

**NEH Living and Writing Deliberately: The Concord Landscapes and the Legacy of Henry Thoreau  
Curriculum Unit**

**August 8, 2017**

**Emily Ray**

## **Being Awake, Aware, and Alive**

**Objectives:** This plan is intended for 10<sup>th</sup> grade English classes studying early American literature (beginnings to 1800) and is part of a unit on Transcendentalism.

1. Students will read and annotate excerpts from Henry David Thoreau's *Walden*, specifically the sections "Where I Lived and What I Lived For" and "Conclusion."
2. Students will identify quotes that support the idea of being active participants in life.
3. Students will study Thoreau's writing process.
4. Students will write a journal entry and an essay based on Thoreau's ideas/writing model.

**Essential Questions:**

1. What does it mean to be an active participant in life?
2. How does technology affect our ability to be completely present in a moment?

**Materials:**

Excerpts from Thoreau's *Walden*

Clip of Common Sense Media "Distracted Parents" ad

<https://youtu.be/G5ADGEo4fvQ>

Art supplies/magazines for poster

**Procedures:**

Day One

1. Bell ringer journal- Does technology make us more or less aware of the world around us?
2. Class will watch the Common Sense Media ad called "Distracted Parents," depicting two parents so distracted by technology that they pay no attention to what their son is saying about school. Teacher will lead class in a discussion about how technology affects daily life and the ability to be truly aware of surroundings.
3. Students will read excerpts from Thoreau's *Walden* and annotate for quotes that support the idea of being awake, aware, and alive.

Day Two

1. Bell ringer journal- Choose one quote from yesterday's annotation that seemed especially significant. What made it stand out?
2. Students will discuss some of the quotes that they highlighted in yesterday's lesson.
3. Students will choose one Thoreau quote that they find inspiring and create a visual representation. They must use at least an 8.5" x 11" paper and include the selected quote. The visual representation can be drawn, printed, or cut from print media.

### Day Three

1. Teacher will share with students Thoreau's process of writing: note taking, journaling, refined essay.
2. Class will take a walking field trip to the pond on school property, taking a notebook and a writing utensil with which to jot down thoughts. Students should try to remain as quiet and solitary as possible as they experience nature. Cell phones are not allowed!

### Day Four

1. Bell ringer journal ( Extended)- Using your notes from yesterday as a reference, write a one page journal entry chronicling your experiences at the pond yesterday.
2. \*Bonus Assignment Opportunity\* - Class will discuss the idea of a technology limitation challenge. How difficult would it be cut certain types of technology out for an extended period? Students can then choose to try to cut TV, movies, and video games out of their lives for the next ten days. At the end of the ten day period, students would turn in an account of their experiences cutting out technology. Were they successful? How long were they able to hold out?

### Day Five

1. Writing Assignment prompt- Henry David Thoreau said, "You must live in the present, launch yourself on every wave, find your eternity in each moment." Does society today encourage the idea of living in the moment? Use the Thoreau quotes you found, your experiences at the pond, and/or our discussions of technology to write a five paragraph response.

### **Assessments:**

1. Journal entries
2. Student annotations
3. Thoreau quote poster
4. Student essays