



LIVING AND WRITING DELIBERATELY: IDEAS FOR TEACHING THE LEGACY OF HENRY DAVID THOREAU

Abstract

This document contains ideas for teaching Thoreau from four different angles, Living with Society, Living with Nature, Practicing Simplicity, and Living with Principle. The unit addresses the Common Core ELA Anchor standards and AP Language and Composition skills, and one section offers an interdisciplinary opportunity with Next Generation Science Standards.

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Introduction

This summer, I was able to attend a National Landmarks Seminar offered by the Concord Museum through the National Endowment for the Humanities on Henry David Thoreau, *Living and Writing Deliberately*. This unit sketch was developed as a result of that seminar. I have first listed out the Common Core ELA Anchor Standards addressed by this unit, which was designed with my AP Language and Composition students in mind. However, the unit is divided into four areas and I think each section could work easily as a mini-unit or be extended as a longer, self-standing unit. The units would also work well in an American Literature class.

The sections are as follows:

1. Introduction – Why study H.D. Thoreau?
2. Living in Society – Understanding how we are impacted by those around us and how we impact those around us.
3. Living in Nature – Following Thoreau’s example as a citizen scientist.
4. Living with Simplicity – Understanding our wants vs. our needs, reflecting on how we can simplify our own lives.
5. Living with Principle – Comparing and contrasting different protest movements, determining our own principles of protest.

There are so many amazing resources available that in developing the unit, I was somewhat overwhelmed. I have included as many of the relevant resources as I came across, but I have also left out many resources that were not as relevant as other resources. For Thoreau’s texts, I have used Henry David Thoreau: Walden, The Maine Woods, Collected Essays and Poems (Library of America College Editions), so all page or paragraph numbers refer to this edition.

I was able to bring home some wonderful images from the seminar. I have assembled some of them in a Google presentation available here:

https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1y0trjPjS1oxo4ikC3aQMslz4ihShTF_EyYYb_HFRitc/edit?usp=sharing

Please feel free to use these images in your lessons. This presentation is also linked in the Living in Nature section, as a resource for examples of nature journaling.

Common Core ELA Anchor Standards addressed:

Key Ideas and Details:

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.1](#)

Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.2](#)

Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.3](#)

Analyze how and why individuals, events, or ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

Craft and Structure:

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.4](#)

Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.5](#)

Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.6](#)

Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas:

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.7](#)

Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.¹

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.8](#)

Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.9](#)

Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.

Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity:

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.10](#)

Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.

In the section on Living with Nature, I have included the suggestion to try using citizen science projects alongside journaling. For a look at how Citizen Science Projects can be linked to Common Core Anchor standards for English and Next Generation Science standards, visit this great document:

<http://learningisopen.org/toolkit/citizen-science/>

[NGSS Crosscutting Concepts](#)

Patterns

Observed patterns of forms and events guide organization and classification, and they prompt questions about relationships and the factors that influence them

Cause and effect: mechanism and explanation

Events have causes, sometimes simple, sometimes multifaceted. A major activity of science is investigating and explaining causal relationships and the mechanisms by which they are mediated. Such mechanisms can then be tested across given contexts and used to predict and explain events in new contexts

Scale, proportion, and quantity.

In considering phenomena, it is critical to recognize what is relevant at different measures of size, time, and energy and to recognize how changes in scale, proportion, or quantity affect a system's structure or performance.

Systems and system models.

Defining the system under study—specifying its boundaries and making explicit a model of that system—provides tools for understanding and testing ideas that are applicable throughout science and engineering.

Introduction

Introduction (Can be used with each of the four units independently or to introduce a large unit that makes use of all of these smaller units)

Activity/Purpose	Resources:
<p>Anticipatory Set (15-30 minutes):</p> <p>Build anticipation by viewing/playing a teaser from Walden the game.</p> <p>Questions for discussion:</p> <p>Who H.D. Thoreau? Why would someone make a video game about his experiment? Why would someone choose to “live in the woods”? What can we learn from his experience? How would he feel about this game?</p>	<p>Walden the game or link to video teaser, projector.</p> <p>Link to game teaser:</p> <p>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OEJ_59hVPgw&feature=youtu.be</p> <p>You can also receive a free educator’s license to use the game at :</p> <p>http://www.waldengame.com/index.html</p> <p>Additional resource (suggested by colleague):</p> <p>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7dD5G5MzBHK</p>
<p>Frontloading (30-45 minutes): In order to understand H.D. Thoreau and his impact in the world, we will read directly from his work. However, it is important to understand the context in which his life was shaped. Let’s explore the time and place and people who have shaped him. We will explore a timeline of Thoreau’s life together.</p>	<p>Chronology of Thoreau’s life from the Walden Woods Project:</p> <p>https://www.walden.org/thoreau/a-brief-chronology/</p>

Strand One: Living with Society

Guiding Questions: How do others impact our lives? How do we impact others? What can we learn about our own social circles by examining H.D. Thoreau's social circle?

Activity/Purpose	Resources:
<p>2-3 45 minute class periods:</p> <p>As a class, research various people who had an impact on Thoreau's life or whom he had an impact on. We will create a large scale, whole class infographic on butcher paper based on student research.</p> <p>Using the hub site listed in the resources, I will assign student pairs or small groups different people that were part of Thoreau's life. Students will report back as we complete our class wide infographic.</p> <p>Students will then create an individual infographic on those people who have impacted them or whom they have had an impact upon. Most of my students are familiar with Piktochart, but more time may be necessary if students have not done this before. A graphic organizer is provided at the end of this document and students may complete this assignment on paper, if computer resources are not available.</p>	<p>http://transcendentalists.com/</p> <p>-This hub site offers links and resources for studying Emerson & Thoreau, as well as a pretty comprehensive list of other important transcendentalists.</p> <p>Program for creating infographics:</p> <p>https://piktochart.com/</p> <p>See page 13 for a graphic organizer that can be used for keeping track of people who impacted Thoreau or for student individual projects.</p>

Strand 2: Living with Nature

Guiding Questions: How do we come to understand nature? How does nature help us to understand ourselves and our place in the world? How does our treatment of nature reflect our values as individuals or as a society? How can we be better stewards of the environment? Why is that important? Must all science come from scientists?

Activity/Purpose	Resources
<p>(One week) Observing in nature:</p> <p>Classroom observation of an object (borrowed from a colleague): Have students write as much as they can about an object in the classroom in a limited amount of time. When time is up, compare notes. Discuss what things they didn't write down that they could have or should have.</p> <p>Observing in an outdoor space: Take students to an outdoor space and have them observe a section of that space on their own. Essentially, the same activity from the classroom, but with more to observe and more time. I will make use of Jardincito, a Nature Play garden in our neighborhood. Each student will be assigned an area on a map of the garden.</p> <p>Possible Extension to this: Have students download the Project Noah app and create a classroom project around the space chosen for observations. Have students use their phones to upload photos and identify the different species of flora and fauna in space.</p> <p>After first observation, have students pose a question for inquiry from their section. Bring students out to collect data for their inquiry question.</p> <p>Read Walden Excerpts: Ponds, Paragraph 18</p>	<p>The following Google Presentation includes my personal images from the seminar. There are several images of Thoreau's journals, which you can use to offer students examples for creating their own journals:</p> <p>https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1y0trjPjS1oxo4ikC3aQMslz4ihShTF_EyYYb_HFRitc/edit?usp=sharing</p> <p>Project Noah is a website that allows students to download a free app and use their phones to upload images of flora and fauna. Teachers can set up a specific project for students to contribute to and then students can help each other identify the plants and animals they observe:</p> <p>http://www.projectnoah.org/</p>

Spring, Paragraphs 17-20, 25-27	
<p>Sharing Data:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">-Compile species data for a “field guide” for the area students observed.-Have students choose a method to share the results of their inquiry project, whether through poetry and prose, art work, charts and graphs, etc. Present findings to the rest of class.	

Strand 3: Living with Simplicity

Guiding Questions: What do we need to survive? What do we need to be happy? What happens when we try to simplify our lives? Do attempts at voluntary poverty have anything to offer those who live in poverty? Would Thoreau’s experiment work today?

Activity/Purpose	Resources:
<p>-James Finely activity (30-45 minutes): Have students list out what their daily expenses are. Remind them to consider the bills their parents might pay, transportation costs, how much their clothes and sneakers might cost if you prorated their use, educational expenses, costs that might not be monetary, etc. Have them reflect on the challenges and surprises they might have noticed during this activity. Ask students to share without sharing the actual dollar amounts or specific details.</p> <p>Defining our wants vs. our needs. How many items on the list were wants? How many were needs? You may need to develop class definitions of “wants” vs. “needs”.</p> <p>-Why do we want the things we want? How does our stuff hurt us? (2 – 3 class periods) View <i>The Story of Stuff</i> and <i>The Merchants of Cool</i>. Have students complete documentary viewing guide.</p> <p>-Read excerpts from “Economy” alongside the contemporary selections listed in the resources and either complete a SOAPStone analysis (see the following unit) for each one or provide students an annotation guide (1 week). Economy: Clothing, p.19-24, Architecture, p.38-45</p> <p>-During the same week, have students give something up for a week they know is a want, but feel is a need and reflect on</p>	<p>The synthesis essay will be graded using a generic AP Synthesis Essay rubric, such as this one: http://teachers.sduhsd.net/mgaughen/docs/Synth%20Generic%20Rubric.pdf</p> <p>A short video on how our stuff is produced, from originating natural resources, to the stores we purchase stuff from. Heavily biased, but not inaccurate: http://storyofstuff.org/movies/story-of-stuff/</p> <p>A Frontline documentary on marketing to teenagers: http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/cool/view/</p> <p>Documentary Viewing Guide from PBS: https://pov-tc.pbs.org/pov/downloads/2010/pov-behindthelens-introducing-documentaries-viewing-guide.pdf</p> <p>Reading Selections:</p> <p>Chapter One from <u>Nickel and Dimed, On (Not) Getting By in America</u> By BARBARA EHRENREICH http://www.nytimes.com/books/first/e/ehrenreich-01nickel.html</p> <p><i>Time</i> article on Cory Booker’s Food Stamp Challenge: http://newsfeed.time.com/2012/12/04/whats-behind-cory-bookers-food-</p>

the experience.

Books for further reading: Into the Wild, Wild

[stamp-challenge/](#)

NBC article on voluntary poverty vs. actual poverty:

<http://www.nbcnews.com/business/consumer/middle-class-minimalist-message-sounds-key-poor-n126536>

Strand 4: Living with Principle

In this short unit, students will compare and contrast different methods of protest and resistance. After reading several essays and articles, students will develop their own statement of principles that they believe in.

Activity/Purpose	Resources:
<p>Anticipatory Set (30-45 minutes):</p> <p>-Agree/Disagree activity using statements from New York Times link. Either ask students to complete these statements on paper or divide room into Agree/Disagree sides and ask students to move to one side of the room or another, depending on how they feel about the statement.</p> <p>Follow up with a class discussion on protest movements that students know about. Have students list out protest movements they are familiar with. Encourage them to generate a list that includes both contemporary and historical protest movements</p> <p>-Over the next 1-2 weeks, read the listed selections below. Use SOAPStone to make sure students understand these texts.</p> <p>“Civil Disobedience”</p> <p>“A Plea for Captain John Brown”</p> <p>“Letter from a Birmingham Jail”</p> <p><i>Possible additional readings about:</i></p> <p><i>Black Lives Matter movement</i></p> <p><i>Antifa</i></p> <p><i>Colin Kaepernick</i></p> <p><i>Malala Yousafzai</i></p> <p><i>Arab Spring</i></p> <p><i>Standing Rock</i></p> <p>After students have completed various readings, develop a class chart of different tools of resistance and protest. Have students complete a short essay exploring what they believe are the best methods for</p>	<p>New York Times Lesson on protests, for Agree/Disagree activity:</p> <p>https://learning.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/04/06/preserve-protect-and-defend-considering-violent-protests-and-american-values/?rref=collection%2Fspotlightcollection%2Flearning-english-language-arts&action=click&contentCollection=learning&region=stream&module=stream_unit&version=search&contentPlacement=3&pgtype=collection</p> <p>Reading Selections:</p> <p>Letter from a Birmingham Jail</p> <p>http://www.massresistance.org/docs/gen/09a/mlk_day/birmingham_jail.html</p> <p>Civil Disobedience:</p> <p>http://xroads.virginia.edu/%7EHYPER2/thoreau/civil.html</p> <p>A Plea for Captain John Brown, annotated text:</p> <p>http://thoreau.eserver.org/plea.html</p> <p>Contemporary Protests:</p> <p>https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/16/sports/football/colin-</p>

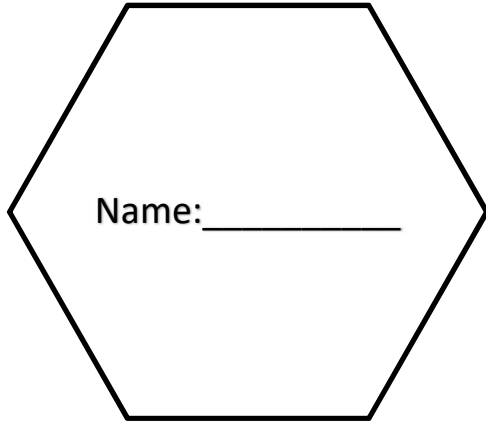
promoting societal change.

Possible extension: Read [In the Time of Butterflies](#)

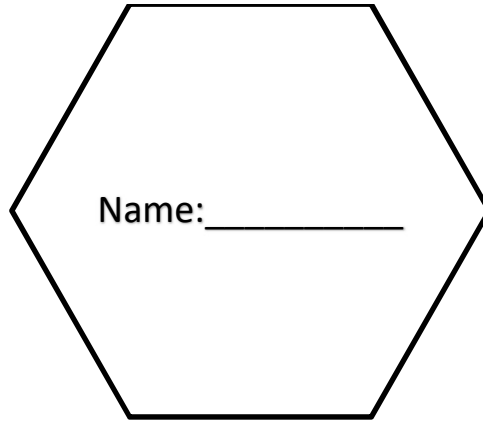
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AP Central SOAPStone method:

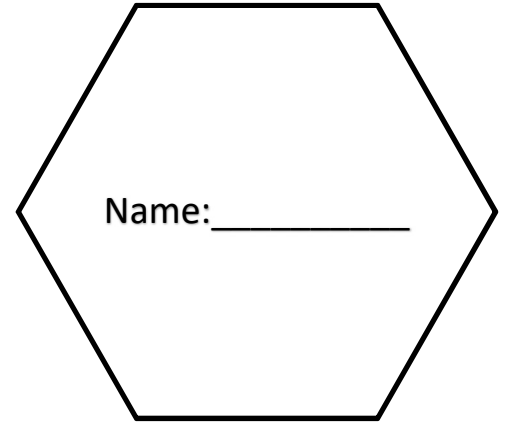
<https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/courses/resources/soapstone-strategy-reading-and-writing>



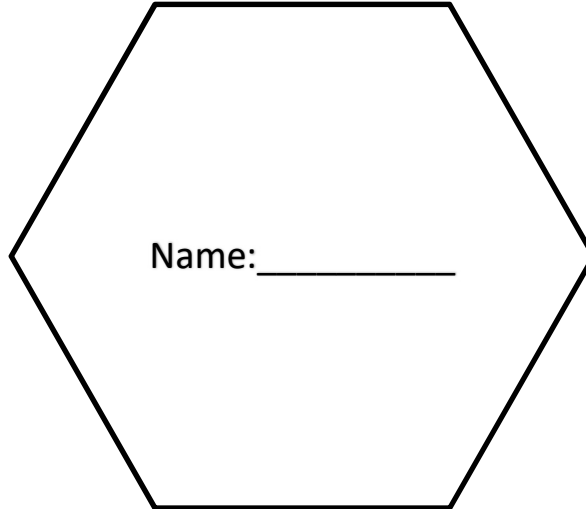
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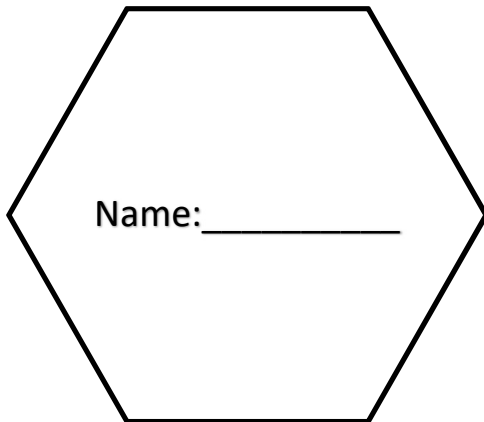
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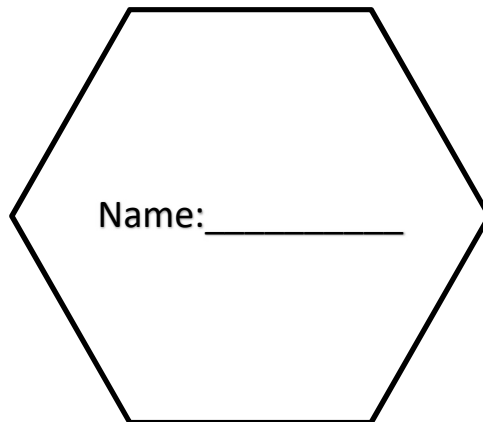
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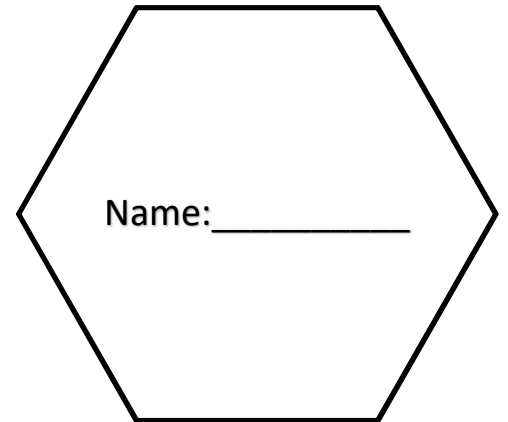
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