

NOTE: I plan to read *Walden* with my students throughout the school year. Fridays will be designated Henry David Thoreau Day in my eighth grade classes, and students will focus on *Walden*. This unit plan will be for the initial introduction to *Walden* and “Economy”. Teachers may use this plan alone or as an introduction to other chapters from *Walden*.

IMPORTANT: Have a vase of fresh flowers visible to students in the classroom. Do not water them during the time of this unit lesson. Just ask students to observe them. (The flowers will be used for “Sic Vita”).

Unit: Introduction to “Economy” from Henry David Thoreau’s *Walden*

Grade Level: Junior High Grade 8

Lesson: “Economy” as an introduction to *Walden*

Topic: Compare and contrast three poems with similar themes to introduce the first chapter of *Walden*, “Economy”, to the students, and ultimately compare “Economy” to the three poems.

Background

Students should have a basic knowledge of Henry David Thoreau prior to teaching this unit, as well as knowledge of literary devices used in poetry such as simile, hyperbole, personification, and metaphor. Henry David Thoreau is a complex writer, and students may find it difficult to understand his meaning since his sentences are filled with symbolism, allusions, and puns. In “Economy”, Thoreau suggests that life is fleeting and must be treasured, not wasted. In order to make the most out of one’s life, one must live it deliberately and often go against the dictates of what society views as a well-lived life. Often, retaining the essence of being child-like will aid a person in living a life that is awake, aware, and alive. Since “Economy” is deemed by many to be difficult to understand, having a background from the reading of the three poems will help students make connections to “Economy.”

Essential Questions

1. What does it mean to live a deliberate life being awake, aware, and alive?
2. How can “time” be viewed as both a friend and an enemy?
3. What is the difference in being child-like as opposed to childish?
4. What were Thoreau’s ideas about living a simple but a fulfilled life?
5. What does Thoreau believe time well spent includes?

Objectives

1. Students will identify use of literary devices used in writing such as metaphor, simile, hyperbole, alliteration, pun, allusion, and personification.
2. Students will compare and contrast the themes of “House on Pooh Corner”, “Fern Hill”, and Sic Vita”.

3. Students will be able to connect Henry David Thoreau's ideas about being awake, alive, and aware to the three poems we examined.
4. Work collaboratively with peers making inferences.
5. Practice writer's craft through original poems, compositions, and discussion questions.

Method

By analyzing "House on Pooh Corner", "Fern Hill", and "Sic Vita", students will be able to identify Thoreau's advice from "Economy" on how to live a determined life that is awake, alive, and aware.

Materials

Song "House on Pooh Corner" by Loggins and Messina

"Fern Hill" by Dylan Thomas

"Sic Vita" by Henry David Thoreau

Chromebooks/IPads

ActivBoard/Smart Board

Walden by Henry David Thoreau

Drawing paper and art supplies

Audio book *Walden*

Procedure Days 1-2 "House on Pooh Corner"

1. Divide students into five groups. Each group will receive one worksheet with the following words: "alive", "awake", "aware", "child-like", and "childish".
2. Discuss as a group and define the words giving examples of each.
3. Share orally the responses from each group and write responses on ActivBoard (Smart Board.)
4. Play "House on Pooh Corner" by Loggins and Messina. (You may also show UTube video that goes with the song)
5. Read lyrics orally to students and discuss the following:

- a. What is the theme of the poem? (Obvious answers will include that it is about Winnie the Pooh and Christopher Robin. Try to elicit from students that the lyrics refer to the passing of childhood and leaving it behind.)
- b. What do the lines: “But I’ve wandered much further today than I should/And I can’t seem to find my way back to the wood” mean? (Answers should include: leaving childhood behind, the loss of innocence, growing up, when we leave childhood behind, it is difficult to go back to it, etc).
- c. What is the metaphor used in those lines? Is there another metaphor? (“Wood” is a metaphor for childhood. “Days” also is a metaphor for childhood).
- d. Usually in childhood stories, the woods usually is a bad place where bad things happen. Give examples: “Snow White”, “Little Red Riding Hood”, etc. Do you think that the “wood” is meant to be a bad place in the song? (Responses will vary)
- e. What are examples of child-like activities in the lyrics? (“Chase all the clouds from the sky”, “Count all the bees in the hive”, “Loosen a jar from the nose of a bear”). What would adults think of these activities? (They probably would think that they are foolish and childish.) Why would such activities be important to a child? (Children are aware, awake, and alive to such things.)
- f. Why would such activities seem so vital and important to a child and not an adult? (Responses will vary).
- g. Do you think the narrator of the song is an adult or child? (Try to elicit the response that it is an adult who realizes the innocence and magic of childhood and would like to return to it.)

Reflect/Explain

Does the theme of the lyrics advocate being “childish” or “child-like?” How do the lyrics promote the idea that we need to be aware, alive, and awake?

Evaluation

1. Discussion elicited from small group activity
2. Discussion elicited from large group
3. Short answer responses on theme and symbolism of the lyrics.

“House on Pooh Corner”—Loggins and Messina

Christopher Robin and I walked along
Under branches lit up by the moon.
Posing our questions to Owl and Eeyore
As our days disappeared all to soon.
But I’ve wandered much further today than I’ve should,
And I can’t seem to find my way back to the wood.

So help me if you can,
I’ve got to get back to the house at Pooh corner by one.
You’d be surprised, there’s so much to be done.
Count all the bees in the hive,
Chase all the clouds from the sky,
Back to the days of Christopher Robin and Pooh.

Winnie the Pooh doesn’t know what to do
Got a honey jar stuck on his nose.
He came to me asking help and advice,
And from here no one knows where he goes.
So I sent him to ask of the Owl if he’s there
How to loosen the jar from the nose of a bear.

So help me if you can,
I’ve got to get back to the house at Pooh Corner by one.
You’d be surprised, there’s so much to be done.
Count all the bees in the hive,
Chase all the clouds from the sky,
Back to the days of Christopher Robin.
Back to the ways of Christopher Robin,
Back to the ways of Pooh.

“HOUSE ON POOH CORNER” GROUP ACTIVITY

GROUP ONE

1. As a group define the word “awake.”
2. Is there a difference in simply meaning “not asleep” as opposed to being truly “awake”?
3. Can a person be “awake” and yet not be really “awake”? What would be the difference?
4. Give examples of what it means to be truly “awake”.

“HOUSE ON POOH CORNER” GROUP ACTIVITY

GROUP TWO

1. As a group define the word “aware.”
2. Is there a difference in simply meaning “aware” as opposed to being truly “aware”?
3. Can a person be “aware” and yet not be really “aware”? What would be the difference?
4. Give examples of what it means to be truly “aware.”

“HOUSE ON POOH CORNER” GROUP ACTIVITY

GROUP THREE

1. As a group define the word “alive.”
2. Is there a difference in simply meaning “alive” as opposed to being truly “alive”?
3. Can a person be “alive” and yet not be really “alive”? What would be the difference?
4. Give examples of what it means to be truly “alive.”

“HOUSE ON POOH CORNER”

GROUP FOUR

1. As a group define the word “childish.”
2. Does the word “childish” have a positive or negative connotation? Explain.
3. Give examples of childish behavior.
4. Should a person give up childish behavior when reaching adulthood? Why or why not?

“HOUSE ON POOH CORNER”

GROUP FIVE

1. As a group define the word “child-like.”
2. Does the word “child-like” have a positive or negative connotation? Explain.
3. Give examples of child-like behavior.

Should a person give up child-like behavior when reaching adulthood? Why or why not?

“HOUSE ON POOH CORNER”

LARGE GROUP DISCUSSION USING ACTIVBOARD/SMART BOARD

DIFFERENCES OF BEING CHILDISH AND BEING CHILD-LIKE

CHILDISH

CHILD-LIKE

“House on Pooh Corner”

Name _____

Answer the following questions in complete sentences.

1. Explain the theme of the lyrics of “House on Pooh Corner.”
2. What are the child-like elements of the lyrics?
3. Why is being childish different from being child-like? Explain.

“Fern Hill”

by

Dylan Thomas

Now as I was young and easy under the apple boughs
About the lilting house and happy as the grass was green,
The night above the dingle starry,
Time let me hail and climb
Golden in the heydays of his eyes,
And honoured among wagons I was prince of the apple towns
And once below a time I lordly had the trees and leaves
Trail with daisies and barley
Down the rivers of the windfall light.

And as I was green and carefree, famous among the barns
About the happy yard and singing as the farm was home,
In the sun that is young once only,
Time let me play and be
Golden in the mercy of his means,
And green and golden I was huntsman and herdsman, the calves
Sang to my horn, the foxes on the hills barked clear and cold,
And the Sabbath rang slowly
In the pebbles of the holy streams.

All the sun long it was running, it was lovely, the hay
Fields high as the house, and tunes from the chimneys, it was air
And playing, lovely and watery
And fire green as grass.
And nightly under the simple stars
As I rode to sleep the owls were bearing the farm away.
All the moon long I heard, blessed among stables, the night-jars
Flying with the ricks, and horses
Flashing into the dark.

And then to awake, and the farm, like a wanderer white
With the dew come back, the cock on his shoulder; it was all
Shining, it was Adam and maiden,
The sky gathered again
And the sun grew round that very day,
So must it have been after the birth of the simple light
In the first, spinning place, the spellbound horses walking warm
Out of the whinnying green stable
On to the fields of praise.

And honoured among foxes and pheasants by the gay house
Under the new made clouds and happy as the heart was long,
In the son born over and over,
I ran my heedless ways.
My wishes raced through the house high hay
And nothing I cared, at my sky blue trades, that time allows
In all his tuneful turning so few and such morning songs
Before the children green and golden
Follow him out of grace.

Nothing I cared, in my lamb white days, that time would take me
Up to the swallow thronged loft by the shadow of my hand,
In the moon that is always rising,
Nor that riding to sleep
I should hear him fly with the high fields
And wake to the farm forever fled from the childless land.
Oh, as I was young and easy in the mercy of his means,
Time held me green and dying
Though I sang in my chains like the sea.

Procedure Days 3-5 “Fern Hill” by Dylan Thomas

1. Read “Fern Hill” orally, then have students read the poem silently.
2. Divide students into six groups. Each group will be assigned one of the stanzas of the poem and will discuss the questions given to them and complete activities.
3. Each group will present their findings to the large group. Teach may elicit more discussion.

Reflect/Explain

Is time seen as an enemy, friend, or both in the poem? Explain. What are the similar themes in “House on Pooh Corner” and “Fern Hill”.

Evaluation

1. Discussion elicited from small group activity
2. Discussion elicited from large group
3. Original poem about leaving childhood behind written by students

“FERN HILL”

GROUP ONE

You will be analyzing the first stanza of the poem. As a group discuss the following questions and record responses.

1. What are the images elicited from nature in the first stanza? What color is used and what is its significance?
2. How is “Time” portrayed in this stanza?
3. What are references to childhood in this stanza?

On the sheet of paper given to you, as a group, illustrate and color the images that you see in this stanza.

“FERN HILL”

GROUP TWO

You will be analyzing the second stanza of the poem. As a group discuss the following questions and record responses.

1. What are the images elicited from nature in the second stanza? What colors are used and what is their significance?
2. How is “Time” portrayed in this stanza?
3. What are references to childhood in this stanza?

On the sheet of paper given to you, as a group, illustrate and color the images that you see in this stanza.

“FERN HILL”

GROUP THREE

You will be analyzing the third stanza of the poem. As a group discuss the following questions and record responses.

1. What are the images elicited from nature in the third stanza? What color is used and what is its significance?
2. How is “Time” portrayed in this stanza?
3. What are references to childhood in this stanza?

On the sheet of paper given to you, as a group, illustrate and color the images that you see in this stanza.

“FERN HILL”

GROUP FIVE

You will be analyzing the fifth stanza of the poem. As a group discuss the following questions and record responses.

1. What are the images elicited from nature in the fifth stanza?

2. How is “Time” portrayed in this stanza?

3. What are references to childhood in this stanza?

On the sheet of paper given to you, as a group, illustrate and color the images that you see in this stanza.

“FERN HILL”

GROUP SIX

You will be analyzing the sixth stanza of the poem. As a group discuss the following questions and record responses.

1. What are the images elicited from nature in the first stanza?

4. How is “Time” portrayed in this stanza?

5. What are references to childhood in this stanza?

On the sheet of paper given to you, as a group, illustrate and color the images that you see in this stanza.

POEM ASSIGNMENT
LEAVING CHILDHOOD BEHIND

You are all on the verge of leaving childhood behind as you prepare for high school. With that in mind, think about your feelings. Does it frighten you? Are you looking forward to becoming a young adult? Did “time” go by quickly during your elementary school years? Do you want to hold on to child-like wonder being awake, aware, and alive?

Write a poem about being on the precipice of leaving your childhood behind..

Poem needs to include poetic devices such as simile, metaphor, personification, hyperbole, etc.

Be sure to use color in your poem as part of the descriptive process.

Poem may be written in free verse or rhyme.

Poem needs to have at least 20 lines.

DUE DATE:

“Sic Vita”

by

Henry David Thoreau

I am a parcel of vain strivings tied
By a chance bond together,
Dangling this way and that, their links
Were made so loose and wide,
Methinks,
For milder weather.

A bunch of violets without their roots,
And sorrel intermixed,
Encircled by a wisp of straw
Once coiled about their shoots.
The law
By which I'm fixed.

A nosegay, which Time clutched from out
Those fair Elysian fields,
With weeds and broken stems, in haste.
Doth make the rabble rout
That waste
The day he yields.

And here I bloom for a short hour unseen.
Drinking my juices up,
With no root in the land
To keep my branches green.
But stand
In a bare cup.

Some tender buds were left upon my stem
In mimicry of life,
But ah! The children will not know,
Till time has withered them.
The woe
With which they're rife.

But now, I see I was not plucked for naught.
And after in life's vase
Of glass set while I might survive,
But by a kind hand brought
Alive to a strange place.

Procedure Days 6-7 “Sic Vita” by Henry David Thoreau

1. Ask students to describe the changes that they have viewed in the flowers that were in the vase in the classroom. What caused those changes? (Some responses should include that they were not rooted and time deteriorated them.)
2. Define the following words on ActivBoard/Smart Board:

sic vita—such is life

vain—producing no result; useless

strive—struggle; great effort

sorrel—garden herb (plant)

methinks—I think

rabble—crowd; mob

rout—disorderly confusion; retreat

Elysian fields—place for heroes and virtuous people after death

rife—undesirable; harmful

naught--nothing

3. Read poem orally then have students read silently again.
4. Discuss the following questions in large group setting:
 - a. What is the theme of the poem? (Possible response should include that the passage of time is quick; we only have a short time to bloom on this earth; we don't realize how quickly we leave childhood behind and take no notice of its passing into adulthood; even though death eventually occurs, our lives have purpose and will bear fruit after we are gone if we live wisely.)
 - b. How did the violets get placed in the vase? (Someone picked them.) Were they supposed to be picked? (No, they were picked by mistake when someone was weeding the garden.)
 - c. Why does Thoreau mention Time? (Time is fleeting and everyone only has a short time to live his or her life. We need to make the most of living it.) What does Time have to do with the violets? (The violets are withering and dying because of the passage of time after they were plucked.)
 - d. Of what significance is the mention of children? (Children do not realize how precious childhood is, especially its innocence. If they do not hold on to it, it soon passes and they become adults with problems. Being child-like throughout life helps in that regard.) What do they have in common with the violets? (Flowers only bloom for a short time just as childhood is only for a short time.)

- e. What is the mood of the poem? (The mood sounds as if it is melancholic, but the poem is hopeful that if our lives are not lived in vain and we hold on to the innocence of childhood, we will bear fruit long after we are gone.).
5. In groups, compare the theme of “Sic Vita” to “House on Pooh Corner” and “Fern Hill.”
6. Share group responses with entire class.

Evaluation

Group discussion, small group responses, paraphrase of the poem

Extension: Read Thoreau’s poem “Great God, I ask thee for no meaner pelf...” and relate its theme to the pieces covered.

ASSIGNMENT “SIC VITA” BY HENRY DAVID THOREAU

Paraphrase the poem as a group in your own words.

Be sure to retain the theme of the poem.

DUE DATE: