

Living and Writing Deliberately

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Objective

Students in grades 9 - 12 will be able to identify and analyze the use of rhetorical strategies and types of phrases in Thoreau's *Walden*.

Essential Question

How did Thoreau use syntax and rhetorical strategies to create his argument to 'live deliberately'?

Background

Thoreau's writing often went through many drafts, including penciled jottings on scraps of paper or in a notebook, more polished entries penned in ink in the journals he kept through most of his adult life, the speeches he delivered at Lyceums and other venues, and finally manuscripts for publication. Scholars have traced as many as six different phrasings of a line from *Walden*. Thoreau made deliberate choices about word choice, syntax and use of rhetorical devices.

Procedure

These lessons were created as an introduction to *Walden* for an Advanced Placement class in English Language, but would be appropriate for high school students. They can be used as a "do it now" or warm-up activity as part of a larger unit.

Part I - Rhetorical Terms

Provide students with a copy of the **Glossary of Literary and Rhetorical Terms with examples from *Walden*** and the formative assessment **Literary and Rhetorical Devices in *Walden***. Students may complete the assessment individually or in pairs. If there is time, students should be encouraged to discuss what effect the rhetorical strategies have on the reader. A follow up activity would be to ask students to find other examples of these devices in their readings.

Part II - Phrases

Provide students with a copy of examples of **Phrases from *Walden*** and the formative assessment. Students may complete the assessment individually or in pairs depending on their familiarity with phrase types. A follow up activity would be to have students find

types of phrases in their own reading, or create a phrase poem following a template specifying the type of phrase to be used in each line.

Glossary of Literary and Rhetorical Terms with examples from *Walden*

alliteration - repetitive consonant sound at the beginning of words

I am no more lonely than the loon in the pond that laughs so loud, or as Walden Pond itself. "Solitude"

Old people did not know enough once, perchance, to fetch fresh fuel to keep the fire a-going.
"Economy"

allusion - a reference to something with which the writer presumes the reader is familiar. In *Walden* Thoreau makes geographical, historical, mythological, Biblical and literary allusions.

In the passage below, Chanticleer is the name of a rooster in fables and in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*.

I do not propose to write an ode to dejection, but to brag as lustily as chanticleer in the morning, standing on his roost, if only to wake my neighbors up. "Where I Lived, and What I Lived For"

We are amused at beholding the costume of Henry VIII, or Queen Elizabeth, as much as if it was that of the King and Queen of the Cannibal Islands. "Economy"

analogy— a comparison of two different things that are similar in some way

Individuals, like nations, must have suitable broad and natural boundaries, even a considerable neutral ground, between them.

Time is but a stream I go a-fishing in. "Where I Lived, and What I Lived For"

anaphora - repetition of a word or a phrase at the beginning of successive lines

Some have asked what I got to eat; **if I** did not feel lonesome; **if I** was not afraid; and the like. "Economy"

Why should they eat their sixty acres, when man is condemned to eat only his peck of dirt? **Why should they** begin digging their graves as soon as they are born? "Economy"

I would rather sit on a pumpkin and have it all to myself, than be crowded on a velvet cushion. **I would rather** ride on earth in an ox cart with a free circulation, than go to heaven in the fancy car of an excursion train and breathe a malaria all the way. "Economy"

anecdote - a short and amusing or interesting story that focuses on a particular incident

I long ago lost a hound, a bay horse, and a turtle dove, and am still on their trail. Many are the travellers I have spoken concerning them, describing their tracks and what calls they answered to. I have met one or two who had heard the hound, and the tramp of the horse, and even seen the dove disappear behind a cloud, and they seemed as anxious to recover them as if they had lost them themselves. "Economy"

antithesis - a statement in which two opposing ideas are balanced

Walden was dead and is alive again. "Spring"

There is an influx of novelty in the world, and yet we tolerate incredible dullness. "Conclusion"

aphorism - a concise statement that expresses succinctly a general truth or idea, often using rhyme or balance

A living dog is better than a dead lion. "Conclusion"

If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer. "Conclusion"

assonance - repetitive vowel sound

Instead of singing like the birds, I silently smiled at my incessant good fortune. "Sounds"

asyndeton - skipping one or more conjunctions

He is not fed, sheltered, clothed, warmed, like his contemporaries. "Economy"

His health is ever good, his lungs are sound, his spirits never flag. "Solitude"

chiasmus - a statement consisting of two parallel parts in which the second part is structurally reversed

I am wont to think that men are not so much the keepers of herds as the herds are keepers of men. "Economy"

didactic - having the primary purpose of showing or teaching; refers to tone

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. "Economy"

euphemism - an indirect, less offensive way of saying something that is considered unpleasant

I hardly need refer now to the laborers in our Southern States who produce the staple exports of this country, and are themselves a staple production of the South. "Economy"

hyperbole - deliberate exaggeration

In the passage below, Thoreau argues that the ownership of property is a worse burden than one of Hercules twelve labors.

I see young men, my townsmen, whose misfortune it is to have inherited farms, houses, barns, cattle, and farming tools; for these are more easily acquired than got rid of. Better if they had been born in the open pasture and suckled by a wolf, that they might have been seen with clearer eyes what field they were called to labor in. Who made them serfs of the soil? Why should they eat their sixty acres, when man is condemned to eat only his peck of dirt? Why should they begin digging their graves as soon as they are born? They have got to live a man's life, pushing all these things before them, and get on as well as they can. How many a poor immortal soul have I met well-nigh crushed and smothered under its load, creeping down the road of life, pushing before it a barn seventy-five feet by forty, its Augean stables never cleansed, and one hundred acres of land, tillage, mowing, pasture and woodlot!" "Economy"

idiom - an expression in a given language that cannot be understood from the literal meaning of the words in the expression

The owner of the axe, as he released his hold on it, said that it was the apple of his eye... "Economy"

oxymoron - juxtaposition of two words that contradict each other

...this small Herculean labor "The Bean Field"

parallelism - repetitive grammatical structure

There is some of the same fitness in a man's building his own house that there is in a bird building its own nest. "Economy"

paradox - a phrase that seems to be self-contradictory, but is nevertheless true

And when the farmer has got his house, he may not be the richer but the poorer for it, and it be the house that has got him. "Economy"

But lo! men have become tools of their tools. "Economy"

personification - giving human characteristics to something non-human

Every little pine needle expanded and swelled with sympathy and befriended me. "Solitude"

It is not all books that are as dull as their readers. "Reading"

polysyndeton - rapid and frequent use of conjunctions in succession

...that you persuade your neighbor to let you make his shoes or his hat or his coat or his carriage or import his groceries for him. "Economy"

...when I came out to the railroad, on my way home, its yellow sand-heap stretching away gleaming in the hazy atmosphere, and the rails shone in the sun, and I heard the lark and the peewee and other birds already come to commence another year with us. "Economy"

pun - a word with a double meaning

In the passage below "shiftless" is a pun, meaning both "without any clothing" and "doing nothing."

Dress a scarecrow in your last shift, you standing shiftless by, who would not soonest salute the scarecrow? "Economy"

rhetorical question - a question asked for rhetorical effect and not requiring an answer

Look at the teamster on the highway, wending his way to market by day or night; does any divinity stir within him? "Economy"

Who made them serfs of the soil? Why should they eat their sixty acres, when man is condemned to eat only his peck of dirt? Why should they begin digging their graves as soon as they are born? "Economy"

understatement - deliberate representation of some thing as lesser in magnitude than it actually is

...nothing new ever does happen in foreign parts, a French revolution not excepted. "Where I Lived, and What I Lived For"

Name _____

Literary and Rhetorical Devices in *Walden*

In the following passages identify examples of literary and rhetorical terms listed in the word bank. One passage may use more than one device, but all devices are used at least once.

Word Bank: allusion, analogy, anaphora, anecdote, antithesis, asyndeton, aphorism, chiasmus, hyperbole, onomatopoeia, oxymoron, paradox, parallelism, personification, polysyndeton, pun, and rhetorical question

1. I have lived some thirty years on this planet, and I have yet to hear the first syllable of valuable or even earnest advice from my seniors.
2. Not till we are lost, in other words, not till we have lost the world, do we begin to find ourselves, and realize where we are and the infinite extent of our relations.
3. ... a man is rich in proportion to the number of things which he can afford to let alone.
4. I did not wish to take a cabin passage, but rather to go before the mast and on the deck of the world, for there I could best see the moonlight amid the mountains.
5. Did you ever think what those sleepers are that underlie the railroad? Each one is a man, an Irishman or a Yankee man. The rails are laid on them, and they are covered with sand and the cars run smoothly over them. They are sound sleepers, I assure you.
6. A lake is the landscape's most beautiful and expressive feature. It is earth's eye; looking into which the beholder measures the depth of his own nature.
7. Nature and human life are as various as our several constitutions. Who shall say what prospect life offers to another? Could a greater miracle take place than for us to look through each other's eyes for an instant?
8. It is not worth the while to go round the world to count the cats in Zanzibar.
9. I do not propose to write an ode to dejection, but to brag as lustily as chanticleer in the morning, standing on his roost, if only to wake my neighbors up.
10. If we read of one man robbed, or murdered, or killed by accident, or one house burned, or one vessel wrecked, or one steamboat blown up, or one cow run over on the Western Railroad, or one mad dog killed, or one lot of grasshoppers in the winter, - we never need read of another.

11. Removing the weeds, putting fresh soil about the bean stems, and encouraging this weed which I had sown, making the yellow soil express its summer thought in bean leaves and blossoms rather than in wormwood and piper and millet grass, making the earth say beans instead of grass — this was my daily work.
12. His health is ever good, his lungs are sound, his spirits never flag.
13. When the farmer has got his house, he may not be the richer by the poorer for it, and it may be that the house has got him.
14. Removing the weeds, putting fresh soil about the bean stems, and encouraging this weed which I had sown, making the yellow soil express its summer thought in bean leaves and blossoms rather than in wormwood and piper and millet grass, making the earth say beans instead of grass — this was my daily work.
15. At length the winter set in good earnest, just as I had finished plastering, and the wind began to howl around the house as if it had not had permission to do so till then. Night after night the geese came lumbering in the dark with a clangor and a whistling of wings, even after the ground was covered with snow, some to alight in Walden, and some flying low over the woods toward Fair Haven, bound for Mexico.
16. The surface of the earth is soft and impressible by the feet of men' and so with the paths which the mind travels. How worn and dusty, then, must be the Highways of the world, how deep the ruts of tradition and conformity.
17. Rather than love, than money, than fame, give me truth.
18. I sat at a table where rich food and wine were in abundance, and obsequious attendance, but sincerity and truth were not; and I went away hungry from the inhospitable board.
19. There is an incessant influx of novelty into the world, and yet we tolerate incredible dullness.
20. I heard a robin in the distance, the first I had heard for many a thousand years, methought, whose note I shall not forget for many a thousand more.
21. ...the traveller asked the boy if the swamp before him had a hard bottom. The boy replied that it had. But presently the traveller's horse sank in up to the girths, and he observed to the boy, "I thought you said that this bog had a hard bottom." "So it has, " answered the latter, "but you have not got half way to it yet." So is it with the bogs and quicksands of society, but he is an old boy that knows it.

Phrases in *Walden* (based on Killgallon's *Grammar for High School*)

Absolute Phrase

A sentence part describing the rest of the sentence in which it appears.

Absolutes are almost complete sentences. Every absolute phrase can be turned into a sentence by adding *was* or *were*.

Example: It is glorious to behold this ribbon of water sparkling in the sun, **the bare face of the pond full of glee and youth**, as if it spoke the joy of the fishes within it...

Test: The bare face of the pond *was* full of glee and youth.

Absolutes frequently begin with possessive pronouns: *my, his, her, its, our, their*.

Example: John Farmer sat at his door one September evening, after a hard day's work, **his mind still running on his labor more or less**.

Appositive Phrase

A noun phrase identifying a person, place or thing named in a sentence.

Examples:

Identifying people: When I consider my neighbors, **the farmers of Concord**...

Identifying things: Most men are satisfied if they read or hear read, and perchance have been convicted by the wisdom of one good book, **the Bible**...

Prepositional Phrase

A preposition is the first word in a prepositional phrase.

Prepositional phrases can function in sentences as adverbs, answering the questions *when? where? and how?*, or as adjectives, answering the questions, *which one? or what kind?*.

Examples:

At present I am a sojourner in civilized life again. *when?*

At present I am a sojourner **in civilized life** again. *where?*

The mass **of men** lead lives **of quiet desperation**. *what kind?*

Participial Phrase

A verbal ending in *-ing* or *-ed* used to describe.

Participles, unlike main verbs or gerunds (another verbal ending in *-ing*), are removable from sentences since they function as adjectives or adverbs. Some past participles are irregular (e.g. *broken* is the past participle of *break* in the example below).

Examples:

I was as much affected by the faint hum of a mosquito **making its invisible and unimaginable tour through my apartment at earliest dawn...**

I heard a fresh and tender bough suddenly fall like a fan to the ground, when there was not a breath of air stirring, **broken off by its own weight.**

Gerund Phrase

A verbal ending in *-ing* used to name activities.

Gerunds can function in a sentence as the subject, direct or indirect object, object of a preposition, or predicate noun. Since gerunds function as nouns they are frequently preceded by the articles *a*, *an* and *the*.

Examples:

Removing the weeds, putting fresh soil about the bean stems, and encouraging this weed which I had sown, ...this was my daily work.

Why should they begin **digging their own graves as soon as they are born?**

Infinitive Phrase

A verbal that always begins with *to* plus a verb.

Infinitives can name something (like nouns), give a reason for something (like adverbs), or describe something (like adjectives).

The grand necessity, then, for our bodies, is **to keep warm, to keep the vital heat in us.**

Name _____

Phrases in *Walden*

Identify the types of phrases underlined in the passages below.

Word Bank: Absolute, Appositive, Gerund, Infinitive, Participial, Prepositional

1. ...when I came out on to the railroad, on my way home, its yellow sand heap stretched away gleaming in the hazy atmosphere...
2. ...when I came out on to the railroad, on my way home, its yellow sand heap stretched away gleaming in the hazy atmosphere...
3. I did not wish to take a cabin passage, but rather to go before the mast and on the deck of the world, for there I could best see the moonlight amid the mountains.
4. Rise free from care before dawn and seek adventures.
5. ...one day, as I crept along its sedgy shore, the fresh spray blowing in my face, I came upon the mouldering wreck of a boat, the sides gone...
6. How many a man has dated a new era in his life from the reading of a book!
7. Instead of singing like the birds, I silently smiled at my incessant good fortune.
8. Instead of singing like the birds, I silently smiled at my incessant good fortune.
9. How many a poor immortal soul have I met well-nigh crushed and smothered under its load, creeping down the road of life, pushing before it a barn seventy-five feet by forth, its Augean stables never cleansed, and one hundred acres of land, tillage, mowing, pasture and woodlot!
10. Yet some, not wise, go to the other side of the globe...
11. This spending of the best part of one's life earning money in order to enjoy a questionable liberty during the least valuable part of it, reminds me of the Englishman who went to India to make a fortune first, in order that he might return to England and live the life of a poet.
12. This spending of the best part of one's life earning money in order to enjoy a questionable liberty during the least valuable part of it, reminds me of the

- Englishman who went to India to make a fortune first, in order that he might return to England and live the life of a poet.
13. Darwin, the naturalist, says of the inhabitants of Tierra del Fuego...
 14. A young forest growing up under your windows, and wild sumachs and blackberry vines breaking through into your cellar; sturdy pitch-pines rubbing and creaking against the shingles for want of room, their roots reaching quite under the house.
 15. Every day or two I strolled to the village to hear some of the gossip which is incessantly going on there, circulating either from mouth to mouth, or from newspaper to newspaper, and which, taken in homeopathic doses, was really as refreshing in its way as the rustle of leaves and the peeping of frogs.
 16. Every day or two I strolled to the village to hear some of the gossip which is incessantly going on there, circulating either from mouth to mouth, or from newspaper to newspaper, and which, taken in homeopathic doses, was really as refreshing in its way as the rustle of leaves and the peeping of frogs.
 17. Every day or two I strolled to the village to hear some of the gossip which is incessantly going on there, circulating either from mouth to mouth, or from newspaper to newspaper, and which, taken in homeopathic doses, was really as refreshing in its way as the rustle of leaves and the peeping of frogs.
 18. Since the woodcutters, and the railroad, and I myself have profaned Walden, perhaps the most attractive, if not the most beautiful, of all our lakes, the gem of the woods, is White Pond...
 19. The better part of the man is soon ploughed into the soil for compost.
 20. The nation itself...is an unwieldy and overgrown establishment, cluttered with furniture and tripped up by its own traps, ruined by luxury and heedless expense, by want of calculation and a worthy aim.
 21. The nation itself...is an unwieldy and overgrown establishment, cluttered with furniture and tripped up by its own traps, ruined by luxury and heedless expense, by want of calculation and a worthy aim.
 22. The nation itself...is an unwieldy and overgrown establishment, cluttered with furniture and tripped up by its own traps, ruined by luxury and heedless expense, by want of calculation and a worthy aim.

