraph Rubric

Craftivity and Paragraph Rubric

	3	2	1	0
Use of Class	Class time was	The majority of	Some class time	Class time was

Time	used wisely and is evident in the final product.	class time was wisely used and is evident in the final product.	was wisely used which is evident in the final product.	not wisely used and final product is not completed.
Effort	Student's final product showcases their effort by being neat, colorful, and error-free.	Student's final product shows some effort in neatness, color, and has only a few mistakes.	Student's final product shows minimal effort and is lacking in neatness, use of color, or obvious mistakes.	Student's final product is not completed.
Connection to Text	Student demonstrates thoughtful consideration of chosen image and quote. Student's connection to text is evident in written explanation which cites several examples.	Student demonstrates consideration of chosen image and/or quote. Student attempted to connect to the text and used one or two examples.	Student did not carefully consider either quote or image. Student made some attempt to connect to the text, but did not use any examples.	Student's image AND quote were not carefully considered. No attempt to connect to the text was made.
Paragraph	Zero mistakes in grammar, usage, and/or mechanics were made.	1-2 mistakes in grammar, usage, and/or mechanics were made.	Several mistakes in grammar, usage, and/or mechanics were made.	Major mistakes in grammar, usage, and/or mechanics were made.

*I weight this assignment by multiplying the total number of points by 3.

Lesson Two: "Where is Your Walden?": Connecting to Your School

Objectives: At the end of this lesson, students will be able to demonstrate the ability to connect their school rules/expectations/classes with the writings of Thoreau by responding to a variety of Thoreau's quotes.

Materials:

- Typed quotes hung in various locations throughout the school
- Pad of sticky notes for each student (I like to use different colors for each group. This makes it easy to narrow down which groups have responded at a glance.)
- Pen/Pencil
- Thoreau, H. D. (2011). *The Quotable Thoreau* (J. S. Cramer, Ed.). Princeton University Press.

Time: Two Sixty Minute Class Periods

Activity: Quote Walk

Day One: Prior to class, the teacher will hang quote posters in various locations throughout the school. (I have selected several quotes from *The Quotable Thoreau* which are typed below.) The teacher will also create a checklist of locations where students can find/respond to quotes.

Students will be divided into four groups of five and each group will be given a separate color of sticky note pads. Students will be asked to take their sticky notes, writing utensil, and checklist and move throughout the school responding to the quotes. A minimum of three of their responses must connect with that specific place in the school in some regard. They may choose to reflect upon a memory in a similar type of room/space, a person from the school (past or present) that embodies the quote, or a lesson learned in a similar room/space. The remainder of their responses must demonstrate either a text to self, text to text, or a text to world connection.

Day Two: Teacher will gather quote posters and sticky note responses and distribute two posters to each of the five groups. Each group must discuss all sticky note responses and group

responses according to a similar theme or answer. Groups will be asked to share their takeaway of the quote based upon their analysis. Each member of the group must participate both in the discussion and in the sharing. (I have each group member assign a grade to every other group member based solely upon participation. I have attached a rubric below. I based my rubric on a free rubric created on TPT by Erin Huddleston. This is the link to the rubric:

<https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Product/Science-Fair-Group-Participation-Rubric-326807>

7) After sharing, play a brief game of four corners. Assign a designation of strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree to each of the four corners in the room. Ask students the following question: “Do you feel Thoreau’s ideas/messages are still valid in today’s world?” Students then stand in the corner that best correlates with their answer to the question. Have students justify their choices orally as time permits.

Quotes

Principal's Office: "It will be perceived that there are two kinds of change—that of the race and that of the individual within the limits of the former" (p. 33).

Lunch room: "Manners are conscious. Character is unconscious" (p. 35)

Locker room: "No man ever stood the lower in my estimation for having a patch in his clothes." (p. 66)

Gym: "Talent indicates a depth of character in some direction." (p. 35)

Door to teacher's lounge: "I know some who in their charity give their coffee grounds to the poor." (p. 41)

Shop: "I served my apprenticeship and have since done considerable journeywork in the huckleberry field. Though I never paid for my schooling and clothing in that way, it was some of the best schooling that I got and paid for itself." (p. 71)

Math Room: "The youth gets together his materials to build a bridge to the moon or perchance a palace or temple on the earth and at length the middle-aged man concludes to build a wood shed with them." (p. 46)

History Room: "Let every man make known what kind of government would command his respect, and that will be one step toward obtaining it." (p.123)

Nurse's Office: "In society you will not find health, but in nature." (p. 127)

English Room: "The pen which wrote it is soon destroyed, but the poem survives." (p. 204)

Science Room: "Some of our richest days are those in which no sun shines outwardly, but so much the more a sun shines inwardly." (p. 234)

Quote Walk/Reflection and Sentence Starter Rubric

Quote Explanations	4	3	2	1
	All quotes are thoroughly explained in a way that demonstrates understanding/c onnection through the use of examples.	The majority of the quotes are explained in a way that demonstrates understanding/c onnection through the use of examples.	More than half of the quotes are explained in a way that demonstrates understanding/c onnection through the use of examples. Some explanations are a bit unclear.	There are very few examples given and/or they do not relate to the quote.

Quote Group Work

Write the names of everyone in your group, including yourself. Circle one score for each category with 4 being the highest and 1 being the lowest. Add the total points for each group member and record their score in the box to the right.

Student Name	Contribution: Provided useful ideas and helpful information	Working with others: Listened, shared, and worked well with peers.	Focus: Stayed focused on the task.	Total Points:
	4 3 2 1	4 3 2 1	4 3 2 1	
	4 3 2 1	4 3 2 1	4 3 2 1	
	4 3 2 1	4 3 2 1	4 3 2 1	
	4 3 2 1	4 3 2 1	4 3 2 1	

Lesson Three: “Where is Your Walden?”: Connecting to Your Town

Objectives: At the end of this lesson, students will be able to demonstrate connections between the writings of Thoreau and their town through the completion of several journal responses.

Time: Two Sixty Minute Class Periods

Materials:

- Journals
- Pen/Pencil
- Quote Walk/Reflection Rubric
- Group Work Rubric

Activity Day One: Quote Reflection

Take students on a walk around the town of Harlem, stopping at the following locations to read a quote from Thoreau and write a journal response.

1. The railroad tracks

Read: “A man must generally get away some hundreds or thousands of miles from home before he can be said to begin his travels. Why not begin his travels at home! Would he have to go far or look very closely to discover novelties?” (p.334)

Respond: What do you know about the groups of people that founded our town? Where did they come from? What nationalities/cultures came here? What occupations might have brought travelers here?

2. Main Street

Read: “If a man has spent all his days about some business, by which he has merely got to be rich, as it is called, i.e., has got some money, many houses and barns and woodlots, then his life has been a failure, I think; but if he has been trying to better his condition in a higher sense than this, has been trying to invent something, to be somebody, —i.e., to

invent and get a patent for himself, —so that all may see his originality, though he should never get above board, —and great inventors, you know, commonly die poor, —I shall think him comparatively successful.” (p. 306)

Respond: How has our Main Street changed over the course of your life? Your parents’ lives? Your grandparents’ lives? What businesses are here that weren’t here before? What businesses are now gone? Do you know any businesspeople in Harlem? Would you consider them successful or not successful? How do they compare with Thoreau’s definition of success?

3. The football field

Read: “It is well to find your employment and amusement in simple and homely things. These wear best and yield most.” (p. 291).

Respond: Sports represent the number one choice of activity for amusement for most people in our town. Do high school sports align with Thoreau’s definition of amusement? Do you feel that participation or observation of high school sports is something that “wears best and yields most?” Give specific examples of why or why not.

4. The city park and swimming pool

Read: “The child plays continually, if you will let it, and all its life is a sort of practical humor of a very pure kind, often of so fine and ethereal a nature, that its parents, its uncles and cousins, can in nowise participate in it, but must stand aloof in silent admiration, and reverence even. The more quiet the more profound it is.” (p. 45)

Respond: Think back on your time spent here at the park and swimming pool. What games/activities did you play? Would you play any of those same games/activities today? Why or why not? What has changed? Do you think you would play any of those games/activities 20 years from now? Again, why or why not?

Day Two:

Use the clock partners strategy to pair students. I have included a link to this strategy below:

<http://sunnydaysinsecondgrade.blogspot.com/2013/01/clock-partners-pairing-students-to-work.html>

Have students share their journal responses with their clock partners. Rotate as needed throughout the class period. Allow enough time for students to evaluate their clock partners using the Group Work Rubric.

Day Four: “Where is Your Walden?”: Connecting to Your Past

Objective: Students will be able to demonstrate their connections between Thoreau and living a full life by exploring the town cemetery, recording the stories of the past, and connecting them with the future through the creation of a photo collage and writing activity.

Materials:

- Phone
- “A Sweet Life” pdf (I have attached a copy of this form below.)
- Craftivity Rubric (I use the same rubric that I use for the mosaic activity to evaluate student work.)

Time: Two Sixty Minute Class Periods

Activity: Cemetery Scavenger Hunt

Day One:

Students will walk to the cemetery. Ask students to reflect on the quote from *Walden* that states, “It is life near the bone where it is sweetest” (182). After a brief discussion, ask students to take pictures of graves they feel most accurately portray a sweetly lived life. Give students “A Sweet Life” handout to guide them in their efforts.

Day Two: Photo Collage

Tell students they will be creating a collage using a minimum of ten of their photos from the cemetery combined with a minimum of five words or phrases from any of Thoreau’s works we have studied thus far, that illustrates the meaning of Thoreau’s quote: “It is life near the bone where it is sweetest” (182). In addition to the collage, students must include a 1-2 paragraph explanation that summarizes their choice of photographs, words, and quotes in relation to Thoreau’s message of living the sweet life.

A Sweet Life Scavenger Hunt and Collage

Pause and reflect on the quote from *Walden* that states, “It is life near the bone where it is sweetest.” What makes life “sweet”? Religion? Military service? Friends and family? Hobbies and activities? Work? While each person’s definition of a “sweet life” will differ, it is your job to decide upon the criteria that sweeten life. Use your phone to capture a minimum of ten images that depict your definition of a sweet life. You may use the questions below to guide your photographic journey. Tomorrow, you will be using these images along with quotes from Thoreau to create a collage depicting your ideal recipe for the sweet life. Your collage must contain the following:

- A minimum of ten images from the graveyard scavenger hunt
- A minimum of five words/quotes/phrases from any of Thoreau’s writings covered in class that connect in some way to your recipe for a “sweet life”
- A 1-2 paragraph explanation of your recipe for the “sweet life” that explains your image choices and passage/word selection.

In addition, your collage must be:

- Neat
- Colorful
- Error-free (No mistakes in grammar, usage, or mechanics.)
- Creative



Religion: Look for gravestones that show different religious backgrounds. How many religions can you find?

Wars: Look for veterans. Are the veterans male or female? Ages? What wars did they participate in? Were there deaths during or after the war?

Diseases: Did any of the deceased die from a particular disease? Which diseases did you notice? Did you find any people that died from the same diseases during the same time period?

Occupations: Do any of the gravestones reflect/depict the occupation of the deceased?

Status: Do any of the gravestones reflect the socio-economic status of the deceased in terms of size or ornateness? Are these gravestones separated in any way from those of lower or higher socio-economic status?

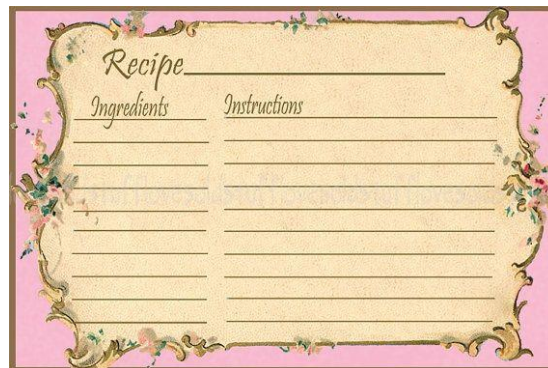
Family: Are there any plots organized by family? How can you tell? How many family members are buried in the same plot? Are there any extended family members?

Friends: Do any of the gravestones mention friendship?

Activities: Do any of the gravestones depict hobbies or activities?

Ethnicity/Culture: Do any of the gravestones reflect the ethnicity/culture of the deceased? How?

Age: What is the age of the oldest grave? The youngest?



Day Five: “Where is Your Walden?”: Connecting to Your Future

Objectives: Students will be able to demonstrate their connections with Thoreau and the Transcendental movement by creating a Bucket List using Google Slides.

Materials:

- Computer
- Prior readings/excerpts from class
- The Bucket List Handout (Idea for this assignment is LOOSELY based upon an assignment purchased on TPT and created by Secondary Sara. A link to the original handout can be found here: <https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Product/The-Bucket-List-Short-Research-Project-with-Real-World-Goal-Setting-1203965>)

Time: Four+ Sixty Minute Class Periods

Activity: The Bucket List

Show the trailer for the movie, *The Bucket List*. A link to the trailer can be found here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vc3mkG21ob4>

Review with students exactly what a bucket list is and why many people write one. Tell students they will demonstrate their connections to Thoreau's works and the Transcendentalist ideals by creating a "Bucket List" that will showcase their own understanding of how to live deeply. Their bucket list must comprise a minimum of ten activities, and will be designed using Google Slides. See handout below for description of full activity. Students will use days one and two to research and complete their presentation and use days three and four (or more depending on the number of students) to present their findings.

The Bucket List

You will demonstrate your understanding of Thoreau’s works and the Transcendentalist ideals by creating a “Bucket List” that will showcase your bucket list for “living deeply.” Your bucket list must comprise a minimum of ten activities, and will be designed using Google Slides.

Each slide must include the following:

- Title of Activity
- Quote from Thoreau that connects to the activity. (You may use any and all handouts/materials from class, as well as use your own research to find appropriate quotes.)
- Brief description of the activity and how it is an example of living deeply
- A corresponding image
- A cohesive color scheme and cohesive font in appropriate/readable size

In addition, each slide must be grammatically correct and error-free. This means you must check for errors in spelling, punctuation, grammar, and/or mechanics prior to submitting. Moreover, you must include a properly formatted MLA Works Cited slide in your presentation.



“Live life deeply!”

Presentation Rubric: The Bucket List

	4	3	2	1
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<p>Bucket List</p>	<p>Bucket List exceeds minimums in quantity, in the description, or in the narrative explanation/connection of items chosen.</p>	<p>List of 8-10 “Bucket items” is made thoughtfully; and the majority of items contain elements of a thoughtful description/connection to items chosen.</p>	<p>List of 5-7 “Bucket items” is made and more than half of the items contain elements of thought in description or connection to items chosen.</p>	<p>List contains less than 5 “Bucket items” and less than half of the items contain elements of thought in description or connection to items chosen.</p>
<p>Slides</p>	<p>All slides enhance the presentation experience for viewers without being distracting and contain all necessary elements.</p>	<p>Majority of slides enhance the presentation experience for viewers without being distracting and contain all necessary elements.</p>	<p>Less than half of the slides enhance the presentation. Several major elements are missing.</p>	<p>More than half of the slides do not enhance the presentation and many major elements are missing.</p>
<p>Presentation & Speaking Skills</p>	<p>Student uses appropriate poise, voice, life, gestures, or speed to deliver a skilled and professional speech.</p>	<p>Student is missing one to two elements in regards to poise, voice, life, eye contact, gestures, or speed necessary to deliver a skilled and</p>	<p>Student is missing three to four practiced elements in regards to poise, voice, life, eye contact, gestures, or</p>	<p>Student is missing five or more elements in regards to poise, voice, life, eye contact, gestures, or speed necessary to</p>

		professional speech.	speed necessary to deliver a skilled and professional speech.	deliver a skilled and professional speech.
Credible Sources & Plagiarism	Student uses credible sources, proper MLA citation styles, and/or incorporation of facts into the presentation and/or Bucket List.	Student uses at least one credible source; most of the sources are referenced in proper MLA format.	Student uses one credible source, but fails to reference or properly format several sources.	Student uses one credible source, but fails to reference or properly format any sources.

*I generally weight this assignment by multiplying the total number of points by 4.

Works Cited

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Unit Assignment Grade Totals

Activity	Points
Sentence Starters	/12 points
Mosaic	/36 points
Quote Walk	/12 points
Quote Group Work	/12 points
Quote Reflection	/12 points

Clock Partners	/12 points
A Sweet Life Photo Collage	/36 points
The Bucket List	/64 points
Total Points	/196 points