

This lesson plan is inspired and informed by my experiences as a participant in the NEH Landmarks of American History Teacher Workshop Living and Writing Deliberately: The Concord Landscapes and Legacy of Henry David Thoreau, July 23-27, 2017. I am indebted to Jayne Gordon and the team of esteemed professors, facilitators, and planners for the opportunity.

Inquiry Questions: *Who was Henry David Thoreau and what is his legacy? How might we apply Thoreau's practices of keen observation in our own lives? What is the relationship of your history to the history of your town? What can we learn from the artifacts of those who have lived in this place before us? How might the questions that Thoreau posed in his time and place relate to the questions that we have in our time and place?*

Objectives: Students will be introduced to the person and writing of Henry David Thoreau (HDT); closely examine the time and place where they live; learn about the history of their town from local historians; engage in analysis of primary source materials; practice keen observation; speak and write with detailed description and clarity; interrogate the origin and notions of civil disobedience; and, develop and pursue individual inquiry questions.

Materials: Online/print materials and children's books, on HDT available from local libraries and gathered on Blackboard; excerpts from *Walden* <http://thoreau.eserver.org/walden00.html> and digitalthoreau.org (selected passages will be extracted and prepared for initial use in class and students will extend reading online); physical or digital journal; student artifacts; guests, artifacts, and resources from the collection of the Lower Merion Historical Society <http://lowermerionhistory.org/web/> (or your local historical society)

Assessment: Socratic Seminar Rubric; Journal Rubric; self- & peer-developed rubric for Independent Inquiry

Who was Henry David Thoreau and what is his legacy?

Class 1:

Henry David Thoreau (HDT) Introductory Teach-In:

Students will select/be assigned a topic and conduct one period of research on an aspect of HDT's life/work and learn all they can. Record all notes in your online or physical journal.

Create a shared Google Slideshow by topic group: "What we need to know about HDT and ____".

Minimum of 5 slides, maximum of 8. Each slide must include 1-2 images and no more than two lines of text. Use notes feature to include the details/content you will share as well as all sources properly cited for all information and images.

Topics: Biographical facts; community of Concord, MA; Walden Pond; transcendentalism; civil rights

Homework: Complete slides. In the following class, groups will share them out and we will discuss. Students will make note of what they find interesting for further study.

Class 2:

Sharing and discussion of slides on HDT Biographical facts; community of Concord, MA; Walden Pond; transcendentalism; civil rights

How might we apply Thoreau's practices of keen observation in our own lives?

Class 3:

Close reading of a selection from "Spring" together; make note of HDT's observation practices in journals.

"Spring" paragraphs 3-9: <http://commons.digitalthoreau.org/walden/spring/spring-1-13/>

Homework: Select one of the following selections to read tonight. In your journals, write down one of HDT's lines that you disagree with; one line that sounds like you could have written it; and one line that makes you wonder about something. Elaborate on your thinking and be prepared to discuss tomorrow.

“The Pond in Winter” paragraphs 1-10: <http://commons.digitalthoreau.org/walden/the-pond-in-winter/the-pond-in-winter-1-10/>

“House Warming” paragraphs 1-9: <http://commons.digitalthoreau.org/walden/house-warming/house-warming-1-9/>

Class 4:

Go outside for a ten-minute walk-and-talk in pairs to share our thinking about last night's reading. Then, each person will select a spot to sit quietly and observe the outdoors, recording details from all five senses in the journals. Use Close Observation handout as a guide where needed.

Homework: Select a place in or near your home to observe. Look and write for a while.

* If approved, possible visit to Tyler Arboretum (<https://www.tylerarboretum.org/>) to explore HDT model home and conduct more observation. (See this article for description: <http://thoreaufarm.org/2017/03/thoreaus-walden-house-pennsylvania-style/>.)

Class 5:

Voluntary sharing out of journal writing. Discussion of principles of observation as evident in HDT and student observations.

What is your relationship to your town and its history?

Find and pin your house on the 2012 survey map of Lower Merion Township with a marked flag. In journals, write about your home and the area that surrounds it. Describe what comes to mind.

Now look at the 1851 map hanging on the other side. What used to be present where your house was today? What do you recognize about your neighborhood? What looks different? What questions does it raise?

Homework: Talk to your parents about what they remember about the neighborhood they grew up in and write down some details.

Class 6:

Share parent feedback about the neighborhoods of their youth. Discuss: What is similar and different today?

Read and discuss “The Village”: <http://commons.digitalthoreau.org/walden/the-village/>. Who and what was important to HDT in his community?

Homework: Consider this question for yourself and write: who and what is important to you and your community?

Class 7:

What can we learn from the artifacts of those who have lived in this place before us?

Guest Conversation with Mr. Gerald Francis, Lower Merion Historical Society:
The History of Lower Merion Township from the Lenape to William Penn to the Present Day

Homework: Write about something new you learned today and pose a follow-up question or two for Mr. Francis.

Class 8:

Students will visit the Lower Merion Historical Society to handle and investigate what artifacts tell us about where we live (Lenape tools, ephemera, maps, letters, photos). Share questions with Mr. Francis, apply close observation strategies, and record details in journals.

Homework: Select an artifact from your own home to bring in tomorrow. (It does not have to be from nature.) Write about it and what it reveals about who you are and how you live.

Class 9:

Students will engage in close observation of their own and one another's objects. They will display the artifacts in display cabinets (original faculty mail cubbies from 100-year-old Cynwyd Elementary borrowed from a colleague) and select an object of interest to analyze. Students may engage in this up to three times depending on time; see Object Observation Sheet. (The students will respond to peers' observations later.)

How might the questions that Thoreau posed in his time and place relate to the questions that we have in our time and place?

Independently, begin close reading of "Where I Lived and What I Lived For" paragraphs 1-18:
<http://commons.digitalthoreau.org/walden/where-i-lived-and-what-i-lived-for/where-i-lived-and-what-i-lived-for-1-12/> (and follow arrow). As you read, record lines that stand out, related notes, and questions.

Homework: Complete close reading of "WIL&WILF" and make note of questions and connections.

Class 10:

Open class by sharing lines, questions, and connections from last night's reading.

Guest Conversation with Mr. Ted Goldsborough, Lower Merion Historical Society:
The History of Lower Merion Academy and the Role of Education in the Community

Homework: Write down questions that come to mind following Mr. Goldsborough's talk. Also read paragraphs 1-12 from "Reading" <http://commons.digitalthoreau.org/walden/reading/?s=education?> Pay particular attention to paragraph 12: What does HDT say about education in this excerpt?

Class 11:

Meet with half of students to discuss "Reading" and responses while the other half respond to peer questions and observations about the selected artifacts on paper. Then switch. Discuss as a whole group—what connections are being made with your understanding of education? Where is there dissonance?

Classes 12 & 13:

Provide students with overview and background on what led to HDT's writing "Civil Disobedience" (revisit student slides if fitting).

Engage in collaborative close reading of “Civil Disobedience”: <http://thoreau.eserver.org/civil1.html> by assigning students one paragraph from the first section to examine. (Distribute in print as well for annotation.) After students have read the whole page, they are to return to their assigned paragraph to summarize, pull out an essential phrase or two, and note questions and connections. We will continue to do this over two class periods (or until we have moved through the text).

Homework: Read and follow the links in this July 2017 Smithsonian article and make notes in journals: <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/martin-luther-king-and-gandhi-werent-only-ones-inspired-thoreaus-civil-disobedience-180963972/>

Class 14:

Distribute and discuss Independent Inquiry inspired by the words and work of HDT. Students begin to work. Following are some possibilities to start thinking:

- *Students reread their journals and create their own version of “Where I Live and What I Live For”.
- *Students identify a line or passage from Thoreau that connects with them and develop their own questions to investigate, for example, by drawing on local history of Politics, Environment (streams, foliage, etc.), Education and Public Schools, Business and Industry, Architecture/Neighborhoods, Ethnicity & Immigration
- *Students revisit slideshows (all posted) and pursue something they want to learn more about.
- *Students explore the Concord Museum’s online exhibition on Thoreau and climate change (<http://www.concordmuseum.org/early-spring-exhibition.php>) or other parts of the collection (<http://www.concordmuseum.org/>) and follow their curiosities.
- *Students play *Walden, A Game* and research topics that pique their interest. (Request educational license here: <http://waldengame.com/educators.html>)
- *Students listen to passages from Thoreau’s journals on nature, friendship, slavery, and society—part of the Morgan Library/Concord Museum exhibition (<http://www.themorgan.org/exhibitions/online/thoreau>) Or explore the whole text of the journals here: http://thoreau.library.ucsb.edu/new_main.html.
- *Students investigate how phrases often associated with Thoreau—such as civil disobedience, living deliberately, simplicity—are relevant today.
- *Students read from the collection of picture books on Thoreau (gathered from district and local libraries) and focus on an aspect of his life that is of interest.
- *Students return to a framing inquiry question and work from there: *Who was Henry David Thoreau and what is his legacy? How might we apply Thoreau’s practices of keen observation in our own lives? What is the relationship of your personal history to the history of your town? What can we learn from the artifacts of those who have lived in this place before us? How might the questions that Thoreau posed in his time and place relate to the questions that we have in our time and place?*

Classes 15-18:

Students work on Independent Inquiries inspired by the words and work of HDT; prepare for sharing.

Practicing Close Observation

Observe:

- What do you see? Write what you notice.
- Keep looking for another minute (or more). Now what do you see?
- What questions you have?
- Count and measure. Write the details.
- Make a "tube" with your thumb and fingers so you can look at just one small area or look at the spot from a different angle. What new things do you notice when you change perspective?
- What do you wonder about what you see? How could you find answers (e.g., observe more closely, conduct research)?

Compare:

- How is what you are looking at the same as _____? Different than _____?
- What does it remind you of?

Interpret:

- What do you think happened before this moment? What do you think might happen next?
- What do you *know* from looking at this place/thing?
- What do you *assume/infer* from looking at it?
- What do you think would happen if _____?

Wonder:

- Do you notice anything surprising or unusual? Describe what you see.
- How would you explain it?
- What new questions did your observations spark? How might you uncover the answers?

You were invited to bring in an artifact from your home that represents you. Write your name and details about that object on one side of the card. Write your number on the other.

- o What do you observe about the object (appearance, size, shape, color, texture, design, purpose)?
- o Why did you bring this object?
- o What does the object symbolize?
- o What is something that others won't know about this object just by looking at it?
- o What is a story that this object might tell?

You were invited to bring in an artifact from your home that represents you. Write your name and details about that object on one side of the card. Write your number on the other.

- o What do you observe about the object (appearance, size, shape, color, texture, design, purpose)?
- o Why did you bring this object?
- o What does the object symbolize?
- o What is something that others won't know about this object just by looking at it?
- o What is a story that this object might tell?

You were invited to bring in an artifact from your home that represents you. Write your name and details about that object on one side of the card. Write your number on the other.

- o What do you observe about the object (appearance, size, shape, color, texture, design, purpose)?
- o Why did you bring this object?
- o What does the object symbolize?
- o What is something that others won't know about this object just by looking at it?
- o What is a story that this object might tell?

You were invited to bring in an artifact from your home that represents you. Write your name and details about that object on one side of the card. Write your number on the other.

- o What do you observe about the object (appearance, size, shape, color, texture, design, purpose)?
- o Why did you bring this object?
- o What does the object symbolize?
- o What is something that others won't know about this object just by looking at it?
- o What is a story that this object might tell?

OBJECT STUDY & RESPONSE

1. Select and examine an object from the collection. Consider:

- o What is familiar about the object? What is unfamiliar or strange about the object?
- o What are your observations about the object (appearance, size, shape, color, texture, design)?
- o What questions does this object raise for you?
- o Think about the object as a cultural artifact. How might it reflect aspects cultural components such as ideology, technology, or sociology?

2. Determine what this object *may* reveal about the person who brought it.

- a. On an index card, describe how you think the object may represent its owner. Please sign your name.
- b. On the other side of the card, write its corresponding number.
- c. Pin the card on the board with the number facing out.

OBJECT STUDY & RESPONSE

1. Select and examine an object from the collection. Consider:

- o What is familiar about the object? What is unfamiliar or strange about the object?
- o What are your observations about the object (appearance, size, shape, color, texture, design)?
- o What questions does this object raise for you?
- o Think about the object as a cultural artifact. How might it reflect aspects cultural components such as ideology, technology, or sociology?

2. Determine what this object *may* reveal about the person who brought it.

- a. On an index card, describe how you think the object may represent its owner. Please sign your name.
- b. On the other side of the card, write its corresponding number.
- c. Pin the card on the board with the number facing out.

YOUR NAME: _____ OBJECT # _____

OBJECT PEER RESPONSE

1. Select an object from the collection and examine it closely. Think before responding below.

- What do you see and/or think when you look at the object?
- What questions does the object raise for you?
- Now think about the object as a cultural artifact. How might this reflect aspects of the owner's culture (ideology, technology, or sociology)?
- Whose object do you think this is?

2. Now locate the object's corresponding card on the board. Read it and respond.

- What personal qualities does the object's owner reveal?
- If you know the owner well, explain why the selection of this object makes sense to you. If you do not know the owner well, tell him/her what you would be interested in knowing more about.

YOUR NAME: _____ OBJECT # _____

OBJECT PEER RESPONSE

1. Select an object from the collection and examine it closely. Think before responding below.

- What do you see and/or think when you look at the object?
- What questions does the object raise for you?
- Now think about the object as a cultural artifact. How might this reflect aspects of the owner's culture (ideology, technology, or sociology)?
- Whose object do you think this is?

2. Now locate the object's corresponding card on the board. Read it and respond.

- What personal qualities does the object's owner reveal?
- If you know the owner well, explain why the selection of this object makes sense to you. If you do not know the owner well, tell him/her what you would be interested in knowing more about.

Independent Inquiry Inspired by Henry David Thoreau



Most have not delved six feet beneath the surface, nor leaped as many above it. We know not where we are. Beside, we are sound asleep nearly half our time. Yet we esteem ourselves wise, and have an established order on the surface. Truly, we are deep thinkers, ... -- Conclusion, ¶16, Walden

CHOOSE A OR B. THEN DO C.

A. Delve Deeper into Life in Lower Merion Township, Now or Then

1. **Choose a contemporary topic related to life in Lower Merion Township.** What is a particular area that you feel passionate about? Is there something that you want to learn more about? Do you want to consider a personal or a societal topic (or both)? What brings you joy in your community? What problems are you observing in your community?

OR

1. **Choose a historical topic related to life in Lower Merion Township.** What is a particular area that you feel passionate about? Is there something that you want to learn more about? Consider topics and questions that emerged through our work and use the resources available through the Lower Merion Historical Society.
2. **Develop an Inquiry Question ⇔ Research.** Read available resources. Collect statistics. Survey your community, if applicable. Learn what others are saying/have said about the topic.
3. **Read more.** Use our library and/or the Lower Merion Historical Society resources and take notes to incorporate into your sharing. ***You must use at least one well-selected primary source.***
4. **Connect to others.** Why/how does your question connect with other people (past or present)? What can we learn from thinking about your topic? Why does your topic matter?
5. **Inform others.** *See options below.* Co-create assessment rubric with peers.

B. Delve Deeper into the Life and Writing of Henry David Thoreau

1. **Conduct further research on Henry David Thoreau.** Use resources available through our library and the Thoreau eServer (<http://thoreau.eserver.org/default.html>) to answer questions that you develop.
2. **Read more full text.** Select *Walden*, *Cape Cod*, or (...) and read closely. Make note of how the writing helps you understand something better.
3. **Research the advocate's life and work.** Read newspapers, magazines, and reports from the time period and determine the social and political climate. Find out the root causes of the issues and how the advocate influenced change. Explain how this was accomplished. If the advocate was part of a larger social movement (e.g., The Civil Rights Movement or the United Farm Workers Movement), then also provide an explanation of the broader context. ***You must use at least one well-selected primary source.***
4. **Connect to now.** How has Henry David Thoreau's work and legacy influenced the present day? Be specific about how his/her work affects/ed both individuals and society and why your topic matters. Consider topics such as writing, social justice, and the environment.
5. **Inform others.** *See options below.* Co-create assessment rubric with peers.

INFORM YOUR CLASSMATES (& OTHERS):

- Create an educational poster or display about the topic. Include statistics, stories, photos, and other attention-grabbing information. Incorporate an infographic. (Try: <http://www.easel.ly>, <https://infogr.am/>, or <http://piktochart.com/>.) Create a works cited page and include credits for non-original materials. Include your inquiry questions and be prepared to answer questions about your work.

OR

- Prepare a video presentation about the topic for an audience of your peers.* Create a works cited page and include credits for non-original materials. Include your inquiry question(s) and be prepared to answer questions about your work.

OR

- Suggest an alternate way to share your work.

AND/OR

- Consider an alternate target audience (though you will still share in class).

Journal Rubric

Please fill in the self-assessment section on the bottom before submitting your work.

	Excellent	Strong	Acceptable	Unacceptable
Content / Meaning	Demonstrates a clear focus on the task/topic and addresses all parts	Maintains focus on the assigned task/topic and addresses most of the task	Some focus on the assigned task/topic yet focus is not entirely clear	Lacks a clear focus on the assigned topic; does not address the task
Analysis and Interpretation	Reveals an in-depth analysis and interpretation of the topic; makes insightful connections	Conveys a thorough understanding of task and topic; makes explicit connections	Conveys a basic understanding of the task and the topic; makes few or superficial connections	Provides a confused or inaccurate understanding of the task or the topic; unclear or no connections
Development and Completion	Ideas are clearly and fully developed by making effective use of relevant and specific details from the text or facts about the topic; all parts of the task are completed with care	Ideas are clearly and consistently developed by using relevant and specific details from the text or topic; all parts of the task are complete	Ideas are briefly developed using some details from the text or topic; all parts of the task are complete, but some parts lack development	Ideas are largely incomplete; one or more parts of the task are incomplete
Language and Conventions	Exhibits correct spelling, grammar, punctuation; project uses sophisticated language and vivid details from the text	Mostly correct spelling, grammar, punctuation; uses appropriate/effective language and incorporates sensory detail	Exhibits errors that somewhat hinder comprehension; some appropriate/effective language and sensory language	Exhibits many errors that hinder comprehension; uses few or no effective words or sensory language
Connections	Makes insightful connections to self, text, others, world	Makes explicit connections to self, text, others, world	Makes few or superficial connections to self, text, others, world	Little or no connections made to self, text, others, world

Self-Assessment:

The best aspect of my journal is: _____

One aspect that may require further revision is:

The grade I would give myself is: _____ because: _____

Teacher Comments:

Socratic Seminar Rubric

Criteria	4	3	2	1
Contributes to discussion	Frequently (4+ comments)	Occasionally (3 comments)	Rarely (2 comments)	Little to none (1 comment)
Cites references to the text or prompt	Specific, appropriate, and frequent	General, appropriate, and frequent	Weak, inappropriate and/or infrequent	No evidence
Builds on others' ideas/references others' ideas	Thoroughly with direct references	Occasionally with vague references	Sporadically	Off topic
Demonstrates "Habits of Mind" – evidence, definitions, viewpoint, connections, conjecture, relevance	Frequently (4+ habits)	Occasionally (3 habits)	Rarely (2 habits)	Little to none (1 habit)
Explains/initiates new ideas	Explains clearly	Attempts to explain	Presents unexplained ideas	No new ideas
Pays attention to others & Includes others in discussion	Gives full attention to seminar Includes others through verbal exchange or invitation into conversation	Pays attention when others speak	Rarely pays attention when others speak Makes divergent remarks	Uninvolved, interrupting, dominating, criticizing, disrespecting, and/or obstructing process

Adapted from - <http://www.lhhh.uconn.edu/centers/school-change/docs/appendf.pdf> & http://www.nusd.k12.az.us/files/gilhomson_classweb/pasceman/socraticseminar.html
 By Ann Marie Seely – July 5, 2005