

WS Walden MIDDLE Lesson Plan

April Ballard, M.Ed, BS



Title: Walden: The Ballad of Thoreau

Subject: Language Arts, Music, Social Studies Drama

Length of Lesson: four class periods

Grade Level: 7th & 8th Grade

The topic of this lesson is Henry David Thoreau. This lesson plan is designed to explore the life of Henry David Thoreau and the time he spent on Walden Pond and also the inspiration and principles of Ralph Waldo Emerson. This lesson encourages students to reflect upon the notion of what Henry David Thoreau hopes to accomplish, feel and the lifestyle he adopts as a result of his time on Walden Pond. This lesson will focus on the strong environmental themes throughout the play, as Henry David Thoreau is celebrated as a founder of the “green movement”.

Students will watch “Walden, The Ballad of Thoreau”. This lesson plan is designed to educate students about the history of Henry David Thoreau and specifically his message of protecting our environment. This lesson will also encourage an appreciation of our environment and an inspiration to create their own environmental music and art. The lesson will enable the students to recognize that their music and art encourage a sense of community which will inspire others to take care of environment. The lesson will allow students to apply what they learn about Henry David Thoreau into their lives by creating music/art and realizing the way it will encourage a sense of community and inspire others. Within the lesson, students will have an opportunity to explore the history of Henry David Thoreau and his time spent on Walden Pond, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and the strong environmental theme throughout the play.

Grade Level: 7th & 8th

- ***Objective:*** Students will develop an understanding of Henry David Thoreau and his time spent on Walden Pond, his inspiration from Ralph Waldo Emerson, and the strong environmental themes throughout the play. Students will understand the history and all that Henry David Thoreau did to inspire the green movement, while also learn the importance of taking care of our environment, the value of being able to relax and enjoy nature (in a world that is often so technologically focused), and also the ways that music and art influence and inspire. This will allow them to learn about history, environmental issues, and will also allow them to apply this knowledge and creativity to create their own music and/or art-form. Creativity encouraged through creating their own unique version of a song. In addition, it is beneficial for students to realize that Thoreau was not a successful writer initially, but it did not stop him from writing. Students will hopefully be encouraged by this to create their own art, play music, and/or write.

➤

Connection to English Language Arts Standards:

- **Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development;** summarize the key supporting details and ideas
- Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words
- Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes
- Write an informative/explanatory text to: examine a topic, convey ideas, concepts and information through: text selection, organization and analysis of relevant content
- Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose and audience

Connection to Arts & Humanities Standards:

- Identify and classify styles, forms, types and genre within art forms (e.g., modern dance and the ethnic dance, a ballad and a patriotic song)
- Communicate a unifying theme or point of view through the production of works in the arts
- Describe to what purpose philosophical ideas generated by artists can be conveyed through works in the arts and humanities
- Students make sense of ideas and communicate ideas with music

Connection to Music Standards:

- Students speak using appropriate forms, conventions, and styles to communicate ideas and information to different audiences for different purposes
- Students make sense of ideas and communicate ideas with the visual arts
- Students make sense of ideas and communicate ideas with music
- Students make sense of and communicate ideas with movement
- Students analyze their own and others' artistic products and performances using accepted standards
- The arts fulfill a variety of purposes in society (e.g., to present issues and ideas, to entertain, to teach or persuade, to design, plan and beautify)
- The arts have value and significance for daily life. They provide personal fulfillment, whether in career settings, avocational pursuits, or leisure
- The arts provide forms of nonverbal communication that can strengthen the presentation of ideas and emotions
- The elements of music, dance and drama are intentionally applied in creating and performing
- Identify and analyze the use of elements of art (e.g., line, shape, color properties, color schemes/groups, form, texture, space, value) and principles of design (e.g., repetition, emphasis, pattern, balance, contrast, rhythm, proportion, movement in a variety of two and three dimensional artworks)
- The arts are powerful tools for understanding human experiences both past and present
- The arts help us understand others' (often very different) ways of thinking, working, and expressing ourselves
- Create or write new, observe, choose and perform dramatic works to fulfill a variety of specific purposes

Connection to Science Standards:

- Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research (Climate Change, Environmental Issues)

Description of Lesson/Activities & Procedures:

The goal is to for students to celebrate the life of Henry David Thoreau and all that he did for environmentalism. We want the students to realize the importance of taking care of our environment and the ways that they are able to do so in their daily lives. In addition, students will develop an awareness of the way that music and art delivers a message and encourages community. This lesson encompasses many subjects. Science is incorporated as students learn the importance of taking care of the environment. Both critical and creative thinking are encouraged and incorporated as students explore the various approaches to deliver the message of environmentalism while also explaining the historical importance of all that Henry David Thoreau did for this message. Ask students how the play demonstrates this message? Students are encouraged to incorporate several different approaches within the project. Students may present their information in the form of, poetry/ballad, musical performance, dramatic/theatrical piece, and artistically such as symbolic illustrations and photography. Students are encouraged to unite together so that their voices are heard.

Activity 1: Introduction and discussion is very important for this topic. Warm up discussion questions will encourage students to begin thinking about the life of Henry David Thoreau and his way of life, ways to take care of the environment and the many ways harm to it influences our lives. For instance, ask students what they think of when they think of ways to be kind to our environment. Students are encourage students to reflect upon how they feel it is a chain reaction once damage is done to the environment. Meaning, how does one action influence another and so on and so forth. Empower the students by asking them what they can do to help treat the environment with love and attention and how they may also raise awareness and prevention to stop some of the damaging acts to our environment. Also, empower the students by encouraging them to really take an interest and creatively present their project and outreach campaign that encourages others to take care of the environment. This time may also be used to have students work collaboratively to begin brainstorming for an outreach campaign to share their message. Students are encouraged to begin sharing ideas and discussing ideas to include the community. This will improve their skills on working collaboratively and also networking as they begin to contact others in the community. This process will encourage to think of the ways they wish to really make an impact and relay their message. For the first activity, students are encouraged to brainstorm ways to creatively present the message of taking care of our environment. Students are encouraged to recognize the ways in which Ralph Waldo Emerson influenced Henry David Thoreau. Ralph Waldo Emerson encouraged individuality and finding the truth within yourself. Ask students to ponder upon those in their lives that influence them positively and impact their lives. Ask students also how they feel Ralph Waldo Emerson challenged Thoreau. Also ask students to reflect upon Rachel's view and her role in the play.

In addition, encourage students to discuss the concept of disconnecting in order to connect. Ask students to reflect upon the ways that technology is productive and non-productive. How did Henry David Thoreau feel after his time spent on Walden Pond? How did it help him to realize the many benefits of nature? Have students spent some time in nature without the use of their cell phones or technology and then reflect upon the way they feel. Activity 1 is brainstorming

and working with others, while the activity 2 will have students focus on the information within Walden. Activity 3 is the performance piece of the lesson (may be expanded in WoodSongs Coffeehouse)

Students are encouraged to raise awareness through various creative approaches. Encourage students to reflect upon their audience as they design their project.

Activity 2: Activity 2 will have students write an informational text in which they discuss the life of Henry David Thoreau. Students will reflect upon the Walden Play and all that it taught them about his life, his message of environmentalism and also the influence of Ralph Waldo Emerson. Students will reflect upon how the message of Henry David Thoreau (and the Walden Play) promotes the message of environmentalism. Introduce quotes to the students to initiate their thoughts on the topic. A powerful quote to promote students to be proactive in taking care of our environment is as follows, “Things do not change; we change”. This allows the students to feel that their actions and message is incredibly important and necessary. Students should feel that their influence is powerful on the future of our environment. Therefore, their understanding of the principles presented in Walden is important, as it contributes to their creative delivery of their message along with their outreach. Informational text is encouraged to introduce the topic with valuable references to support the evidence and information. Then, students are encouraged to incorporate various artistic ways of relaying and expressing their message. Drawings, paintings, and photography to express this message are also strongly encouraged. Students will also learn through this process that there are various methods to present information and relay messages. The project for this class will include an outreach campaign organized by the students to encourage the importance of taking good care of our environment for our future. Students are encouraged to reflect upon daily habits that they may incorporate into their lives in order to do so. For instance, recycling, water preservation, and not littering.

This project encompasses critical and creative thinking as students begin to plan and organize their project.

Activity 3: The project will be presented to their peers and teachers. In addition, students will organize this project further and continue to raise awareness and they may wish to contact local radio and newspapers. This will help the students to build communication skills and also feel a part of something that is making an impact on the lives of so many people. It is our hope that the students will feel inspired to collaborate and put together a project and/or campaign that really relays all they've learned from watching Walden; in turn Henry David Thoreau and Ralph Waldo Emerson. This may include their performance piece (Activity 1) in which students either perform a ballad/song, recite poetry or a short story, present art work, and/or a theatrical piece. This project encourages creative thinking and for the students to individualize their project in a way they feel best presents the message. Students are encouraged to creatively express this message and relay information in their safe and encouraging school environment.

Rubric and Guidelines:

Demonstrates an understanding of artistic and musical expression as it relates to the message of promoting a message (Environmentalism)	Shows an enriched and strong understanding of Henry David Thoreau's message as portrayed by his life principles and shown in, "Walden, The Ballad of Thoreau"	Shows an understanding of the information presented in the Walden play and Henry David Thoreau's message	Shows somewhat of an understanding of the information in the Walden Play and Henry David Thoreau's message	Does not seem to understand Henry David Thoreau's message and the way in which he is a founder of environmentalism
Demonstrates an understanding of how their projects will portray the importance of environmentalism; understands how music and art express important points.	Understanding is clear of how the arts and music express important points	Is able to somewhat make the connection	Demonstrates an understanding of information and musical and art expression demonstrated in the Walden Play, but not entirely connecting it to their own project design	An understanding of the play and the principles of Henry David Thoreau is not evident.
Project clearly expresses the importance of taking care of our environment	Very well	Fairly well	Needs some extra guidance	Exhibits little to none of the desired goal
Stays on Task and works collaboratively while designing project	Stays on task all (100%) of the time.	Stays on task most (99-90%) of the time.	Stays on task some (89%-75%) of the time.	Stays more off task than on task.