

Curriculum - Henry David Thoreau and The Green New Deal

Developed by NEH Summer Scholar, Dr. Carol Graham

Four Units

Each Unit Contains:

**Four Essential Questions*

**Three Lesson Plans (including objectives, step by step classroom instruction guidelines and Resources)*

Curriculum Description: *This curriculum is designed for an eleventh- grade literature classroom with a title and emphasis on “Why Henry David Thoreau Matters and The Green New Deal.” This classroom also has an environmental component, which dovetails nicely with this curriculum which examines and explores Thoreau’s writings and discoveries, while capitalizing on the strong environmental concerns that young people have today. The essential questions, lesson plans and goals are written in a general enough form (resources included) and can be modified for use in elementary, middle schools and all levels of high school.*

Henry Thoreau- Living in Society (Thread Number 1)

Unit 1

Essential Questions for Living in Society

- 1.) What predictions can be made comparing Thoreau’s experiences and today’s; The Green New Deal?
- 2.) How did Thoreau use his writings to better understand himself?
- 3.) What was Thoreau’s relationship with society?
- 4.) How does Thoreau’s writings of himself and society reflect upon his thoughts on government responsibilities?

Lesson Plan 1

Objective (Lesson Plan 1-3): Examining Henry David Thoreau and climate change.

Introduce students to Henry David Thoreau’s life and observations on nature by sharing and displaying for the classroom, the Concord Museum online-exhibition. Pause and engage students in small group and whole class conversations about Thoreau’s nature observations on climate change. Utilize the following link:

Lesson Plan 1, (continued)

<https://concordmuseum.org/online-exhibition/early-spring-henry-thoreau-and-climate-change/>

After viewing the video, organize students into small groups (3-4 students per group). Ask students to decide as a group, the three most important ideas of Thoreau's discoveries (from the video) on plants and why they chose them. Have each group share their selections, identifying their reasoning as a whole class. Have one member of each of the groups, write the group's selections on the board. If time permits, decide as a class the top three Thoreau observations/discoveries on climate change.

Next, ask students what they know about "The Green New Deal." List their thoughts (guesses/predictions), on the board. Share the following two links with students. Afterwards, compare and contrast their thoughts and ideas prior to viewing both selections with their thoughts and ideas after viewing the selection.

Give students a written copy of the scoring rubric (*chosen by teacher/school/district*), to be utilized for grading purposes for student journal writing assignments and the final two classes presentation and project (Unit 4, Lesson Plans 2 and 3). Each student/group presentation and project discussion time limit will be approximately eight minutes (four minutes for the presentation, four minutes to describe, discuss and display their project for the class). Essentially, the top score would consist of high quality, journal writing assignments, a presentation and a project. High quality would consist of evidence that exhibits specific, detailed insights and observations, excellent evidence/reasoning support, strong connections demonstrated and no grammatical errors.

If time permits in this class period or at the beginning of Lesson Two, compare and contrast Henry David Thoreau's reflections on climate change with their reflections on "The Green New Deal."

<https://www.vox.com/videos/2019/6/12/18653754/green-new-deal-video>

<https://www.vox.com/energy-and-environment/2018/12/21/18144138/green-new-deal-alexandria-ocasio-cortez>

Lesson Plan 2

Review the main points of the Green New Deal in a whole class discussion. List students' contributions on the board for the entire class to see. Next to the list write "What can the students in Mrs./Mr. (insert teacher's name) Classroom do to combat the effects of climate change?" Beneath this question write: "What would Henry David Thoreau act upon to combat the effects of climate change with his own behavior, his writings and viewpoint on society and

Lesson Plan 2 (continued)

governmental responsibilities? Then say, “Students think about these two questions as we learn more about Henry David Thoreau’s Life as we view the next three video segments. Each reveal

various informational facts about Henry David Thoreau including two photographs of Henry David Thoreau. Jot down ideas, notes or insights that you find interesting in your journals, as you are viewing the segments, to share with the class afterwards.

<https://concordmuseum.org/collections/the-henry-david-thoreau-collection/>

http://thoreau.library.ucsb.edu/thoreau_life.html

<https://www.loc.gov/item/95513963/>

(Pictures of Henry D. Thoreau)

Lesson Plan 3

Divide the students into groups of 3-4 students per group. Ask students to discuss as a group, the suggestions given in the previous class from the question that was provided: “What can the students in Mrs./Mr. (*insert your teacher’s name*) classroom do to combat the effects of climate change?” Ask students to review each suggestion through the eyes of Henry David Thoreau, utilizing the information students gleaned from viewing the three video segments on Henry David Thoreau’s life during the previous lesson and any notes/ideas and insights that they have written in their journals during viewing. Direct students to complete this activity prior to students viewing the next two segments on Henry David Thoreau and the Preservation of Forests Movement. Ask each group to identify the top three choices for the class to implement, that they think would be educational, fun, and assist in combating the effects of climate change that Henry David Thoreau would applaud and encourage if he was a part of this classroom today. Examples of projects might be, but are not limited to designing and discussion of an environmentally friendly cabin, garden, landscape, farmer’s field, food preparation, clothing, equipment for utilization, water preservation in a landscape, field, personal garden, cooking and living, constructed in any medium of materials.

<https://concordmuseum.org/online-exhibition/>

<https://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=amrv&fileName=v28//amrv28.db&recNum=0&itemLink=r%3Fammem%2Fconsrvbib%3A%40field%28NUMBER%2B%40band%28amrv%2Bv28%29%29%3A&linkText=0>

(Preservation of forests movement)

Henry Thoreau- Living in Nature (Thread Number 2)

Unit 2

Essential Questions for Living in Nature

- 1.) What did Thoreau mean when he wrote, “Paradise (to be) Regained?”**
- 2.) How can Thoreau’s reflections about nature help/teach us?**
- 3.) What connections did Thoreau make between ourselves, society and the world as a whole?**
- 4.) How do the experiences of the seven people compare and contrast with Thoreau’s experience at Walden?**

Lesson Plan 1

Objective (Lesson Plan 1-3): Writing reflections about Thoreau and creating an authentic model.

Write/Show all four essential questions for living in nature on the board. Briefly reflect upon the discussions, videos and group assignments that students completed during Unit 1.

Then ask students to write their own thoughts, predictions and reflections in their journals, for the first three essential questions based on the information learned and experienced in Unit 1. Give students about twenty minutes to complete this task, then open the classroom up for students to share their responses and reflections.

Ask students to select one of the three top choices selected by the classroom to implement from Unit 1, Lesson three, to design and create a three-dimensional miniature model complete with descriptors, analysis and supportive facts to present to the entire class during Unit four, Lesson three. Remind students to incorporate Thoreau’s thoughts and ideas about nature, society and governmental responsibilities and today’s climate change directives into their chosen model.

Encourage students to work on these projects in groups, utilizing their journals, classroom notes and classroom discussions from the previous lessons. Lastly, share the experiences of the seven people (video) who gave up civilization to live in the wild. Encourage students to reflect on similarities and differences of each of the seven people compared to Thoreau’s experience at Walden.

<https://www.mnn.com/earth-matters/wilderness-resources/photos/7-people-who-gave-up-on-civilization-to-live-in-the-wild/7-people-who-gave-up-on-civilization-to-live-in-the-wild-0>

Lesson Plan 2

Allow students at least one half of class time to work in their groups on the presentation of their miniature models discussed and assigned in Unit 2, Lesson one. As students are working circulate around the room making note from one-on-one discussions, of which students are working together in groups/individually, and which of the three class selections they have chosen to create and present during the final class. Then briefly, give an overview of the following two resources, (videos) prior to students viewing them. Ask students to add to their journal entries any notes, interesting observations and insights they gain while viewing the two segments. Remind students that both videos provide additional support and reasons as to why Thoreau moved to Walden Pond and that this information will provide additional observations and insights in the creation and presentation of their own miniature models.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2013/04/21/books/review/a-man-for-all-seasons.html>

http://thoreau.library.ucsb.edu/thoreau_walden.html

(Why did Thoreau move to Walden Pond?)

Lesson Plan 3

Provide at least one half time of the class period for students to work on their presentations and projects.

Then read two or three excerpts from “Walden,” stopping after each excerpt for whole class discussion and reflection before continuing to read the next selected excerpt. Be sure to show each of the excerpts for students to view while each excerpt is being read. This will provide a deeper understanding of Thoreau’s writing and reflections. Provide the link for students to utilize outside the classroom and encourage students to complete the reading of “Walden,” on their own, continuing to take time to write personal observations and insights into their classroom journals to incorporate into their presentation and model projects.

https://books.googleusercontent.com/books/content?req=AKW5QacUBUeYuWeq2xM-sEUwNmxYc8RQ63e8f9KgKtRkloZUgqC3pEf-TRobwK4lwLzfo-9SFidhyUJdBVWvY-ft93IG7267yyqyhjTg_Kga9DJR2tk52ewvFQlVvC4qfW73RV8_ulePnQQWNax4Ql6wEpphDN3De9xHDYdDg-F-6B1sGnTaGp4LMReKbTFpSLY6k4vDttTmnSbUICPofTOZjSiBqIMqXr6LHR7R_boWr1NxFuOemymiC4NQaOySzCA2V1cuX8C

(Walden by Henry David Thoreau)

Henry Thoreau – Practicing Simplicity (Thread Number 3)

Unit 3

Essential Questions for Practicing Simplicity

- 1.) What lessons on living a simple life did Thoreau’s friends in Concord demonstrate on living with simplicity?
- 2.) How is “the poetry of the farmer’s life,” reflected in the writings of Thoreau?
- 3.) How does Thoreau’s writings reflect upon the relationship of the aim of a laborer and work?
- 4.) How does practicing simplicity apply to Thoreau and The Green New Deal?

Lesson Plan 1

Objective (Lesson 1-3): Practicing simplicity in Thoreau’s life and our lives in today’s world.

Ask students to write 3 examples in their journals as to how Henry David Thoreau practiced living with simplicity. Students can share their examples in small groups and then each group can share with the classroom. Then ask students to think about how Thoreau’s neighbors and friends helped him to demonstrate how to live life simply. Ask students what they think that Thoreau meant when he wrote about “the poetry of the farmer’s life,” and “the aim of the laborer and work.” Remind students to add any additional insights or observations from class discussions to their journals. Then, enrich students’ understanding of Thoreau’s quotes and writings on practicing simplicity, by having them view the video segment (link provided below), containing quotes from Thoreau on practicing simplicity. Save time for students to share one of their favorite quotes and reasoning as to why the quote they selected was their favorite and how the quote might reflect upon the concepts learned about The Green New Deal.

<https://www.walden.org/quotation-category/morals-and-values/simplicity/>

(Henry Thoreau- Quotes on Practicing Simplicity)

Lesson Plan 2

The goal of this lesson is to provide each student (if working on the project as an individual student), and each group working on the project, time to briefly share their progress and receive suggestions, comments and feedback on their project with the class. Remind students that the due date for their projects will be (share chosen date), and the presentation of their projects will be during Unit 4 Lesson 3 class time. Call on student volunteers/groups one at a time allowing five minutes for each individual/group introduction and brief overview of their project. Allow an additional five minutes for the rest of the class to provide feedback,

Lesson Plan 2 (continued)

suggestions and comments. Remind students prior to sharing and providing feedback, that all feedback and comments should be positive and encouraging in nature.

Then make sure all students have had the opportunity to speak about their projects and receive positive suggestions and feedback.

If time permits during this lesson, show, read and stop to discuss in segments, the article (link below, "Practicing Simplicity"), as a whole classroom activity.

<http://simplicitycollective.com/acts-of-opposition>

(Practicing Simplicity Article)

Lesson Plan 3

Write the fourth essential question on the board:

How does practicing simplicity apply to Thoreau and The Green New Deal?

Explain to students that the goal of this class period is to compare and contrast the concept of practicing simplicity through the eyes of Henry David Thoreau and The Green New Deal plan. If students have not had the opportunity to view and discuss the article (link provided in the previous lesson, "Practicing Simplicity"), complete this activity first.

Then ask students to write their reflections, notes and insights in their journals as they view the next video on "The Simple Life of Henry David Thoreau."

After the video concludes, ask student volunteers to share their journal writings, insights, observations and discoveries.

1.) Ask: "Did you learn something new about the life of simplicity in this video that you did not know before about Henry David Thoreau?"

2.) Then ask this follow-up question: Can this concept/idea/method be applied to implementing "The Green New Deal?"

<http://simplicitycollective.com/the-simple-life-of-henry-david-thoreau>

Henry Thoreau- Choosing Life with Principle (Thread Number 4)

Unit 4

Essential Questions for Choosing Life with Principle

- 1.) How does Thoreau think of himself, as a man and a subject in society?**
- 2.) What is the meaning of Thoreau’s comment, “Men know well which side their bread is buttered,” describe?**
- 3.) Why does Thoreau lament, “it is a strange world when republics, kingdoms and empires come begging to a private man’s door?”**
- 4.) What relationships can be found between Thoreau’s Life and The Green New Deal?**

Lesson Plan 1

Objective (Lesson 1-3): Tying the Principles outlined in the Green New Deal Program to the principles of Henry D. Thoreau.

Write and display the first three out of the four essential questions for students:

- 1.) How does Thoreau think of himself, as a man and a subject in society?
- 2.) What is the meaning of Thoreau’s comment, “Men know well which side their bread is buttered,” describe?
- 3.) Why does Thoreau lament, “It is a strange world when republics, kingdoms and empires come begging to a private man’s door?”

Read aloud the three essential questions. Then provide students twenty minutes to write their thoughts and insights in their journals regarding these three essential questions. Remind students to review and utilize in their writings, previous notes, insights and observations recorded in their journals from previous classroom assignments, discussions, videos and student classroom remarks during the sharing experience in the classroom. If students have some difficulty on the third essential question, tell them to do their best to predict what Thoreau might have meant and tell them more insight will be provided after this activity. Provide at least twenty minutes (or more if each of the students have not had the opportunity to share their journal writings/notations during the discussion).

After this discussion and sharing experience, ask students to reflect upon a follow-up question:

Lesson Plan 1 (continued)

How did Henry David Thoreau arrive at the understanding/principle that; “Men know well which side their bread is buttered?”

(This question previews and provides an opportunity for students to reflect on the word and concept of “principle,” in their own lives and provoke students to think deeply about how

Henry David Thoreau thoughts about the concept of “principle,” in preparation for the upcoming classroom videos.) (Links for the videos are below.)

If time permits, after students have viewed the videos:

- *Review with students the question and discussion prior to viewing the videos.
- *Give a brief summary of the highlights and observations from the students.
- *Engage students in sharing and discussing their observations on the same question after viewing the videos.
- *Ask students: Have their thoughts, reflections and observations changed?

<https://www.videoproject.com/Life-With-Principle-Thoreaus-Voice-in-our-Time.html>

https://www.nytimes.com/2012/04/19/opinion/early-bloomers.html?_r=4&hpw&

(Thoreau’s Quote: “It is not what you look at, it is what you see.”) Article-What Bloomed during Thoreau’s Life and What is Blooming now, 160 years later.)

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/changepower/201811/6-ways-discover-and-choose-your-core-values>

(How to choose your core values)

Lesson Plan 2

Presentations:

Plan for one half of the students in the class to complete their presentations and project display and discussion during lesson plan two and the remaining one half of the students/groups to complete their presentations and projects during lesson three (next class).

Lesson Plan 2 (continued)

Remind students/group presenters of the time limits and grading process prior to beginning the final presentations, project discussions and displays. Call on volunteers that would like to begin with their presentations and projects.

Lesson Plan 2 (continued)

Ask students that are viewing the presentations, to note in their journals which classmates/groups are presenting and one or two positive, informative/encouraging remarks about the presenter/group's presentation and project display/discussion while each is presenting.

After each presentation, for approximately three-five minutes, call on student volunteers that would like to share their comments from their journal notes about the presentation they just viewed, before beginning the next presentation.

Lesson Plan 3

Presentations:

Plan for the remaining one half of the students in the class to have the opportunity to give their presentations, display and discuss their projects.

Remind students/group presenters of the time limits and grading process prior to beginning the final presentations, project discussions and displays. Call on volunteers that would like to begin with their presentations and projects.

Ask students that are viewing the presentation, to note in their journals first names of their classmates that are presenting and then write one or two positive, informative/encouraging remarks about the presenter/group's presentation and project display/discussion while each is presenting.

After each presentation, for approximately three-five minutes, call on student volunteers that would like to share their comments from their journal notes about the presentation they just viewed, before beginning the next presentation.