

# WS Walden COLLEGE Lesson Plan

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***Title: Walden: The Ballad of Thoreau***

***Subject: Language Arts, Music, History, Drama***

***Length of Lesson: five class periods***

***Grade Level: College Level***

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. This lesson will include instructions which will inform students how to write a Cinquain Poem. The lesson does not limit the art form to the poem of course, but this guideline is included as a possible option and/or additional option. The lesson will enable the students to recognize that their music and art encourages 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. Henry David Thoreau was not a successful writer initially, and it did not stop him from journaling daily about his time spent on Walden Pond. In fact, it took decades for the public to discover Thoreau. Students are encouraged to journal daily for one of the assignments detailed in the Activities/Procedure portion.

In addition, this lesson will include an activity in which students are asked to disconnect from technology. Explanation of this activity is included in the Activities/Procedure portion.

## ***Goals & Objectives:***

- Students will learn about the life and message of Henry David Thoreau
- Students will learn the strong connection to environmentalism and importance of taking care of our environment through the message of Henry David Thoreau (as portrayed in Walden)
- Students will learn the history of Henry David Thoreau and his time spent on Walden Pond
- Students will become familiar with terms such as self-sufficiency and climate change

- Students will develop communication skills while planning presentation and event
- Students will build communication skills while working collaboratively on presentation project
- Students will build creative thinking skills as they design their presentation
- Students will be able to make connections to how music unites people throughout various genres
- Students will ideally discover the value of disconnecting and develop an appreciate of nature and our environment
- Connection to their life experience as they reflect upon the ways to design a project which establishes a sense of community

***Vocabulary and Essential Points: Henry David Thoreau, Ralph-Waldo Emerson, Environmentalism, Self-Sufficiency, Earth Day, Climate Change, Climatologist***

***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. 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. This process will encourage to think of the ways they wish to really make an impact and relay their message. Also ask students to explore Rachel's role in the play? What is her point-of view?

For the first activity, students are encouraged to brainstorm ways to creatively present the message of taking care of our environment. 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 presentation piece of the lesson.

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. For instance, quotes may include the following by Henry David Thoreau: "Our generation abandons the enterprises of another like stranded vessels." Another 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 peers and instructor. Students may decide to organize this project further and continue to raise awareness by contacting local radio, newspapers and campus organizations. 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 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. Students will also design a rubric in which they evaluate their project.

Activity 4: Students are asked to engage in a stress relieving activity for at least one hour, without disrupting this exercise by checking phone and/or other devices, or submitting to other distractions, such as watching TV. For example, students may decide to go for a walk, exercise, read a book (not on a device), or visit a place designed for reflection. Write a reflection paper explaining how this type of disconnecting experience affected stress level and ability to return to school commitments. This activity will hopefully encourage students to be more active in nature and realize the way in which it essentially reconnects us, as demonstrated by Henry David Thoreau. Students are encouraged to journal their reflections just as Henry David Thoreau did in his journal. His reflections and quotes are a great inspiration for this activity.

***Additional Resource Purdue Owl; How to write a Cinquain Poem***

Method: Line 1 - a one word title (or 2 syllables)

Line 2 - a 2 word phrase that describes your title or you can just use two words (or 4 syllables)

Line 3 - a 3 word phrase that describes an action relating to your title or just actions words (or 6 syllables)

Line 4 - a 4 word phrase that describes a feeling relating to your topic or just feeling words (or 8 syllables)

Line 5 - one word that refers back to your title (or 2 syllables)

