

Ainsley McClachrie
"In Search of Walden"
Glenwood Springs High School
Glenwood Springs, CO
Grade 11/American Lit
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UNIT OVERVIEW |

The purpose of this one-week mini-unit is to introduce students to the major works and ideas of Henry David Thoreau and the transcendentalist movement. Students will read excerpts of Thoreau's *Walden* and will make meaning through engaging activities and collaborative classroom discussion. In order to contextualize Thoreau's teachings, students will find their own 'Walden Pond'--a natural place in which they can create and contemplate. At the conclusion of this lesson, students will be able to identify who Thoreau was, what his main ideas in *Walden* were, and what transcendentalists believed, and will be able to connect these ideas to their everyday life.

UNIT CALENDAR |

	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
Week 1	Who was Thoreau?	"Where I Lived, and What I Lived For"	"Economy"	"The Beanfield"	String Journal Day

[Colorado state teaching standards](#)

Lesson #1: Who Was Thoreau?

OBJECTIVES |

At the end of this lesson, students will be able to...

- Identify the major life events and influences of Henry David Thoreau
- Understand the impact of author biography on their writing

STANDARDS |

10.1: Synthesize multiple, authoritative literary and/or informational sources to answer questions or solve problems, producing well-organized and developed research projects that defend information, conclusions, and solutions.

RESOURCES |

Copies of [Thoreau Scavenger Hunt](#) (1 per student)

Copies of [Are You A Transcendentalist? quiz](#) (1 per student)

Student notebooks

Whiteboard

Projector

[Henry David Thoreau lecture notes](#)

PROCEDURE |

NOTE: The beginning of this lesson (opening activity & first learning activity) can take place outside; however, students will need their laptops and an internet connection.

Opening Activity: (Before) Bellringer (15 minutes)

Students will complete the "Are You A Transcendentalist?" pre-reading quiz by reading a list of ten statements and indicating whether they agree or disagree with each one; afterward, we will review the statements as a class and students can share and elaborate on their answer.

Learning Activity: Henry David Thoreau internet scavenger hunt (15 min.)

Using credible internet sources, students will try to fill out the Thoreau Scavenger Hunt worksheets with information about Thoreau's life and works. Students can work individually or in small groups.

Learning Activity: Henry David Thoreau lecture (30 min.)

The Henry David Thoreau Google Slides presentation will be projected on the whiteboard; students will be instructed to take notes. The presentation goes through the life and works of Henry David Thoreau.

Lesson #2: "Where I Lived, and What I Lived For"

OBJECTIVES |

At the end of this lesson, students will be able to...

- Understand the philosophical purpose of Thoreau's 'experiment' at Walden Pond

STANDARDS |

4.2.a: 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. (CCSS: RI.11-12.1)

3.1.b: Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (for example: where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed). (CCSS: RL.11-12.3)

RESOURCES |

Copies of ["Where I Lived, and What I Lived For"](#) (1 per student)

Copies of [RLAW sheets](#) (1 per student)

Student notebooks

PROCEDURE |

NOTE: This lesson would work best outside.

Opening Activity: (Before) Bellringer (10 minutes)

In their notebook, students will spend five minutes answering the question: if you could live anywhere in the world, where would you live? Why?

Students can share their answers with the class if they'd like.

Learning Activity: "Where I Lived, and What I Lived For" read-aloud (25 min.)

The instructor will read an excerpt from the chapter "Where I Lived, and What I Lived For" from Henry David Thoreau's *Walden*. Students will be required to follow along in the reading with their eyes; they'll be encouraged to highlight quotations or passages that stand out to them.

Learning Activity: RLAW Annotations (30 min.)

Students will choose a passage from the chapter that resonated with them and create a reader and writer annotation for the passage on their RLAW worksheets (20 minutes). Students will spend the last ten minutes of class sharing their annotations with a partner (10 minutes).

ASSESSMENT |

Informal: students will demonstrate their understanding on their RLAW sheets.

Lesson #3: "Economy"

OBJECTIVES |

At the end of this lesson, students will be able to...

- Understand the socio-economic purpose of Thoreau's 'experiment' at Walden Pond

STANDARDS |

4.2.a: 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. (CCSS: RI.11-12.1)

RESOURCES |

Copies of [Economy Pre-reading](#) (1 per student)

Copies of [Economy](#) (1 per student)

Student notebooks

PROCEDURE |

NOTE: This lesson would work best outside.

Opening Activity: (Before) Bellringer (20 minutes)

Students will complete the Economy Pre-reading by 'packing up' their own cabin. Students will be presented with a 150-square grid which represents the 150 square feet of Thoreau's cabin on Walden Pond. Students will choose what items they want to bring with them. After completing their grid, students can share what they decided to pack with the class.

Learning Activity: "Economy" read-aloud (35 min.)

Students will independently read an excerpt from the chapter "Economy" of Thoreau's *Walden*. As they read, students will complete the questions in the right hand margin of their paper.

Afterward, the instructor will re-read "Economy" aloud to the students; then, as a class, we'll review the answers.

ASSESSMENT |

Informal: students will demonstrate their understanding on their "Economy" worksheets.

Lesson #4: "The Beanfield"

OBJECTIVES |

At the end of this lesson, students will be able to...

- Connect Thoreau's teachings to their own lives
- Artistically depict their goals and dreams

STANDARDS |

4.2.a: 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. (CCSS: RI.11-12.1)

3.1.b: Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (for example: where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed). (CCSS: RL.11-12.3)

RESOURCES |

Copies of [The Beanfield](#) (1 per student)

Paper cups (1 per student)

Soil

Seedlings (1 per student)

PROCEDURE |

Opening Activity: (Before) Bellringer (10 minutes)

Instructor will introduce the activity by distributing The Beanfield handouts and reading the top portion of the worksheet aloud to the class.

Learning Activity: Cup decoration & planting (50 minutes)

Students will identify a goal they hope to grow from a seedling to a flower. They'll artistically depict that goal on their cup—students who are overwhelmed with the artistic element of the project can simply write words or phrases that convey their goal. Then, students will fill their cups with soil and 'plant' their goal. Completed projects should be put in a sunny spot in the classroom and regularly watered during class time.

Lesson #5: String Journals Day

OBJECTIVES |

At the end of this lesson, students will be able to...

- Write fluently and independently
- Reflect quietly in nature
- Connect Thoreau's teachings to their own life

STANDARDS |

9.4.a: Demonstrate command of the conventions of Standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking. (CCSS: L.11-12.1)

9.4.d: Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. (Grade-specific expectations for writing types are defined in expectations 1-2 above.) (CCSS: W.11-12.4)

RESOURCES |

Student notebooks

Timer

Student devices (collected by instructor, if school rules allow, at the beginning of the activity and later distributed for the last activity)

String (1 string per student)

PROCEDURE |

Opening Activity: (Before) Bellringer (10 minutes)

While still in the classroom, the instructor will give each student a string and introduce the activity.

Students will be instructed that, when the class goes outside, they will find a spot outside that appeals to them. They'll tie their string around a natural feature in/near that spot (a tree, a rock, etc.) and will sit there and write quietly in their notebooks for twenty minutes. It should be clear that these reflections will be read by the instructor and should focus on how the student feels in the outdoors. The written reflection needs to be *about how students feel in their outdoor spot*.

Learning Activity: String Journals (25 minutes)

The instructor will then bring the class outside. Students will find their spot and begin writing. At the end of twenty minutes, the instructor will use a timer to indicate that time is up. Students will be prompted to share their experience.

Learning Activity: Amateur Naturalists (20 minutes)

The instructor will tell students that, like Thoreau, they will also be amateur naturalists. Using the app Seek, students will identify three plants or animals in/near their string journal spot. Students will record their findings at the bottom of their string journal entry.

ASSESSMENT |

A (100-90)	B (89-80)	C (79-70)	D (69-65)	F (65 & below)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Length of student response shows that student worked diligently for twenty minutes.The student's entry is focused on their experience at their string	Student response is missing one element	Student response is missing two elements	Student response is missing three elements	Student response is missing all elements

journal spot: what they hear, see, feel, taste, touch, and experience. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Response demonstrates a depth of inquiry and thought.<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Student identified three plants/animals in their spot.	from 'A' column.	from 'A' column.	from 'A' column.	from 'A' column.
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BIBLIOGRAPHY |

Thoreau, Henry David, and Jeffrey S Cramer. Walden: A Fully Annotated Edition. Yale University Press, 2006.