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## **Living and Writing Deliberately Curriculum Unit- Grade 6**

I have created this unit as a mini expedition that fits within the framework of our opening integrated unit of study for 6th grade. The four threads focused on are the following:

1. Being Awake, Aware, and Alive
2. Hearing that Different Drummer
3. Living in Nature
4. Choosing Life with Principle

All four threads are interwoven within each lesson. We will be returning to these threads throughout the year through the institution of "[Thoreauvian Thursdays](#)", and another mini expedition on Thoreau's place in the abolitionist movement as a part of our civil rights expedition.

I have created a [discovery journal](#) for the students to use during this unit. It is designed as a blueprint to help them get started with journaling, and as an assessment/reflection tool.

*\* To copy the discovery journal into a booklet format you first need to print all of the pages single-sided. Every other page then needs to be rotated 190° then reprinted with the printer set to double-sided. There is probably an easier way, but that is how I had to format it.*

*\*\* For more on Expeditionary Learning visit this [link](#).*

### **Lesson One: Living Deliberately**

**Rationale:** This brief lesson serves three main purposes-

1. To begin the process of self reflection
2. Practice deconstructing words to aid in understanding/comprehension.
3. To (hopefully) record how their understanding of this small piece of text can evolve into a deeper piece of learning.

**Essential Question:** What does "living deliberately" mean to you?

**Learning Target:** I can explain what I think it means to "live deliberately".

**Materials needed:** discovery journal

### **Lesson Summary and Steps:**

- Pass out and introduce the discovery journal.
- Write the words “Living Deliberately” on the board.
- Give students time to work on it independently, then deconstruct the words as a class.
- Have students complete the reflection in their journal.
- Share by choice.

### **Lesson Two: Kick off- Inquiry Circle**

**Rationale:** The goal for kick off is to introduce the unit, generate student interest and questions, and begin building knowledge about the topic.

### **Focusing quotes:**

- *“All this is perfectly distinct to an observant eye, and yet could easily passed unnoticed by most.”*
- *“Civil Disobedience”*

### **Essential Questions:**

- How comfortable were you with the inquiry process?
- Did you feel like you could connect what you observed, read, or interacted with to some prior knowledge you already possessed?
- How comfortable were you generating questions? Making inferences?
- How observant do you consider yourself?
- Did you feel confident with the loose structure of the lesson?

**Learning Target:** I can observe photographs, artifacts, primary documents and quotations to access prior knowledge and generate questions about Henry David Thoreau.

### **Lesson Summary and Steps:**

- Unpack the learning target with the students. Since this is our first inquiry circle some students may have trouble with the open aspect of this activity. Some may be used to right and wrong answers, and answering questions rather than generating them. *I will have them save their discovery journal to use for self reflection throughout the year, especially noting the progress they make during kick off inquiry circles.*

- Divide students into small groups (Note that each student will need the opportunity to interact with the contents of the station). They will travel through the stations in these groups.
- Each student should have a clipboard, discovery journal, and pencil.
- Make sure the students know in what order they will proceed through the stations. I give them between 5-10 minutes in each station. This will depend on my group of students and the size of the groups. *Remind them that they will need time for observation and reflection.*
- Circle up to share and discuss their thoughts, observations and questions.

### **Materials Needed:**

- [Photos and documents](#) printed out. *You may need multiple copies depending on the group sizes.*
- Discovery journals
- Replica of Thoreau's walking stick
- pencils and pencil parts
- Old surveying tools (or replicas)
- Old ledger (or replica)
- Copy of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*

### **Inquiry Circle Stations:**

1. Photograph- grave site
2. Replica walking stick
3. Copy of survey of the Thoreau homestead with a surveying tool.
4. Poem "Henry's Flute" with a photo of his flute
5. Photograph- Interior of his cabin
6. Artifact- General Store ledger
7. Photograph of jail lock & the words "civil disobedience"
8. Pencils
9. Journal
10. Photograph of Uncle Tom and Eva statue with a copy of the book.

### **Lesson Three: Getting to know Henry David Thoreau through text.**

**Rationale:** Students will have been introduced to the BHH (book, head, heart) framework- they are working on paying attention to the text, to their thoughts about the text, how they feel about the text, and how they might change as a result of reading the text. Reading about Thoreau and reading his words seems like the perfect way to illustrate the possibilities to students, *These lessons utilize both fiction and nonfiction.*

**Focusing Quotes:**

- “A truly good book...teaches me better than to read it. I must soon lay it down, and commence living on its hint...What I began by reading, I must finish by acting.” Journal, 19 February 1841

**Essential Questions:**

- Who was Henry David Thoreau?
- Why is he still relevant today?
- Can I discover new things about myself through the study of a person from history?

**Day One: nonfiction- NEWSELA articles****Learning Targets:**

- I can read a current, nonfiction news article to learn about Henry David Thoreau.
- I can use excerpts from the primary source, “Walden”, to understand why Thoreau went to Walden to live, and why he decided to return to the town of Concord, MA.

**Lesson Summary and Steps:**

- Students will read three NEWSELA articles, respond to each in their booklet, then utilize their notes to contribute to a class discussion.
  - Article One: [Philosophers: Henry David Thoreau](#)
  - Article Two: [Primary Sources: Thoreau’s Walden Pond, Why he Went into the Woods](#)
  - Article Three: [Primary Sources: Thoreau’s Walden Pond, Why he Left the Woods](#)

**Materials Needed:**

- Discovery journal
- Printed copies of each article for every student.

**Day Two: Fiction- *If You Spent a Day With Thoreau at Walden Pond* by Robert Burleigh**

**Learning Target:** I can deepen my understanding of a subject through the genre of historical fiction.

**Lesson Summary and Steps:**

- Read Aloud, *If You Spent a Day With Thoreau at Walden Pond*. As students listen to the story have them sketch what they visualize in their journal.
- Class discussion about their emerging thinking and comparing the two genres.

**Materials Needed:**

- Discovery journal
- Copy of the picture book

**Lesson Four: Getting to know Henry David Thoreau through observation.**

**Rationale:** Now that the students have a solid introduction to Thoreau they will go back and look, with “new eyes”, at some of the objects from the kick-off. Mirroring Thoreau’s power of observation while referring back to the focusing quotes will move them to a deeper understanding of Thoreau, his teachings, and themselves.

**Focusing quotes:**

- *“All this is perfectly distinct to an observant eye, and yet could easily passed unnoticed by most.”*
- *“The distraction of surveying enables me rapidly to take new points of view. A day or two of surveying is equal to a journey.”*
- *“I am on the alert for some Wonderful Thing.”*

**Essential Questions:**

- What does it mean to observe something closely?
- What can we learn about a person by studying their personal belongings?
- What can we learn about a person by studying a document that is connected to them?

**Learning Target:** I can observe a person’s personal possessions and relevant documents to learn more about them.

**Lesson Summary and Steps:**

- Read the focusing quotes together as a class. Discuss initial thoughts.
- Review essential questions
- Unpack the learning targets with the class.
- Divide class into three groups. They will spend 20 minutes in each station to observe and respond in their journals.

- Thoreau's [desk](#)
- [Survey](#) of the Thoreau homestead dated March 30, 1857.
- Replica of Thoreau's walking stick
- Come together at the end to share and reflect focusing on the quotes and essential questions.

**Materials Needed:**

- Discovery journal
- Printed out copies of the photo and survey
- Replica of Thoreau's walking stick

*Note: I will have several copies of the images so that students have plenty of time to observe.*

**Lesson Five: Journaling & Writing**

**Rationale:** Two overarching goals I have for this year are to help deepen my students' connections with what they read and write, and to encourage them to use journaling as a tool for learning about themselves and the world around them. What better way to accomplish this than by the study of Thoreau?

These are foundational lessons that we will return to again and again throughout the year.

**Day 1: The Basics**

**Essential Questions:**

- What is a journal?
- What is a diary?
- What is a log?
- What is a memoir?

**Learning Target:**

- I understand the difference between a journal, diary, log, memoir and recognize the purpose for each one.

**Lesson Summary and Steps:**

- Show examples of each and have a class discussion on what each of these are, and their purpose.

- When we have come to a consensus about each one, the students will record the definitions in their discovery journal.

**Materials Needed:**

- Discovery journal
- Examples of a journal, diary, log and memoir

**Days 2 & 3: The Concord Museum's lesson plan- [A Word for Nature](#) and [PPT](#)**

**Focusing Quotes:**

- *“As I was paddling along the north shore one very calm October afternoon, for such days especially they settle on to the lakes, like the milkweed down, having looked in vain over the pond for a loon, suddenly one, sailing out from the shore toward the middle a few rods in front of me, set up his mild laugh and betrayed himself. I pursued with a paddle and he dived, but when he came up I was nearer than before. He dived again, but I miscalculated the direction he would take, and we were fifty rods apart when he came to the surface this time, for I had helped to widen the interval; and again he laughed long and loud, and with more reason than before. He manoeuvred so cunningly that I could not get within half a dozen rods of him. Each time, when he came to the surface, turning his head this way and that, he coolly surveyed the water and the land, and apparently chose his course so that he might come up where there was the widest expanse of water and at the greatest distance from the boat. It was surprising how quickly he made up his mind and put his resolve into execution. He led me at once to the widest part of the pond, and could not be driven from it. While he was thinking one thing in his brain, I was endeavoring to divine his thought in mine. It was a pretty game, played on the smooth surface of the pond, a man against a loon. Suddenly your adversary's checker disappears beneath the board, and the problem is to place yours nearest to where his will appear again.” – Thoreau, Walden*
- *“To the sick the doctors wisely recommend a change of air and scenery. Thank Heaven, here is not all the world. The buckeye does not grow in New England, and the mockingbird is rarely heard here. The wild goose is more of a cosmopolite than we; he breaks his fast in Canada, takes a luncheon in the Ohio, and plumes himself for the night in a southern bayou. Even the bison, to some extent, keeps pace with the seasons cropping the pastures of the Colorado only till a greener and sweeter grass awaits him by the Yellowstone. Yet we think that if rail fences are pulled down, and stone walls piled up on our farms, bounds are*

*henceforth set to our lives and our fates decided. [...] The universe is wider than our views of it.” – Thoreau, Walden*

- *“I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived. I did not wish to live what was not life, living is so dear; nor did I wish to practise resignation, unless it was quite necessary. I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life [...] Let us spend one day as deliberately as Nature, and not be thrown off the track by every nutshell and mosquito's wing that falls on the rails.” – Thoreau, Walden*
- *“Sometimes, on Sundays, I heard the bells, the Lincoln, Acton, Bedford, or Concord bell, when the wind was favorable, a faint, sweet, and, as it were, natural melody, worth importing into the wilderness. At a sufficient distance over the woods this sound acquires a certain vibratory hum, as if the pine needles in the horizon were the strings of a harp which it swept. All sound heard at the greatest possible distance produces one and the same effect, a vibration of the universal lyre [...] The echo is, to some extent, an original sound, and therein is the magic and charm of it. It is not merely a repetition of what was worth repeating in the bell, but partly the voice of the wood; the same trivial words and notes sung by a wood-nymph.” – Thoreau, Walden*

### **Essential Questions:**

- What different relationships do humans have with the natural environment?
- Nature writing has roots from all points in history, from early written language by indigenous people to the European Enlightenment writing. But why might nature writing be important in the United States today?

### **Learning Target:**

- I can explain the purpose of the genre of nature writing.
- I can explain three types of nature writing that Thoreau used, descriptive, personal, and philosophical.
- I can read a passage from Thoreau's writing and identify the type of nature writing used, and its purpose.
- I can write about my observations and reflections of an inspirational place in nature.

### **Lesson Summary and Steps:**

Follow the Concord Museum's lesson plan- [A Word for Nature](#) and [PPT](#)

## Lesson Six: Thoreau and Education

**Rational:** An important goal for the first six weeks of school is to set my students on a path of self awareness that includes knowing themselves better as learners- Are they visual learners? Do they work better alone, or in a group? Do they prefer hands-on activities? Are they comfortable taking risks? Do they have a growth mindset? Thoreau's writings on education illustrate his knowledge of himself as a learner. I feel like this lesson will serve as a bridge to wrap up our introduction to Thoreau while setting up a path for us to return to his writings as we progress through the year.

### Focusing Quotes:

- *“Those hours that should have been devoted to study have been spent in scouring the woods, and exploring the lakes and streams of my native village.”*
- *“Not by constraint or severity should you have access to true wisdom, but by abandonment and childlike mirthfulness. If you would know aught, be gay before it.” 23 June 1840, Journal 1:140*
- *“ We are all schoolmasters and our schoolhouse is the universe. To attend chiefly to the desk or schoolhouse while we neglect the scenery in which it is placed is absurd. If we do not look out we shall find our fine schoolhouse standing in a cowyard at last.” 15 October 1859, Journal XII:387*
- *“Perhaps I should give some account of myself. I would make education a pleasant thing both to teacher and the scholar. This discipline, which we allow to the end of life, should not be one thing in the schoolroom, and another in the street. We should seek to be fellow students with the pupil, and should learn of, as well as with him, if we should be helpful to him.” Letter to Orestes Brownson, 30 December 1837, Correspondence, 20*
- *“What does education often do!-It makes a straight-cut ditch of a free, meandering brook.” After 31 October 1850, Journal 3:130*
- *How vain it is to sit down to write when you have not stood up to live!—Journal, 19 August 1851*

Our music teacher will look at this quote with them.

- *“True words are those- as Trench says- transport- rapture, ravishment, ecstasy - these are the words I want. This is the effect of music - I am rapt away by it- out of myself- These are truly poetical words. I am inspired - elevated- expanded- I am on the mount.”*

### **Essential Questions:**

- What was Henry David Thoreau’s view on education? What did he think about his own educational experiences? When in how did he learn best?
- How can I use Thoreau’s writings/observations on his own experience of education to help my understanding of myself as a learner?
- What is the difference between what you are assigned to write and what you choose to write? Which has the greater impact on you? Why?

### **Learning Targets:**

- I can read passages from Thoreau’s writings to make inferences about his views on education.
- I can make text to self connections to deepen my thinking about my own education.

### **Lesson Summary and Steps:**

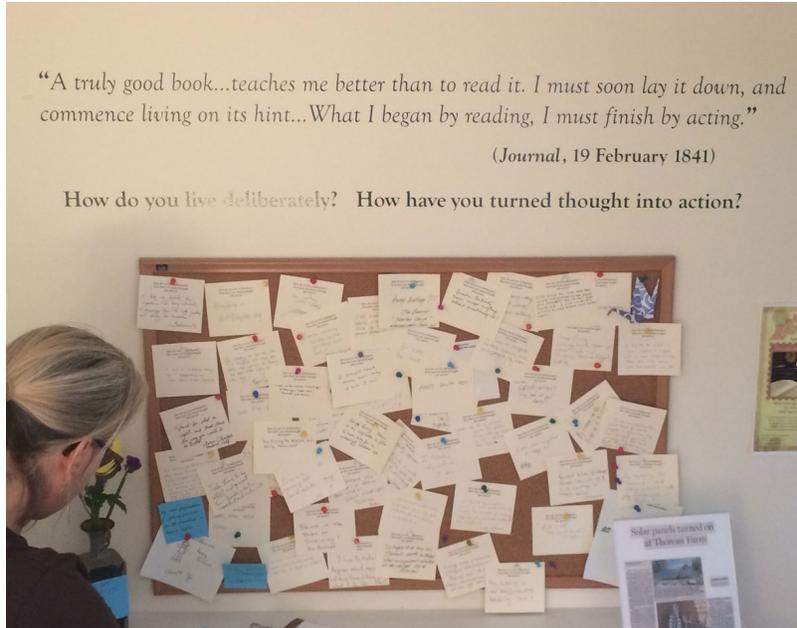
- [PPT](#) presentation with them to introduce the lesson and get them started.
- [Gallery Walk](#)
- Debriefing

### **Materials Needed:**

- Discovery journal
- Power PPT
- Chart Paper for the gallery walk

### **Closing Lesson: Revisiting “living deliberately”.**

**Rationale:** As a closing activity I would like the students to go back and look at the phrase living deliberately again. Read it within the context of the passage in *Walden* and revise their thinking. We will begin our new interactive bulletin board based on the one from the Thoreau Society.



### **Focusing Quote:**

"I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived. I did not wish to live what was not life, living is so dear; nor did I wish to practise resignation, unless it was quite necessary. I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life, to live so sturdily and Spartan-like as to put to rout all that was not life, to cut a broad swath and shave close, to drive life into a corner, and reduce it to its lowest terms..."

### **Essential Questions:**

- How do you live deliberately?
- How have you turned thought into action?

### **Lesson Summary and Steps:**

- Show the full quote on the board
- Take some time to discuss together then have students return to their discover journal to complete this final reflection.
- Introduce the new interactive bulletin board. We will be looking at & discussing new notes as part of our Thoreauvian Thursdays during CPR (morning meeting).

## Materials Needed:

- Discovery journals
- Bulletin board display with available sticky notes.

## Works Cited

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