A Sense of Place: A Sense of Myself
Grade 11 AP English Lang. and Comp.
planned for October 2024

Unit Overview: This three-week unit will introduce AP Lang. students to the tenets of Transcendentalism, the writing of Henry David Thoreau as well as more contemporary nature writers in order to inspire them to slow down, observe nature carefully and live more deliberately. The content of this unit asks students to grapple with Thoreau’s concepts and language, but also to recognize how these concepts are still relevant nearly 100 years later.

Readings will include Calvin and Hobbes comic strips, “Living Like Weasels” by Annie Dillard, excerpts from Walden, “After Apple-Picking” by Robert Frost, the documentary film No Impact Man starring Colin Beavans, and “Waste” by Wendell Berry.

The culminating assessment of the unit will be an AP-style synthesis essay that requires students to develop a position on an excerpt from Wendell Berry’s text, “A Native Hill.”

Objectives: Students will be able to
➔ identify and describe the tenets of Transcendentalism
➔ evaluate arguments presented in various texts
➔ compare and contrast themes and styles of Thoreau’s writings with those of contemporary nature writers
➔ make personal connections with literary texts and their own lives
➔ describe personal connections with nature
➔ identify strategies for living deliberately
➔ evaluate impacts of the modern consumer lifestyle on the environment and determine methods to lessen that impact
➔ develop a personal sense of place and a stronger sense of self
➔ develop notes outlining relationships between texts in order to synthesize at least three texts related to Transcendentalism and sense of place in a formal essay
➔ develop open-ended questions to better understand Thoreau and his life
**Time Commitment:** about 15 55-minute class periods.

Unit Outline:

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| Introduction To HD Thoreau and Transcendentalism | 2    | ➔ Anticipation Guide: A Transcendentalist Survey  
 |                                               |      | ➔ Class Discussion  
 |                                               |      | ➔ Intro. To Thoreau and Transcendentalism Notes  
 |                                               |      | ➔ Transcendentalism through *Calvin and Hobbes*  
 |                                               |      | ➔ Partner work and present to class  
 |                                               |      | ➔ HW: Sense of Place journal |
| Sense of Place and Annie Dillard             | 2    | ➔ Share your Sense of Place journal with a partner/small group  
 |                                               |      | ➔ Practice Active Listening  
 |                                               |      | ➔ Read and annotate Annie Dillard’s “Living Like Weasels”  
 |                                               |      | ➔ Class Discussion of “Living Like Weasels”  
 |                                               |      | ➔ HW: Read Thoreau’s “The Bean-Field” |
| The Importance of Work: Thoreau, Frost, Collins and You! | 2    | ➔ Thoreau’s “The Bean Field”  
 |                                               |      | ➔ Frost’s “After Apple-Picking”  
 |                                               |      | ➔ Collin’s “Shoveling Snow with Buddha”  
 |                                               |      | ➔ 3-Column Notes  
 |                                               |      | ➔ Discussion of Sense of Place, and the importance of work (obligation and inspiration) as revealed in all three texts.  
 |                                               |      | ➔ HW: What do you know beans about? Teach the Teacher journal and presentations. |
| “Economy” and “Waste”                        | 2    | ➔ Excerpt from Thoreau’s “Economy” (474-477 in *Language of Composition*)  
 |                                               |      | ➔ “Waste” by Wendell Berry (484-486 in *Language of Composition*)  
 |                                               |      | ➔ Class Discussion of Life’s Necessities. |
| *No Impact Man* and “Where I Lived and What I Lived For” | 3    | ➔ View *No Impact Man* and take notes on his purpose, philosophy, and choices. |
Lesson #1  Introduction To HD Thoreau and Transcendentalism (2 days)

Introduce students to the tenets of Transcendentalism and Henry David Thoreau.

1. Give students the Anticipation Guide to Transcendentalism. After about 10 minutes, allow students to discuss their opinions and rationale behind those opinions as a class. At the conclusion of the discussion, reveal that a Transcendentalist would find most, if not all, of these statements to be true. Students should be able to assess their “level of Transcendentalism” with this anticipation guide, but there are not “right or wrong” answers.

2. Next, present the Google presentation, An Introduction to Thoreau and Transcendentalism, which has been adapted from Julie Wright (a former LHS colleague).

3. In pairs, have students apply the tenets of Transcendentalism to Calvin and Hobbes comics. Assign each pair one comic strip to analyze and provide about 8 minutes for that analysis and discussion. Then, have each pair share their findings with the larger group.
   a. What are some common themes in these comics?
   b. Which character seems to be Thoreauvian?

4. HW: Sense of Place journal assignment

Lesson #2  Sense of Place and Annie Dillard (2 days)

Have students connect their Sense of Place experience to Annie Dillard’s experience, as described in “Living Like Weasels.”
1. Have students practice **active listening** as they share their Sense of Place journals in small groups.
   a. Respond to your classmate’s sharing in one of the following ways:
      i. phrase or image that caught your attention
      ii. a surprise
      iii. something that makes you want to respond
      iv. Free choice/reaction comment
2. Next, read and annotate Annie Dillard’s essay, *“Living Like Weasels.”*
3. HW: Respond to the discussion question that follows the essay.
4. Engage students in a class discussion of Dillard’s essay, focusing on her wild vs. civilized theme, use of imagery, and connections to Thoreau’s intentions for his Walden experiment. Have students share their thoughts and challenge them to find Dillard’s thesis. How can we learn to be more like a weasel? How would life be different if we did?
5. HW: Read and annotate Thoreau’s “The Bean-Field” (pp. 324-334 of *The Portable Thoreau*).

**Lesson #3  The Importance of Work: Thoreau, Frost, Collins and You! (2 days)**
Have students practice their synthesis skills by bringing 3 texts together to learn about the importance of work.
1. Have students work in small groups to discuss their notes and annotations for Thoreau’s “The Bean-Field.”
   a. What conclusions can you draw from the reading?
   b. Was it really all about beans?
   c. What does Thoreau seem to be arguing about work, specifically obligation to work and inspiration from work?
2. Compare another text that relates to the importance of work theme: *“After Apple-Picking”* by Robert Frost. Have students read and annotate Frost’s poem.
   a. How does it also connect to the obligation and inspiration of work concept?
   b. How does the farm work relate to Thoreau’s experiment?
   c. How are the texts similar and different?
3. Next, read *“Shoveling Snow With Buddha”* by Billy Collins to compare to Thoreau’s essay and Frost’s poem.
   a. What connections can you make to Transcendentalism?
4. As all three texts are discussed, students will take notes on the document, Three Column Notes for the Importance of Work, recording important details and quotations that reveal sense of place and the importance of work.
5. HW: To better connect students’ sense of self to Thoreau’s “The Bean-Field,” assign the Teach the Teacher Journal and Presentation assignment. Two
students will present each day, starting in 2 days, until all students have presented.

a. What do you know beans about?

Lesson #4  “Economy” and “Waste” (2 days)
Have students consider how to decide what we really need to live a decent and productive life -- a life that matters.

1. Give students time to read and annotate two excerpted texts found in *The Language of Composition* textbook: “Economy” by HD Thoreau (pp. 474-477) and “Waste” By Wendell Berry (pp. 484-486).

2. Lead a class discussion about Life’s Necessities with these questions:
   a. Being extremely economical in his assessment even for his own time, Thoreau denotes what he calls “grand necessity” and what he considers near necessities (para. 3). And he writes, “Most of the luxuries, and many of the so called comforts of life, are not only indispensable, but positive hindrances to the elevation of mankind” (para. 4). Do you agree with this statement? What would you add to his list today? Which things that Thoreau considers luxuries do we now deem as necessities?
   b. Berry writes, “There is no sense and no sanity in objecting to the desecration of the flag while tolerating and justifying and encouraging as a daily business the desecration of the country for which it stands (para. 4).” What allusion does this statement make? What is the major assumption that underlies its claim? Do you agree with Berry’s position? Why or why not?

3. Record student ideas on the board and encourage all ideas that relate to the concept of life necessities. Students do not have to agree with both or either authors, but they should work on determining their own thoughts on the topic.

Lesson #5  *No Impact Man* and “Where I Lived and What I Lived For” (3 days)
Consider two nonconformist experiments in the documentary *No Impact Man* and the essay, “Where I Lived and What I Lived For.”

1. In class, show the film. Have students watch and listen carefully in order to answer the questions in the *No Impact Man* Viewing Guide.

2. HW: Have students read excerpts from Thoreau’s essay, “Where I Lived, and What I Lived For” (pp. 296-301 in *The Language of Composition* Textbook) and annotate in order to understand Thoreau’s argument, taking notes on points of intersection between the documentary and the essay. In other words, if Thoreau and Beavan could sit down to share a meal together, what would they find they have in common?

3. Lead a class discussion -- If Thoreau and Beavan could get together to talk, what would they have in common? What might they learn from each other? Require
Lesson #6  Hexagonal Thinking and the Synthesis Essay (3 days)
Reviewing Synthesis Skills and Writing the Essay
1. Review “hexagonal thinking” graphic organizer with students. Hexagonal Thinking Graphic Organizer

2. Working in small groups until it is time to write the essay, have students read their assigned Synthesis prompt (there are 2 versions, each with a Wendell Berry quotation) and turn the prompt into a question that they can answer. Synthesis Essay A  Synthesis Essay B

3. Have students write that essay question in the center hexagon of their graphic organizer.

4. Next, using pencil, have students write the titles and authors of texts that are listed on the prompt in the outer 6 hexagons with the smaller rectangles defining the relationship between the texts. Some texts may relate because they have similar arguments, some may present a counterargument, some may develop the point of a neighboring text, etc. Students need to figure out how to arrange the texts on the graphic organizer.

5. Finally, students need to choose a quotation or a specific detail from the text that could potentially help them answer the essay question. These quotations need to be written into the larger rectangles that are on the outside of the hexagons.

6. Explain that this work is difficult, but it will make writing the essay easier. Explain that there are many correct ways to complete the graphic organizer. Finally, explain that they do not have to use all six sources in the essay. Three sources are required, four would be ideal. They can decide to leave 2 or 3 sources out of their essay.

7. Review the scoring criteria for this essay. Synthesis Essay Rubric

8. Use remaining class time to answer any questions and provide time to write.

9. HW: In journals, write at least 3 open-ended questions for HD Thoreau. (6 pts.) Explain that we will meet him at Walden Pond.

Lesson #7  Field Trip to Walden Pond (1 day)
Walk in his steps and listen to his wisdom. Meeting HD Thoreau at Walden Pond.
1. Meet Thoreau (Richard Smith) at the replica house. Have students ask their questions and write down any answers that Thoreau provides. Students should also ask any questions that naturally occur to them through the conversation.

2. Quietly hike to house site and view the cairn, view to the pond, etc. Talk about observations from the walk and the environmental changes that have occurred since Thoreau lived there in 1845-1847. Read selected quotations from Walden.
3. Continue around the pond perimeter to the beach. Enjoy a picnic on the beach. If time permits, visit the visitor center and gift shop.

4. HW: Journal about any aspect of our experience. Did anything surprise you? Did you enjoy the natural surroundings? Did you like meeting Thoreau? Any other topics are fine! (10 pts.)

MA Standards:
Grades 11–12 Reading Standards for Literature [RL]

Key Ideas and Details
1. Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what a text states explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.
2. Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text 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 a text.
3. Analyze the impact of the author’s choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story, poem, or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed).

Craft and Structure
4. Determine the figurative or connotative meaning(s) of words and phrases as they are used in a text; analyze the impact of specific words or rhetorical patterns (e.g., how the language evokes a sense of time and place, how shifts in rhetorical patterns signal new perspectives).
5. Analyze how an author’s choices concerning how to structure specific parts of a text (e.g., the choice of where to begin or end a story, the choice to provide a comedic or tragic resolution, the choice to introduce a new tone or point of view) contribute to its overall structure and meaning as well as its aesthetic impact.

Grades 11–12 Reading Standards for Informational Text [RI]

Key Ideas and Details
1. Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what a text states explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.
2. Determine two or more central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to provide a complex analysis; provide an objective summary of a text.
3. Analyze a complex set of ideas or sequence of events and explain how specific individuals, ideas, or events interact and develop over the course of the text.

Craft and Structure
4. Determine the meaning(s) of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze how an author uses and refines or revises the meaning of a key term or terms over the course of a text.
5. Analyze and evaluate the effectiveness of the structure an author uses in an exposition or argument, including whether the structure makes points clear, coherent, convincing, and engaging.
6. Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text in which the rhetoric is particularly effective, analyzing how style and content contribute to the power, persuasiveness, or beauty of the text.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

9. Analyze pre-twentieth-century documents of historical and literary significance for their themes, purposes, and rhetorical features.

Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity

1. Write arguments (e.g., essays, letters to the editor, advocacy speeches) to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.
   a. Introduce precise, knowledgeable claim(s), establish the significance of the claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and create an organization that logically sequences claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.
   b. Develop claim(s) and counterclaims fairly and thoroughly, supplying the most relevant evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both in a manner that anticipates the audience’s knowledge level, concerns, values, and possible biases.
   c. Use words, phrases, and clauses as well as varied syntax to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships between claim(s) and reasons, between reasons and evidence, and between claim(s) and counterclaims.
   d. Establish and maintain a style appropriate to audience and purpose (e.g., formal for academic writing) while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing.
   e. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented.

2. Write informative/explanatory texts (e.g., essays, oral reports, biographical feature articles) to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.
   a. Introduce a topic; organize complex ideas, concepts, and information so that each new element builds on that which precedes it to create a unified whole; include text features (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., figures, tables), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.
   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.
   c. Use appropriate and varied transitions and syntax to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships among complex ideas and concepts.
   d. Use precise language, domain-specific vocabulary, and techniques such as metaphor, simile, and analogy to manage the complexity of the topic.
e. Establish and maintain a style appropriate to audience and purpose (e.g., formal for academic writing) while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing.
f. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented (e.g., articulating implications or the significance of the topic).

3. Write narratives to develop experiences or events using effective literary techniques, well-chosen details, and well-structured sequences.

Production and Distribution of Writing
4. Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

Grades 11–12 Speaking and Listening Standards [SL]

Comprehension and Collaboration
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.
   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.
   b. Work with peers to promote civil, democratic discussions and decision-making, set clear goals and deadlines, and establish individual roles as needed.
   c. Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that probe reasoning and evidence; ensure a hearing for a full range of positions on a topic or issue; clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions; and promote divergent and creative perspectives.
   d. Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives; 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.

Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas
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, vocabulary, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and a range of formal and informal tasks.
5. Make strategic use of digital media (e.g., audio, visual, interactive elements) in presentations to enhance understanding of findings, reasoning, and evidence and to add interest.
Bibliography


Collins, Billy. “Shoveling Snow with Buddha.” All Poetry.


