

## Lesson Plan for Cara Lane's Honors Junior American Literature Class

**Thread:** Being Awake, Aware, and Alive

**Objectives for Lesson #1:** Students will carefully read excerpts from Thoreau's *Walden* (demonstrated by annotations and notes on the text) and analyze his philosophy (demonstrated by an argumentative essay in response to the essential question) while considering their own 21<sup>st</sup> century context.

**Essential Question for Lesson #1:** Are Thoreau's views on life relevant to American life today? (This question is meant to be specific to students in their own contexts.)

**Procedure for Lesson #1:** After students have been introduced to Transcendentalism and have a working understanding of this philosophy as well as of the related opinions of Ralph Waldo Emerson, students will read Thoreau's "Where I Lived, and What I Lived for" and the "Conclusion" from *Walden*. Students should annotate as they read and make relevant notes. Then students will be asked to answer the essential question in a formal essay. The essay is their opportunity to demonstrate their understanding of the text(s) via their explanations and use of relevant, supporting quotes from *Walden* as well as to demonstrate their ability to reflect on an exterior philosophy—the cultural world in which they live but may not notice.

**Needed Materials for Lesson #1:** 1) The reading texts—preferably on handouts so that students may write and highlight directly on the paper. 2) Students will need their own writing utensils and paper. Since this will be a formal assessment, I will ask that students type these essays on their own time.

**Recommendations for Assessing Students in Lesson #1:** Create a rubric that contains the point values that are appropriate for your class level. I would assess on a scale of 1-10 in each of the five following categories: Focus, Support/Elaboration, Organization, Integration & Analysis/Overall Effect, and Conventions. (\*\*See the attachment for the distribution of points).

**Objective for Lesson #2:** Students will carefully read excerpts from Whitman's *Song of Myself* and do a comparison between his philosophy and Thoreau's philosophy from their readings in *Walden*.

**Essential Question for Lesson #2:** In what ways are Whitman and Thoreau's perspectives on life aligned?

**Procedure for Lesson #2:** I usually cover Whitman at the conclusion of our Civil War Unit. His response to Lincoln's death via his poem, "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd" is a

natural segue from the diaries, letters, and speeches of that time period to this particular author. Once students have a working understanding of Whitman's background and unconventional approach to not only his writing (both content and style-wise) but also to life, they are better prepared to glean the parallels that exist between him and Thoreau. Students must utilize direct quotes from *both* works in order to demonstrate their understanding of the essential question.

**Necessary Materials for Lesson #2:** 1) Excerpts from Whitman's *Song of Myself* 2) Access to the same excerpts from *Walden* that were covered in Lesson #1 3) Writing Materials

**Recommendations for Assessing Students in Lesson #2:** This could be handled in a similar manner to Lesson #1; however, if I had done the first lesson, then I would be more inclined to have students working independently in class and to spot check their work; the goal would be to have them make five parallels between Whitman and Thoreau's works. Then I would have students work in small groups (which are usually already established) to come up with four to five of the strongest connections they could make between the two authors. Students would have to turn in both their individual work as well as their final group work. (I would assess students on a quality scale either for the final group product or the individual efforts as well. It's up to the teacher should they want to assess each connection individually or as an overall assignment.) If time permitted, then I would have students share one parallel from each group as a springboard for a whole class discussion regarding these authors and their findings. This would serve as an informal assessment (possibly participation points only).