

BEING AWAKE, AWARE, AND ALIVE

Curriculum project for Theresa Roh

NEH Living and Writing Deliberately: The Concord Landscapes and Legacy of Henry Thoreau

July 23-28, 2017

BACKGROUND

Students will learn about Thoreau from class discussions and picture books. They will discuss topics such as living deliberately, self-determination, simplicity, solitude, reflection, mindfulness, being awake and alive, observation and being accountable to self and others. The following books can be used to teach elementary students about Henry Thoreau:

Henry Hikes to Fitchburg by D.B. Johnson

Henry Builds a Cabin by D.B. Johnson

Henry Works by D.B. Johnson

Henry Climbs a Mountain by D. B. Johnson

If you Spent a Day with Thoreau at Walden Pond by Robert Burleigh

Henry David's House by Henry David Thoreau and Steven Schnur

A Year in the Woods by Henry David Thoreau and Geovanni Manna

Students will look at photos of Henry David Thoreau's original journals. They will notice that his journals have written text, drawings, graphs, charts, and poetry.

The study of Thoreau will be woven throughout the school year in all subject areas. Students will discuss how they are living a more deliberate life.

SPENDING TIME IN NATURE OBSERVING, BEING AWARE AND PRESENT

To begin this process we will engage in a "walk and talk" using quotes from Thoreau. Students will walk in pairs and have a quote to discuss. Each student will be given five minutes to reflect on the quote. Each child must talk and have a conversation with the other student. We will use this technique several times before students begin recording in their journals. Students will spend time outdoors reflecting on quotes from Henry Thoreau and sketching nature. They will have a quote journal with sketches for each week in the school year.

OBJECTIVE and PROCEDURE

Students will listen to the audio poem "How to be Alone" by Tanya Davis.

Students will create a nature journal using recycled materials.

Each week students will spend 15-20 minutes outside enjoying nature. This time limit will increase as the year goes on and as time permits. They will write a Thoreau quote at the top of the page. They will draw a leaf, tree, pine cone, clouds or anything they observe in nature. If students see animals they may choose to draw them.

Students will reflect on the quote they have written. The first quote will be "A journal—a book that shall contain a record of all your joy—your ecstasy."

MATERIALS

Cardboard, hole-puncher, sticks (the students will find these outside), a rubber band and paper with holes punched at the top.

There will be a box in the room with quotes from Thoreau and other Transcendentalist writers. Students may use these for their journals or find quotes on the Internet using the classroom iPads. If they find a new quote they will write it on cardstock and put it in the quote box.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

What is something you observe in nature?

What does the object look like?

What details do you notice?

What details distinguish it from other similar objects?

How does the object make you feel?

What do you think about when you see the object?

Students can brainstorm other ideas for questions each week before going outside.

Encourage students to be fully awake and alive as they have this reflection time each week. If it is raining the students can complete the quiet time and reflection in the classroom.

QUOTES FROM THOREAU

“Heaven is under our feet, as well as over our heads.”

“The language of friendships is not words but meanings.”

“It’s not what you look at that matters, it’s what you see.”

“The world is but a canvas to our imagination.”

“You must live in the present, launch yourself on every wave, find your eternity opinion each moment.”

“The most I can do for my friend is simply to be his friend.”

“Wealth is the ability to fully experience life.”

“The price of anything is the amount of life you exchange for it.”

“Goodness is the only investment that never fails.”

“Could a greater miracle take place than for us to look through each other's eyes for an instant?”

“The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation.”

“Live your beliefs and you can turn the world around.”

“It’s never too late to give up your prejudices.”

“Rather than love, than money, than fame, give me truth.”

“Things do not change; we change.

“Many go fishing all their lives without knowing that it is not fish they are after.”

More Henry David Thoreau quotes can be found at brainyquote.com

EXTENSION

Students keep interactive notebooks in Science class. In the past they have contained notes and foldables on science concepts. I want to extend this practice to include other components.

Students will also record reflections in their Science interactive notebooks. Instead of using them for just notes they will write reflections on lessons they learn and illustrate concepts learned in the lesson. (We will use some of the graphic representations from the Waldorf School illustrations. These will be modeled on the board as a class.)

Students will include poetry, charts, graphs, tables, maps and personal reflections.

LIVING DELIBERATELY THROUGHOUT THE SCHOOL YEAR.

Students will reflect on how they are using time each day. They will discuss questions such as what does it mean to be awake, alive and living deliberately. What does it mean to simplify? Why did Thoreau think it was important to simplify? Why did Thoreau go to the woods to live deliberately? How can you live deliberately in your current environment?

After discussing how to live deliberately, students will think of one way each week that they can practice being awake, alive and living deliberately.

Students will record their ideas in their Religion interactive notebooks each Friday. Each Thursday students will reflect on how they have improved on their practice of living deliberately. They will either continue working on the goal from the week before or think of another goal to focus on the following week.

Throughout the year, I will add to the unit on Thoreau. I will add lessons from my cohorts from the NEH workshop.

I will include lessons in math and social studies on timelines, graphs, measurement and surveying.

ANALYZING PHOTOS OF OBJECTS FROM THE LIFE OF HENRY THOREAU

Photos of objects from the Concord Museum and from the concordmuseum.org website will be used for this lesson. An Observant Eye: The Thoreau Collection at the Concord Museum will also be used for photographs of objects.

OBJECTIVE

Students will look at a photo of an object from Thoreau's life and use background knowledge and critical thinking skills to identify the object and the use in Thoreau's life. After students brainstorm ideas, the true identity of the object will be revealed and discussed.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

How can objects associated with Thoreau help us to understand Thoreau and his legacy?

What personal objects do you have and how do they help you make an impact on the world? (examples: musical instrument, sports equipment, paintings, essays written)

PROCEDURE

Have students study objects and discuss observations.

What do you see?

What do you think the object is used for?

What purpose did the object serve?

Is it heavy or light?

What is the shape?

What is it made of?

What patterns or designs do you see on the object?

If you could touch it, how would it feel?

Does it make a sound?

Would adults, children or both use it?

Why might Thoreau use this?

Do you like the way it looks?

Has it always looked this way?

What value does the object have?

Will it become more or less valuable over time?

What happens once this object is no longer used?

Does it remind you of any object you use?

What questions do you have about the object?

Where could you learn more about this object?

Questions are adapted from a lesson on "Reading and Evaluating Objects" from the George Washington Teacher Institute.

CULMINATING LESSON

Reflection of Your Life

This will be used at the end of the school year.

Throughout the year students will learn about Henry's life and hopefully develop a relationship with him.

OBJECTIVE

Students will reflect on the life of Henry Thoreau and his legacy. They will discuss how Henry showed a love for learning throughout his life and encouraged simple, deliberate living.

Students will find a quote that describes their purpose in life.

They will write about how they would like to be remembered by their friends and community. They will reflect on what difference they hope to make in the world. How do they hope to accomplish this?

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

Why did Henry matter?

What legacy do you think he wanted to leave?

How will you remember Henry Thoreau?

What legacy do you hope to leave?

How do you want people to see you?

What do you want people to remember about you?

PROCEDURES

1. Students will view photos of tombstones from Sleepy Hollow.
2. Students will read the epitaphs and observe the tombstones.
3. Students will discuss the objects left at Louisa M. Alcott's grave.
4. What do the objects say about Louisa's legacy?
5. Use a scroll cut out and write about yourself in the future celebrating who you are and what impact you had in the world. Include a quote that describes your legacy.
6. Hang the scrolls on a board title "LIVING DELIBERATELY".