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

Thread: Hearing That Different Drummer

Social Emotional Curriculum Unit

We All Beat to Our Own Drums

Grade Level: 2nd -5th Grade

(I have written this curriculum for 3rd Graders but they certainly could be used or adapted for older students)

OVERVIEW & PURPOSE

One goal of these lessons is to introduce the students to Henry David Thoreau, as he will be a mentor for our studies in a variety of ways throughout the school year. This unit focuses on exploring Henry David Thoreau: The Independent Thinker (based on the idea from The Morgan Museum in the “This Ever New Self” Thoreau and His Journal exhibit) (We will explore many parts of Thoreau throughout our studies this year).

Another main goal of these lessons is to help them explore who they are as an individual, what their passions are, and what makes them a unique individual. This will be done as an activity if the first two weeks of school as we are building our classroom community and getting to know each other. It will also be followed up by other lessons as we progress from identifying and being proud of the unique characteristics of each individual in the classroom to recognizing the importance of diversity and how to respect those differences in working together in the classroom community.

Thirdly, these lessons will help the students explore a quote for its literary meaning and explore that meaning with various forms of expression.

Guiding Questions

1. What does it mean to “beat to your own drummer?”
2. Why is it important to recognize and be respectful of the unique passions/ interests of each individual in our classroom?
3. What makes you unique?
4. What were some of the characteristics/ passions that made Thoreau unique?
5. What is figurative language?

EDUCATION STANDARDS

1. English Language Anchor Standards (all grades) CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.1 Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
2. CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.4 Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
3. CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.6 Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and communicative tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate. C
4. CSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.L.1 Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.L.3 Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.L.5 Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.L.6 Acquire and use accurately a range of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when encountering an unknown term important to comprehension or expression.

OBJECTIVES

1. To introduce the students to Thoreau as a historical figure
2. To teach that Thoreau was a unique individual who pursued his ideas and passions
3. Students will explore all the ways in which they identify themselves
4. Students will recognize that there are many roles/ways that we define ourselves
5. Students will learn to respectfully listen to their peers
6. Students will explore how to express themselves creatively through art and public speaking and writing
7. Students will learn what an analogy is and explore what it means to “beat their own drums”

We All Beat to Our Own Drums

Lesson 1 : Exploring Metaphor

Thoreau Quotations:

“If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer. Let him step to the music which he hears, however measured or far away.” —Walden (1854)

Objectives:

1. To look closely at a text and think critically about what the writer is trying to say
2. To demonstrate, through conversation and writing, an exploration of meaning of the quote
3. For students to be familiar with how authors use figurative language in their writing

Standards

MATERIALS NEEDED

Thoreau Drummer Quote Worksheet

White Board

Thoreau Drummer Quote- Student Copy- attached as a separate PDF

Background

This is the first in a series of lessons based around this quote. This beginning lesson will be less focused on Thoreau, but more on exploring the words and the concept of figurative language.

Step 1/ Read Aloud/ Word exploration

Hang the poster with the Drummer Quote in the center of your classroom/or circle area

Hand each student [Thoreau Drummer Quote Student Copy](#)

Put quote under document camera or white board

Reading

Explain that you are going to read the quote aloud several times and ask the students to :

- a. Listen carefully the words in the quote
- b. Think about it silently in their heads

(You can even post these instructions on board)

Read the quote aloud for them

Have one or two students read the quote aloud for the class

Exploring

“Now that we have read through this quote several times, I want to hear some observations/questions that you have about it. We will talk in a moment about meaning of the whole quote, but for now I want you to focus on specifically on the words. “

Use the questions on the worksheet to start the discussion.

Then have students share the words they circled and give them the definitions. You can share the vocabulary cards I have created at the end of this lesson.

In your discussion, challenge students to think about what Thoreau means or is trying to say in this quote.

“Do you think he means this literally? That we each hear drums drumming?”

Explain that in Thoreau uses figurative language to get his meaning across. Ask them if they have ever heard the phrase: “beat to your own drum”

What do they think this phrase means? You may to help them along with this if they haven't heard it before. It means that each person should pay attention to what they love and do things they love.

In this quote, Thoreau is trying to encourage people to recognize that if someone is doing something differently that it is because they are doing things that they love or in a way that makes sense to them and this is ok.

“However measured or far away” - he is trying to say however close to “normal” or what others are doing or however far away or different from what others are doing

Engage:

Ask students to brainstorm examples of when they or someone else has done something differently from maybe what was “normal” or expected.

Then you can also discuss with them that often when others or people do things different from what has been done before or what is expected, they often get criticized and judged. Thoreau is trying to say that we should have respect and tolerance and even admiration for those that seek to do things differently.

Conclusion

To wrap up the discussion, have students listen to a brief clips of one singular instrument and then a orchestra.

Try and use an orchestra as an analogy for how each player has to play different instruments and different music to make the orchestra music come together. If everyone all played the same instrument and the same music, it would not be as enjoyable.

In our classroom, we are going to spend the next few days getting to know each other, but this will continue all year. We are going to pay attention to what we have in common, but also what talents and characteristics each of us as individuals has. We will celebrate and respect each individual for their strengths and areas of growth and work to work together to make our own orchestra this year in our classroom.

Assessment:

Ask students to choose one of the following journal entries to write and reflect about after the lesson:

1. Why is diversity (or a variety of opinions, skills, or ideas) important in a classroom or any group of people?

2. What does it mean to “hear a different drummer”? Is this a good thing or a bad thing according to Thoreau?

Evaluate each student’s writing and look for the following characteristics in their writing:

-ability to express their own ideas and support those ideas with evidence/ examples from the text

-ability to grasp an understanding of figurative language and explore possible ideas of what Thoreau meant in his quote

Vocabulary

pace	the speed at which something moves
companions	friends or peers who are with someone
measured	close or at the same speed

We All Beat to Our Own Drums

Lesson 2: What is Your Beat?

Exploring Individuality/ Passions in Our Classroom

MATERIALS NEEDED

1. Picture Book: Burleigh, Robert If You Spent A Day With Thoreau at Walden Pond
2. What is Your Beat? What do you Love? Worksheet (attached as a PDF)

"If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer. Let him step to the music which he hears, however measured or far away." —Walden (1854)

ACTIVITY

Introduction: To begin this lesson, speak to the students about that today you are going to introduce them to a new friend. I love referring to authors as friends, as even if they are deceased and we haven't met them personally, I believe that we become friends with authors when we read their books. Although we aren't meeting the author personally, we are still getting to know them through their writing. Books often teach us and meet us at different points of our lives when we reread them so I do think of books as friends.

Anyways, explain to them that they are going to learn about an important figure in Massachusetts and U.S. history. (I will focus on MA history since this is part of the curriculum I teach). Ask the students if they have ever heard of Henry David Thoreau and take some responses. (As they are in elementary school and if you aren't in MA, they may not have any prior knowledge about him. But if you are in MA, it is more likely that they might have heard of him or Concord, or Walden Pond.) Do an informal survey to see what prior knowledge you students might know.

"Henry David Thoreau was an important figure in history as he wrote and taught ideas that help people think differently about the world around them, particularly nature. He is most famous for being a writer, but he was also had many other talents and roles that defined him. This year we will explore some passions/ roles of Thoreau. I was inspired by an exhibit I saw at the Morgan Library this summer and how they portrayed /explored these different sides of Thoreau's life and came up with a creative idea for us to explore

all the different sides of you. “

Read the picture book to them and then have them brainstorm with you some of the things that Thoreau was passionate about or adjectives we could use to describe him:

Writer, reader, nature lover, philosopher, friend

Activity:

“Today we are going to do an activity in which you will start to think about what you are passionate about / adjectives/ roles you would use to describe yourself. Today we are going to brainstorm, and tomorrow we will use them to create an art project and activity.”

In order to get the students warmed up to this activity, you will post a series of prompts around the room. Have students take their clip boards and worksheets (with the prompts) and visit some of the prompts. You can assign two or three to one and then time them for a few minutes and give them a cue to rotate to the next prompt. Explain before you begin the activity, that some of the prompts might come quick, some might take some thought, and some you might not find an answer to in the time provided. This is ok, it is just an activity to get them warmed up.

Some prompts:

What is your role/s in your family ? (son, grandson, nephew, brother)

What do you love to do in your spare time? (read, play video games, play with friends, make crafts)

What are your favorite books/ book to read?

After you have given them a chance to explore prompts and think of answers to write on their worksheet, have them settle down at their desk to keep brainstorming answers.

This worksheet will feed into Lesson 3.

We All Beat to Our Own Drums

Lesson 3: Silhouette of Me Project

Objectives:

- create artistic representation of themselves and their unique passions and interests
- present to audience in a clear voice
- follow multiple step directions

Overview:

As a follow up from the previous lesson, students will take their passions / interests and create an artistic representation of themselves in a silhouette of their heads.

Materials Needed:

- Digital camera or phone
- Sharpies
- Tag board
- Coloring pencils/ crayons
- Black construction paper

Activity:

1. Have students pull out their worksheet from the previous lesson. Explain to them that today you are going to have them make picture representations of their interests and put them in a silhouette of their heads.
2. Show them some examples of silhouettes and give them this definition: the dark shape and outline of someone or something visible against a lighter background, especially in dim light.

Explain that before there were cameras, people made silhouettes of people as a way to represent them.

Some pictures of silhouettes to show them:

<https://s-media-cache-ak0.pinimg.com/originals/71/52/c0/7152c0c2e215a7910377786b1108a706.jpg>

<https://s-media-cache-ak0.pinimg.com/736x/f3/2b/c0/f32bc0946c92c3410ea9c2b4368be25b--silhouette-portrait-silhouette-art.jpg>

Thoreau Connection:

Show them this example of a silhouette of Henry David Thoreau

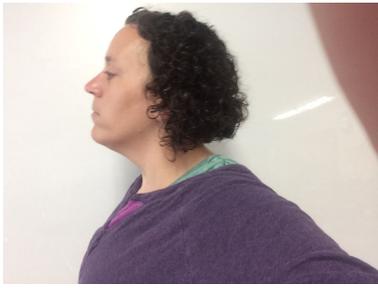
<https://static01.nyt.com/images/2017/06/02/arts/02THOREAU1/02THOREAU1-blog427.jpg>

3. Explain to students that you are going to create silhouettes of each of their heads but that instead of filling it in with black you are going to fill them in with pictures of their passions and interests. See the link below for a visual example:

<https://s-media-cache-ak0.pinimg.com/originals/e2/be/1d/e2be1d2b456c0170d21c0c87dfe43055.jpg>

4. To begin project take a picture of each student's profile

I have included a picture of my profile since I didn't get a chance to practice yet with a child.



5. Next, print out the profile (you may need to adjust size/crop photo for your needs) and then have students use sharpie/pen to outline their profile and cut it out.

6. After they have cut out their profile, have them trace it on an 8 ½ x 11 piece of tag board.

7. In the outline, they should start to draw pictures (inspired from the previous lesson's worksheet) of the things that represent their passions / interests. They should use a pen or sharpie to outline the pictures and then fill in the space around the drawings.

8. To finish the artwork, you will have the students cut out their silhouettes and then glue them to fit on an 8 ½ x 11 black piece of construction paper

9. Have students then share their silhouettes and give a brief explanation of 5-7 of the items they included and how those pictures represents part of their talents,

passions and interests.

Once I am back at school, I plan to make more examples for my students and will share photos of these with you to supplement these lessons.

