

Teacher: Jeannine Mendoza

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Journal Unit

Three lessons (or more if you wish)

Rationale: According to Judith C. Hochman and Natalie Wexler who wrote The Writing Revolution, keeping a journal helps individuals improve mental clarity, solve problems, document their struggles and relationships, and facilitate personal growth. Journals have been used by individuals throughout history, most notably by Henry David Thoreau, whose journal entries, musings and discussions led to writing Walden, Civil Disobedience, and other essays.

Subject: Language Arts/Social Studies

California Common Core Standards

Standards for Informational Text, Grade 7

- 1.0 Cite several pieces of textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
 - 2.0 Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text; provide an objective summary of the text.
 - 3.0 Analyze how particular elements of a story or drama interact.

Primary Objective for the Unit: Following an examination and discussion of certain Thoreau selections from Thoreau's own journal, the students will come to an understanding of journals and how the use of journals can help them deal with their concerns and problems. They also will see how reading Thoreau's journal can give readers an insight into the writer/philosopher/naturalist himself.

Lesson One: Introduction to the Unit- Journaling

Overview: Following some examination of the writing of Thoreau, and discussion, students will compose a reaction paragraph to Thoreau's writing and ideas.

Materials: Handout 1, writing materials, six or seven books of Thoreau's writing, perhaps a Thoreau biography, map of Massachusetts, Concord city map

1. Anticipatory Set: The students will be seated at their desks and the teacher will give them a short presentation of Henry David Thoreau, the famous poet/philosopher and American writer who lived in Massachusetts from 1817-1862. The teacher will describe how Thoreau lived his life on his own terms, and influenced American thought and behavior in the nineteenth century.
2. Purpose: The teacher will go over some excerpts of Thoreau's diaries and the students will be given the opportunity to read and react to them. This will give the students some exposure to an important American philosopher from the 1800's who did not follow the crowd, wrote against slavery, advocated reforming government and embracing nature.
3. Input: The students will be shown the copy of Handout 1, a list of Thoreau's excerpts from his journal and other writing. The students will be allowed five minutes to read and react to an excerpt, deciding whether the excerpt pertains to nature, society, or philosophy. The students will list descriptive words used by Thoreau. Then they will write a reaction to the excerpt.
4. Modeling: The teacher will model a personal reaction to an excerpt. The

teacher will show the students how to give evidence and examples that back up the teacher's opinions.

5. Guided Practice: The teacher will guide the students as they share their reactions to Thoreau's writing with other class members.

6. Checking For Understanding: The teacher will make sure that all students participate on some level in the discussion, and will collect the reaction papers that the students completed.

7. Independent Practice: The students can share their own use of journals or the journals of others (for example, Anne Frank) and the importance and use of journal writing.

Lesson Two: Introduction to Journaling

Overview: The students will be given their own new journal to be used for class and in whatever way the student wishes. The students will decorate their own journal to suit themselves. The students will write an introduction if they choose or at least make an initial entry.

Materials: One new journal per student, markers, pencils, rulers, glue sticks, colored paper, stickers, scissors, writing materials, six or seven books of Thoreau's writing, a Thoreau biography, map of Massachusetts, Concord city map

1. Anticipatory Set: The students will be reminded of Thoreau and his journals. Then the teacher will describe how the students will be given a new journal of his/her own to be used in class and elsewhere. If possible, the teacher could share some decorated journals from previous classes.
2. Purpose: The students will personalize and begin to use their own journal, and these journals will help the students document their days, work through their individual problems, and facilitate personal growth. The journals can also be used during class time for projects.
3. Input: The teacher will pass out the new journals to the students and describe how the journals can be personalized. The teacher will remind the students that their journal should reflect the student's own identity, their likes, favorite color, etc.
4. Modeling: The teacher will model how the students can decorate their journals and personalize them. The teacher will demonstrate how the first page could be used for a personal statement or at least for the name, class, and date.

5. Guided Practice: With the teacher's guidance, the students will decorate and personalize their journals. The teacher will answer questions, offer suggestions, and assist students in the journal making.

6. Checking For Understanding: The teacher will walk around the room, making sure that each student is working on the project and possibly working on a journal entry

7. Independent Practice: The students can write in their journal, describing the process of journal making, or they can do an actual journal entry of their choice.

Lesson Three: Outdoor Observation #1 and Journal Entry

Overview: The students will go outdoors to a garden or wooded area and be given thirty minutes to observe and otherwise commune with nature like Thoreau did, and make a journal entry describing and/or reacting to what they see, hear, feel and smell .

Materials: Students will bring their own bug spray if necessary, new journals, writing materials and sun block if needed.

1. Anticipatory Set: The students will be reminded of how Thoreau chronicled his stay at Walden with his diary, and how nature influenced his writing and his viewpoint.
2. Purpose: The students will be told that their assignment today is to spend time with nature and write a journal entry that reflects their experience.
3. Input: The teacher will set up some ground rules for the students. First, this time is not for socializing, but a time for observing nature. Second, the teacher will remind the students that they are expected to emulate Thoreau and write a journal entry about their observation.
4. Modeling: The teacher will offer some of Thoreau's actual journal entries as a model for writing descriptive sentences.
5. Guided Practice: The students will be given thirty minutes to observe nature and an additional fifteen to write a journal entry. The teacher will supervise.

6. Checking For Understanding: The teacher will monitor the area, making sure that each student is on task, but the teacher will not intrude on the quiet observation that is taking place.

7. Independent Practice: The students can write in their journals and make sketches that relate to the natural surroundings. They can also share their journal entries after the initial 45 minutes.

Handout 1

This is June, the month of grass and leaves. The deciduous trees are investing the evergreens and revealing how dark they are. Already the aspens are trembling again, and a new summer is offered me. I feel a little fluttered in my thoughts, as if I might be too late. Each season is but an infinitesimal point. It no sooner comes than it is gone. It has no duration. It simply gives a tone and hue to my thought. Each annual phenomenon is a reminiscence and prompting. Our thoughts and sentiments answer to the revolutions of the seasons, as two cog-wheels fit into each other. We are conversant with only one point of contact at a time, from which we receive a prompting and impulse and instantly pass to a new season or point of contact. A year is made up of a certain series and number of sensations and thoughts which have their language in nature. Now I am ice, now I am sorrel. Each experience reduces itself to a mood of the mind.

Journal, June 6, 1857

Strange that so few ever come to the woods to see how the pine lives and grows and spires, lifting its evergreen arms to the light, --to see its perfect success...

From The Maine Woods

A windy day. What have these high and roaring winds to do with the fall? No doubt they speak plainly enough to the sap that is in these trees...

Ah, if I could put into words that music which I hear ; that music which can bring tears to the eyes of marble statues! – to which the very muscles of men are obedient!

Journal, September 28, 1852

The wilderness is near, as well as dear to every man. Even the oldest villages are indebted to the border of wild wood which surrounds them, more than to the gardens of men. There is something indescribably inspiring and beautiful in the aspect of the forest skirting, and occasionally jutting into the midst of new towns ,which, like the sand heaps of fresh fox burrows, have sprung up in their midst. The very uprightness of the pines and maples asserts the ancient rectitude and vigor of nature. Our lives need the relief of such a background, where the pine flourishes and the jay still screams.

From A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers

I went to the woods because I wished to lie deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die , discover that I had not lived.

From Walden

Every day a new picture is painted and framed, held up for half an hour , in such lights as the Great Artist chooses, and then withdrawn , and the curtain falls.

And then the sun goes down , and long the afterglow gives light. And then the damask curtains glow along the western window. And now the first star is lit, and I go home.

Journal, January 7, 1852

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.

From Walden

The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation. What is called resignation is confirmed desperation. From the desperate city you go into the desperate country, and have to console yourself with the bravery of minks and muskrats. A stereotyped but conscious despair is concealed even under what are called the games and amusements of mankind. There is no play in them, for this comes after work. But it is characteristic of wisdom not to do desperate things.

From Walden

Each new year is a surprise to us. We find that we had virtually forgotten the note of each bird, and when we hear it again it is remembered like a dream, reminding us of a previous state of existence. How happens it that the associations it awakens are always pleasing, never saddening: reminiscences of our sanest hours? The voice of nature is always encouraging.

Journal, March 18, 1858