LOOK CLOSELY AT YOUR HOME

Where is my Walden Pond?

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THOREAUS HOUSE AT WALDEN POND.

“I had three chairs in my house; one for solitude, two for friendship, three for society.”
– Henry David Thoreau, Walden
The Mojave Desert is our home. It has not always been a desert, but we will save that for later, keeping in mind that this is where we live, work, and go to school.

Introduction to the Mojave Desert in pictures:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gZzxEcujwGo

Plants and animals of the Mojave Desert:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6EelVbzuf24
THE MOJAVE DESERT

Desert USA is an excellent source for your research on your home, the Mojave Desert.

https://www.desertusa.com/mojave-desert.html

OTHER EXCELLENT SOURCES:

http://mojavedesert.net/description.html

Be sure to use the links at the top of the page

Mojave Desert PPT

Second Mojave Desert PPT

Students: Using a piece of printer paper fold in half, the HOT DOG way. Then fold the opposite direction twice to create 4 division. You should now have a 3-4 page brochure with 4 division horizontally. A Cover Page and 2 inside pages and one back page.

On this brochure, on the cover page you have 4 slots to fill. The top slot is reserved for THE MOJAVE DESERT. The other three are for you to decide. You can put plants, animals, climate, Native Americans, history, or any other subject you are interested in. We have made these brochures several times in class. Follow the same template. The left inside of the brochure is your definition or description, and the inside right is a picture of your own drawing.

The back page is your choice.
Background information:

YouTube to show in class and discuss with your students on the Mojave Desert:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S-Bwb0xayiA
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CahVTHKxhUU

Ancient inhabitants of the Mojave Desert; petroglyphs
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0UYJmJL33PU

TEACHERS: There are several options to support the making of the brochures. Student can access information from the above website on their phones, or you can take them to the computer lab for research, or the library. If the students are inclined to read paper, the library can have several books on the Mojave Desert on display or checked out to your classroom.

After researching the Mojave Desert, it is time to move on to Henry David Thoreau.

As an introduction, show the film we saw on the bus. I need to get a copy myself.

If the students are interested in further researching, here are some interesting YouTube films on HDT.

Henry David Thoreau
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T70nkxohmnY
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_8FUPrd5ra0
READING THOREAU

Give the students a verbal introduction to the Chapter SOUNDS being sure to discuss the fact of the railroad being nearby and Thoreau’s ambiguous feelings concerning it, especially through the rattle and the whistle of the locomotive and its cars.

Then with the class or as an assignment, read the last approximately 3 pages of the chapter beginning with

“Now that the cars are gone by and all the restless world with them, and the fishes in the pond no longer feel their rumbling, I am more alone than ever.”

You may want to Xerox this for your classes.

I am trying to relate to the students that although their world is filled with city sounds, they can find moments when they are alone with the sounds of nature.

STUDENTS:

Assignment is to find a spot in their urban world and write a 1 page essay invoking the sounds they hear, using Thoreau’s essay as a guide. They may need to practice in the classroom, emphasizing the sitting still part that does not come easily for them. A nice beginning exercise could be to take them outside in their school environment if possible for a designated time period and then share these practice essays in class.
I was witness to events of a less peaceful character. One day when I went out to my wood-pile, or rather my pile of stumps, I observed two large ants, the one red, the other much larger, nearly half an inch long,
and black, fiercely contending with one another. Having once got hold
they never let go, but struggled and wrestled and rolled on the chips
incessantly. Looking farther, I was surprised to find that the chips were
covered with such combatants, that it was not a duellum, but a bellum,
a war between two races of ants, the red always pitted against the
black, and frequently two red ones to one black. The legions of these
Myrmidons covered all the hills and vales in my wood-yard, and the
ground was already strewn with the dead and dying, both red and
black. It was the only battle which I have ever witnessed, the only
battle-field I ever trod while the battle was raging; internecine war; the
red republicans on the one hand, and the black imperialists on the
other. On every side they were engaged in deadly combat, yet without
any noise that I could hear, and human soldiers never fought so
resolutely. I watched a couple that were fast locked in each other's
embraces, in a little sunny valley amid the chips, now at noonday
prepared to fight till the sun went down, or life went out. The smaller
red champion had fastened himself like a vice to his adversary's front,
and through all the tumblings on that field never for an instant ceased
to gnaw at one of his feelers near the root, having already caused the
other to go by the board; while the stronger black one dashed him from
side to side, and, as I saw on looking nearer, had already divested him
of several of his members. They fought with more pertinacity than
bulldogs. Neither manifested the least disposition to retreat. It was
evident that their battle-cry was "Conquer or die." In the meanwhile
there came along a single red ant on the hillside of this valley, evidently
full of excitement, who either had despatched his foe, or had not yet
taken part in the battle; probably the latter, for he had lost none of his
limbs; whose mother had charged him to return with his shield or upon
it. Or perchance he was some Achilles, who had nourished his wrath apart, and had now come to avenge or rescue his Patroclus. He saw this unequal combat from afar -- for the blacks were nearly twice the size of the red -- he drew near with rapid pace till be stood on his guard within half an inch of the combatants; then, watching his opportunity, he sprang upon the black warrior, and commenced his operations near the root of his right fore leg, leaving the foe to select among his own members; and so there were three united for life, as if a new kind of attraction had been invented which put all other locks and cements to shame. I should not have wondered by this time to find that they had their respective musical bands stationed on some eminent chip, and playing their national airs the while, to excite the slow and cheer the dying combatants. I was myself excited somewhat even as if they had been men. The more you think of it, the less the difference. And certainly there is not the fight recorded in Concord history, at least, if in the history of America, that will bear a moment's comparison with this, whether for the numbers engaged in it, or for the patriotism and heroism displayed. For numbers and for carnage it was an Austerlitz or Dresden. Concord Fight! Two killed on the patriots' side, and Luther Blanchard wounded! Why here every ant was a Buttrick -- "Fire! for God's sake fire!" -- and thousands shared the fate of Davis and Hosmer. There was not one hireling there. I have no doubt that it was a principle they fought for, as much as our ancestors, and not to avoid a three-penny tax on their tea; and the results of this battle will be as important and memorable to those whom it concerns as those of the battle of Bunker Hill, at least.

I took up the chip on which the three I have particularly described were struggling, carried it into my house, and placed it under a tumbler on
my window-sill, in order to see the issue. Holding a microscope to the first-mentioned red ant, I saw that, though he was assiduously gnawing at the near fore leg of his enemy, having severed his remaining feeler, his own breast was all torn away, exposing what vitals he had there to the jaws of the black warrior, whose breastplate was apparently too thick for him to pierce; and the dark carbuncles of the sufferer’s eyes shone with ferocity such as war only could excite. They struggled half an hour longer under the tumbler, and when I looked again the black soldier had severed the heads of his foes from their bodies, and the still living heads were hanging on either side of him like ghastly trophies at his saddle-bow, still apparently as firmly fastened as ever, and he was endeavoring with feeble struggles, being without feelers and with only the remnant of a leg, and I know not how many other wounds, to divest himself of them; which at length, after half an hour more, he accomplished. I raised the glass, and he went off over the window-sill in that crippled state. Whether he finally survived that combat, and spent the remainder of his days in some Hotel des Invalides, I do not know; but I thought that his industry would not be worth much thereafter. I never learned which party was victorious, nor the cause of the war; but I felt for the rest of that day as if I had had my feelings excited and harrowed by witnessing the struggle, the ferocity and carnage, of a human battle before my door.

Kirby and Spence tell us that the battles of ants have long been celebrated and the date of them recorded, though they say that Huber is the only modern author who appears to have witnessed them. "AEneas Sylvius," say they, "after giving a very circumstantial account of one contested with great obstinacy by a great and small species on the trunk of a pear tree," adds that "this action was fought in the
pontificate of Eugenius the Fourth, in the presence of Nicholas Pistoriensis, an eminent lawyer, who related the whole, history of the battle with the greatest fidelity." A similar engagement between great and small ants is recorded by Olaus Magnus, in which the small ones, being victorious, are said to have buried the bodies of their own soldiers, but left those of their giant enemies a prey to the birds. This event happened previous to the expulsion of the tyrant Christiern the Second from Sweden." The battle which I witnessed took place in the Presidency of Polk, five years before the passage of Webster's Fugitive-Slave Bill.

Xerox this passage from BRUTE NEIGHBORS for your students, then show them the following videos on making a quadrant.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0uXfd959z6s

This video will lead to several others.

TEACHERS: Take the class outside with a piece of notebook paper and something to write on. Place the paper on the ground and make this area a very small quadrat. After tracing the area with the writing utensil, observe this area and write as much as you can about this small area.

Go back into the classroom and share writings with the class. The teacher should have the best one! (Yes I got this idea from one of the other Biology teachers at the Land Marks seminar!)
If there is time and the inclination, you can transfer this skill to any other area chosen by the student, but make the quadrat 1 meter by 1 meter.

Draw the quadrat and what is found in it and write a one page description

The students will most likely be unable to see anything as dramatic as the battle of the ants as Thoreau did, however, they might see something they had not anticipated. This exercise may lead them into being better and more careful observers overall.

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In discovering the online museum resources I would like to note how excellent the **EARLY SPRING: Henry Thoreau and Climate Change** is. I would run through this with my students somewhere in the unit, given the time.

http://www.concordmuseum.org/early-spring-exhibition.php