

Unit: Lowell and the Industrial Revolution

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Lesson Topic: Art & Literature

Grade Level: Middle School

State Standards:

Class Time: 45-60 Minutes

Objectives:

- Learn basic facts about Henry David Thoreau
- Support one of Thoreau's famous statements in writing

Prerequisite knowledge/Background Information:

- Students will have a basic understanding of transcendentalism.

Materials:

- Photo slideshow of NEH photos of Thoreau actor and cabin reproduction
- Teacher-generated PowerPoint of two Thoreau quotes
- "Thinking about Thoreau" handout (quotes from brainyquotes.com—see below)

Procedure:

1. Show photo slideshow of the Thoreau actor and cabin reproduction.
2. Have students discuss briefly whether this cabin appeals to them, and have them explain why or why not.
3. Distribute the "Thinking about Thoreau" handout (below).
4. Read the Thoreau quotes to the students, answering any questions they might have.
5. Tell the students to choose one Thoreau quote they agree with.
6. Once the students have selected a Thoreau quote, they are to write a paragraph explaining what they think Henry David Thoreau was trying to say, and why they agree with it.
7. When the students have completed their paragraphs, divide them up into groups of three and let them read their responses to each other.
8. Instruct listeners to be ready agree or disagree about their groupmates quote and interpretation

Assessment

Students will write a paragraph explaining their interpretation of a Thoreau quote, and whether they agree with it or not.

Thinking about Thoreau

In his short life, Henry David Thoreau filled notebooks with his observations of nature and thoughts about people and life in general. Pick one of the following Thoreau comments that you agree with. Write that quote on top of a piece of notebook paper and then write a paragraph explaining what Thoreau is saying (summarize), stating why you believe it is true (expand) and describing how you have seen this in your own life or observed it in others (connect).

- A man is rich in proportion to the number of things he can afford to let alone.
- It is not enough to be busy. So are the ants. The question is: What are we busy about?
- Every creature is better alive than dead, men and moose and pine trees, and he who understands it aright will rather preserve its life than destroy it.
- Money is not required to buy one necessity of the soul.
- Heaven is under our feet as well as over our heads.
- I would rather sit on a pumpkin and have it all to myself, than be crowded on a velvet cushion.
- Our life is frittered away by detail... simplify, simplify.
- In the long run, men hit only what they aim at. Therefore, they had better aim at something high.
- Men have become the tools of their tools.
- 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.

quotes from www.brainyquotes.com