

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

Curriculum Unit: Being Awake, Aware, and Alive

Readings During Unit

The World is Too Much with Us by William Wordsworth (Poem)

From *Education* by Ralph Waldo Emerson (Essay)

Walking by Henry David Thoreau (Essay)

Educated by Tara Westover (Memoir)

Essential Questions

What is a person's role as a citizen of the world?

What does it mean to be "educated"?

Introduction

My students use the expression "Stay Woke," which means being aware of your surroundings and things going on, with a focus on social injustices (*Urban Dictionary*). These students are always connected to the happenings in the world via their phones, Snapchat, Twitter, and text messages. There is little disconnected time or time for self-reflection in their lives. To better their lives, I hope to introduce the principles of the Transcendentalists to them with a focus on what it means to them to be an educated citizen of the world.

Introductory Reading: *The World is Too Much with Us* by William Wordsworth (Poem)

The world is too much with us; late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers,-
Little we see in Nature that is ours;
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!
This Sea that bares her bosom to the moon;
The winds that will be howling at all hours,
And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers;
For this, for everything, we are out of tune;
It moves us not. Great God! I'd rather be
A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn;
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,

Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;

Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;

Or hear old Triton blow his wreath-ed horn.

Analyze this poem. What do you think Wordsworth is telling us? How does this apply to our lives today?

Required District Summer Reading- *Educated* by Tara Westover (Memoir)

Students in my school district approaching Dual Enrollment English must read Westover's memoir in the summer. This is the local university's required read as well. To assess knowledge of this reading, and to ensure the reading is done, students are given a list of items from the reading found below and are asked to make connections/explanations for each. How is the listed item key in the understanding of the text? Students keep in mind the overarching question, "What is a person's role as a citizen of the world?" and does "Education" and transcendentalist philosophy fit with any of these items/events?

Activity-Connections from *Educated* by Tara Westover

Ruby Ridge	Herbal Tinctures and potions	Bipolar Disorder
Midwifery	Illuminati	Singing and Annie
Racoon Eyes	Days of Abomination and Y2K	Muscle Testing
Jacob and Esau	Junkyard Salvage	Gates Cambridge Scholarship
Homeschooling	ACT	The Holocaust
Anna Mathea	Positive Liberty and Isaiah Berlin	Buck's Peak

In Class Reading and Discussion of Text- Using from *Education* by Ralph Waldo Emerson (Essay) and *Walking* by Henry David Thoreau (Essay), students will practice personal connection note taking. They will focus on Text-to-Self, Text-to-World, and Text-to-Text connections. I will also ask they keep a list of quotes which particularly resonate with them in the form of a commonplace book.

Text-to-Self Connections-

What does this reading remind you of?

Does anything in this reading remind you of anything in your own life?

Text-to-Text Connections-

What does this remind you of in another text you have read?

How is this text similar or different to other things you have read?

Text-to-World Connections-

What does this remind you of in the world today?

Activity-Commonplace Book Transformed into Art and a Shared Experience

Share Sophia Thoreau's leaves of her brother's writing via the document projector. These images can be found in *The Concord Museum Collections* book (pages 102-105).

Using the quotes compiled from the student's close reading and put into a commonplace book, students will choose their two favorite quotes from their commonplace books and write them on leaves using black Sharpies (making sure to sign author's name at the end). Birch bark and stones may also be used. Then, on our class nature walk around our local lake, (our Walden stand in) students will leave the stones in paths, bushes or trees for fellow "saunterers" to enjoy.

Activity-Classroom Transcendentalist Panel

Students are given the opportunity to hold a panel discussion in the guise of prominent people who have advocated for a simplistic lifestyle or one of materialism. These people, many of whom are deceased and from different eras, come together for a meeting of the minds. Although they would not have met in life, it is interesting to surmise what they might have said to one another if they engaged in conversation. The panelists are chosen because they have views that are in common or in contrast.

Panelists include: Henry David Thoreau*, Mahatma Gandhi*, Cornelius Vanderbilt*, Henry Ford*, Andrew Carnegie*, Margaret Fuller*, Nathaniel Hawthorne*, Louisa May Alcott*, Ralph Waldo Emerson*, Bill Gates*, Mother Teresa*, Tara Westover*, Kim Kardashian, John Muir, Teddy Roosevelt, Charles Koch, J. Paul Getty, Mark Zuckerberg, Jacques Cousteau, Irving Stowe, Larry Page, Martin Cooper, Martha Stewart, Jeff Bezos, Leo Tolstoy, Warren Buffet, George Soros, Robert Frost, Rachel Carson, Martin Luther King, Jr.

Teachers can do the panel two ways. One approach is to have the class or teacher select the first twelve panelists listed (asterisks) and use a 12-character panel. The other approach is to randomly assign a character to every person in the class and have them role play as the character in a class circle. I prefer the 12-character panel for an in-depth discussion.

All panelists will conduct research about their characters using primary and secondary sources and provide a description of themselves (character) on an index card for the moderator on panel day. The teacher portrays the role of the moderator. At times the moderator may ask for clarification from character panelists. Panelists may use notecards and should prepare answers as their character to these questions:

1. What is the role of materialism in your life?
2. What is the role of nature in your life?
3. What is the importance of spirituality in your life?
4. What is a person's role as a citizen in the world?
5. What are our obligations to the world itself?

6. What should we do with great wealth?
7. What is the most important law we should live by?
8. What is the greatest problem facing the world today?
9. How should this problem be overcome?
10. What does it mean to be “educated”?
11. What is a quote for which you would like to be remembered? Consider the themes in transcendental philosophy (or not) expressed by your quote such as self-reliance, individualism, anti-materialism, the beauty of nature, and simplicity.

On the panel discussion class day, I have a 90-minute block, students come dressed as their characters. I place a large character name plate in front of each student. Students contribute to the discussion by listening actively and responding with questions or comments to what another character has said. No one panelist is to monopolize the discussion. Begin the day with the moderator providing a brief introduction of each character provided to him/her by the panelist on a card and voicing the overarching question for the panel which is the benefits of materialism or simplicity as a lifestyle.

Setting up an auditorium works for easy discussion when using the essential 12 characters. If requiring entire class participation, arranging students in a circle in the classroom works well and follow the inner-outer circle method.

Read each question to the panel or direct it to the panel at large and give all a chance to respond. Call on characters who have questions for other characters. As a moderator, point out the points on which characters seem to agree or disagree. At the end, provide time for the audience to ask character’s questions and sum up the discussion and thank the audience and characters.