


Day 2: "Solitude" from Walden

Begin lesson

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	Teaching notes
	Click the "Begin lesson" button to view this lesson. Teaching notes for each slide will appear in this box.

Before the Lesson

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Before the Lesson	Teaching notes


Anchor Text

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<p style="text-align: center;">Walden: Solitude By Henry David Thoreau Published 1854</p> <p>This is a delicious evening, when the whole body is one sense, and imbibes delight through every pore. I go and come with a strange liberty in Nature, a part of herself. As I walk along the stony shore of the pond in my shirt-sleeves, though it is cool as well as cloudy and windy, and I see nothing special to attract me, all the elements are unusually congenial to me. The bullfrogs tramp to usher in the night, and the note of the whip-poor-will is borne on the rippling wind from over the water. Sympathy with the flattering alder and poplar leaves almost takes away my breath; yet, like the lake, my serenity is rippled but not ruffled. These small waves raised by the evening wind are as remote from storms as the smooth reflecting surface. Though it is now dark, the wind still blows and murmurs in the wood; the waves still dash, and some creatures halt the rest with their notes. The repose is never complete. The wildest animals do not repose, but seek their prey now; the fox, and skunk, and rabbit, now roam the fields and woods without fear. They are Nature's watchmen—links which connect the days of animated life.</p> <p>When I return to my house I find that visitors have been there and left their cards, either a bunch of flowers, or a wreath of evergreen, or a name in pencil on a yellow walnut leaf or a chip. They who come rarely to the woods take some little piece of the forest into their hands to play with by the way, which they leave, either intentionally or accidentally. One has peeled a willow wand, served it into a nice, and dropped it on my table. I could almost tell if visitors had called.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Teaching notes</p> <p>Download and print copies of the anchor text for each student.</p>
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Student Notes Sheet

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<p style="text-align: center;"> LearnZillion</p> <p>Name: _____ Date: _____</p> <p>Student name for: Walden "Solitude"</p> <p>Day 2</p> <p>1. According to paragraph 3, how solitary is Thoreau's life?</p> <p>2. Why does Thoreau consider his necessary feeling of loneliness to be "a slight misery"? Consider paragraph 4.</p> <p>3. What is Thoreau's purpose in paragraphs 12 and 13?</p> <p>4. How does Thoreau's idea of the dullness of man in paragraph 11 develop the idea of solitude?</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Teaching notes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This guided notes sheet provides students with the text-dependent questions associated with this lesson, and relevant graphic organizers. You may modify these sheets as needed. During class, students can use these sheets to record their responses, notes, or ideas. Use the back to record responses to the focus question. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Following class, collect student notes to use as a formative assessment.
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Getting Started

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<h1>Getting Started</h1>	Teaching notes

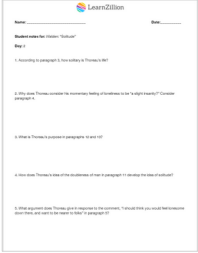
Introduction 1 of 2

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 <p style="color: green; font-style: italic;">Walden: "Solitude"</p> <p>Henry David Thoreau</p>	Teaching notes
	<p>Pacing: 5 minutes</p> <p>Notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pass out Student Notes Sheet for each student and ensure that they have a copy of the text that they began annotating yesterday. Remind students about the text, author, and what was discussed yesterday. A good way to do this would be to ask students to explain to their peers.

Introduction 2 of 2

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 <p>As we explore the text we will be asking and answering questions.</p> <p>We will find and keep track of evidence from the text to support our ideas about each question.</p>	Teaching notes
<p>author, and what was discussed yesterday. A good way to do this would be to ask students to explain to their peers.</p>	Pacing: 5 minutes Notes: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Pass out Student Notes Sheet for each student and ensure that they have a copy of the text that they began annotating yesterday.Remind students about the text,

Exploring the Text

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<h1>Exploring the Text</h1>	Teaching notes

Supporting Question 1

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According to paragraph 3, how solitary is Thoreau's life?

Teaching notes

Pacing: 5 minutes

Standard: RI.11-12.1

Purpose: This will help students differentiate between the ideas of solitude and loneliness according to Thoreau's perspective. This is critical for students' understanding of

Thoreau's point of view and the meaning of the text.

Answer: While Thoreau lives an incredibly solitary life, in a place isolated enough that "it is as much Asia or Africa as New England," he says that he does not in any way feel lonely. His nearest neighbor lives a mile away and he can see no evidence of humanity outside of his own cabin. His only visitors come to fish from the pond in the spring, and leave "the world to darkness and to [Thoreau]" each evening. He has no visitors, as if he were "the first or last man." Just after paragraph 3, there is a shift in tone and topic in the text, and Thoreau describes the "sweet and tender" society that he finds in his solitary surroundings. He certainly describes himself as solitary, but does not seem to feel lonely despite his lack of close neighbors or frequent visitors.

Look for students....

- Considering how far away from civilization Thoreau lives.
- Drawing evidence from the text to describe Thoreau's surroundings.
- Talking about Thoreau's visitors.
- Looking at the shift after paragraph 3.
- Thinking about the difference between solitude and loneliness in this passage.

Guiding questions and prompts:

- Ask, "How does Thoreau describe his surroundings?"
- Ask, "Who are Thoreau's visitors? Why do they come?"
- Ask, "How is the beginning of paragraph 4 different from paragraph 3? Does it surprise you? Why or why not?"
- Ask, "Is Thoreau living in solitude? Is Thoreau lonely? Discuss these ideas."

Additional Notes:

- With this question, we really want students to understand the difference that Thoreau is making between solitude and loneliness.

- Have students pick out literary devices such as metaphor, simile, and allusion as they read along and annotate their text for these things. This will help them with future lessons.
- If you have time, give students a copy of Thomas Gray's "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard." Have them consider why Thoreau would include an allusion to this poem in this passage.

Supporting Question 2

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Why does Thoreau consider his momentary feeling of loneliness to be "a slight insanity?" Consider paragraph 4.

Teaching notes

Pacing: 5 minutes

Standard: RI.11-12.6

Purpose: Addressing this question is of particular importance because it offers a response to the cultural idea that solitude and loneliness are inevitably tied together. Paragraph 5

gives Thoreau's clearest argument against the idea that solitude equals loneliness. Here he also continues to build his case for society with Nature.

Answer: When Thoreau first began living in solitude near Walden Pond, he felt lonely and considered moving back into human civilization. He "doubted if the near neighborhood of man was not essential to a serene and healthy life" and thought that "to be alone was something unpleasant." At the same time, he considers these thoughts to be "a slight insanity" and rebuked himself for feeling that way. His sudden sensibility that Nature provided "sweet and beneficent society" and that every aspect of nature "expanded and swelled with sympathy and befriended" him caused him to feel that these thoughts were fleeting and misguided. He discovered that the society which Nature provides is better company for him than the society which he found in communion with other people, and he draws greater understanding of himself and of life when he is living so close to the natural world.

Look for students....

- Rereading paragraph 4.
- Explaining how Thoreau felt when he first arrived at Walden Pond.
- Explaining why he felt that way and why he ceased to feel that way.
- Using text evidence to support their claim.

Guiding questions and prompts:

- Ask, "Why did Thoreau feel lonely?"
- Ask, "Why did Thoreau cease to feel lonely? Be sure to use text evidence to support your reasoning."
- Ask, "Does Thoreau feel more closely bonded to his fellow man or to Nature? How do you know? Why?"

Additional Notes:

- If students want more text evidence, direct them to paragraph 5, which presents further proof against the idea of loneliness in solitude.

Supporting Question 3

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What is Thoreau's purpose in paragraphs 12 and 13?

Teaching notes

Pacing: 5 minutes

Standard: RI.11-12.6

Purpose: These paragraphs give fair consideration to another aspect of Thoreau's argument. He explicates his ideas about the harm that too much human society can cause and

the near impossibility of truly feeling understood by other human beings.

Answer: In these paragraphs, Thoreau discusses the reason why depriving himself of human company is "wholesome." He believes that he has "never found the companion that was so companionable as solitude." After saying, "we are for the most part more lonely when we go abroad among men than when we stay in our chambers," Thoreau goes on to describe and discuss this notion that the influence of humanity and civilization is often negative. He says that when working, man is of necessity alone. He also says that "society is too cheap" and that being around people too often causes men to "lose some respect for one another." He furthers his discussion of the value of solitude in these paragraphs by pointing out his perceived flaws of insufficient solitude.

Look for students....

- Considering the statement, "Society is commonly too cheap."
- Using text evidence to support their claims.
- Thinking about what the phrase, "I have never found the companion that was so companionable as solitude," says about Thoreau's purpose in the text.

Guiding questions and prompts:

- Ask, "When do you feel most alone?"
- Ask, "Do you often need time away from people to recharge?"
- Ask, "When you are working the hardest, do you feel alone or a part of a community?"
- Ask, "Why does Thoreau call men, 'musty old cheese?'"
- Ask, "Do you feel connections only when you are with another person, or do you 'still feel connected to people who you do not see often?'"
- Ask, "Do you think it helps relationships for people to be apart sometimes?"
- Ask, "Do you find solitude to be 'companionable?' Why or why not?"

Additional Notes:

- Have students make personal connections with the ideas in this text so that they can more fully understand Thoreau's argument and purpose.
- This section is critical for students to consider how they line up with Thoreau's beliefs about solitude and human society.

Supporting Question 4

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How does Thoreau's idea of the doubleness of man in paragraph 11 develop the idea of solitude?

Teaching notes

Pacing: 5 minutes

Standard: RI.11-12.2

Purpose: At first, this paragraph seems slightly off-topic and might confuse some students. However, at further study it provides us with more proof of the importance of

solitude according to Thoreau and is critical in student understanding of the complexity of his interweaving themes and ideas. With this idea Thoreau also compares himself to both Nature and to the Hindu god Indra, which gives students further indication about his spiritual perspective.

Answer: In paragraph 11 Thoreau considers a new and complex idea of the doubleness of man. This means that man can be "beside" himself "in a sane sense" by thinking. He continues, "by a conscious effort of the mind we can stand aloof from actions and their consequences" and become a spectator and critic of one's own life. This doubleness of man contradicts the idea that solitude must be lonely by allowing man to be society for himself. In this way, Thoreau stands "as remote from [himself] as from another." It also can cause man to be "poor neighbors and friends," which makes living with people difficult and undesirable. If man is his own company, then why should he need the company of others to keep from being lonely?

Look for students....

- Rereading paragraph 11.
- Defining what Thoreau means by the "doubleness" of man.
- Explicating why this doubleness would prevent the necessity of human companionship.
- Providing textual evidence for their claim.

Guiding questions and prompts:

- Ask, "What does Thoreau mean in this paragraph?"
- Ask, "Why would this doubleness make him bad company for other people?"
- Ask, "Why would this doubleness keep him from needing others?"
- Ask, "What evidence does Thoreau give that doubleness is useful for him?"
- Ask, "Have you ever felt like you were a spectator or critic of your own life?"
- Ask, "What does Thoreau mean when he says "I may be...down on it.""

Additional Notes:

- This is a very complicated notion to understand, and one that students will need to discuss before understanding it completely.
- Students struggling with this concept would do well to connect the idea to their own experiences or hear about the experiences of other students.

Supporting Question 5

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What argument does Thoreau give in response to the comment, "I should think you would feel lonesome down there, and want to be nearer to folks" in paragraph 5?

Teaching notes

Pacing: 5 minutes

Standard: RI.11-12.5

Purpose: Thoreau's answer to this question sums up his reasoning behind the idea that it is best to live a solitary life and that a solitary life does not necessitate loneliness. It is the most clear-cut reasoning in

answer to the question of how a relationship with Nature keeps one solitary while simultaneously keeping him from being lonely.

Answer: Thoreau recalls a frequent comment from acquaintances that he must be lonely and in want of human company. To this idea Thoreau responds that the whole earth is miniscule in comparison to the universe, and says, "Why should I feel lonely? Is not our planet in the Milky Way?" He considers the question to be unimportant in the grand scheme of things and believes that "no exertion of the legs can bring two minds much nearer to one another." He thinks that geographical isolation does not matter because he can commune with the minds of those who have come before him through books and can commune with life as a whole through Nature. When he can commune in such a way, he is not lonely or isolated, but connected to what is most important, "the perennial source of our life."

Look for students....

- Rereading paragraph 5, and perhaps moving on to paragraph 6 to find text evidence.
- Thinking about the difference between geographical isolation and isolation of the mind or spirit.
- Considering the advantages of living in Nature for Thoreau.
- Bringing their thoughts back around to how this argument connects solitude and loneliness.

Guiding questions and prompts:

- Ask, "Why does Thoreau start talking about the universe?"
- Ask, "How does Thoreau's discussion of the size of the universe put his own geographical isolation into perspective?"
- Ask, "How do you feel about Thoreau's comment, 'I have found that no exertion of the legs can bring two minds much nearer to one another?'"

- Ask, "What do you think Thoreau means when he says 'the perennial source of our life?'"
- Ask, "What is the effect of Thoreau's comparison between a man and a willow tree?"

Additional Notes:

- This passage is dense, and students may need more support to understand the concepts that Thoreau is discussing.
- Consider having students share answers as a whole class and build up to a culminating answer together so that you can ensure that each student understands Thoreau's argument.

Focus Question

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<h1>Focus Question</h1>	Teaching notes

Focus Question

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How does Thoreau use man's relationship to Nature to differentiate between solitude and loneliness?

Teaching notes

Pacing: 20 minutes

Standard: RI.11-12.3

Purpose: This builds on Day 1's question by having students revisit their conclusions about the central ideas and then asking them to expound on those ideas. This also

asks students to find evidence from the text to support their claims. This step is necessary before students have to consider how the two ideas interact with and develop one another, which will happen on Day 4.

Answer: Ordinarily, solitude is an occasional necessity for man and we align it with loneliness. Thoreau separates the two, saying, "I never found a companion so companionable as solitude." When he questions, "Why should I feel lonely? Is not our planet in the Milky Way?" He requires his readers to consider their place in this vast universe and shifts the focus off of the individual self. To him, solitude is merely a physical state while loneliness is an emotion to be avoided. Nature guards against loneliness because being in nature draws him outside of his own self which allows him the duality that he discusses in paragraph 11--considering one's self while simultaneously being your self. Thoreau gives both an argument against loneliness and an argument against the frequent society of mankind which, while they seem to be contradictory, are intricately connected.

Look for students....

- Considering Thoreau's definitions of solitude and loneliness and how they differ.
- Using text evidence to support their answer.
- Using information from the supporting questions for Day 2

Guiding questions and prompts:

- Ask, "What does Thoreau mean by 'solitude'?"
- Ask, "Does Thoreau live in solitude? Is he lonely? Explain how the two relate."
- Ask, "Are you ever by yourself but do not feel lonely? Describe your experience."

Additional Notes:

- This day may be one of the most difficult for students because it begins to get into Thoreau's philosophy, so be patient and have students work together if they do not

understand.


After the Lesson

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<h1>After the Lesson</h1>	Teaching notes

Comprehension Skill Video

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<p>Core Lesson Ask yourself, "How do these ideas interact throughout the text?"</p> <div style="text-align: center;"></div> <p>Visit https://haywood.lzill.co/r/44380</p>	Teaching notes
	<p>Use this video as an intervention tool for students who struggle to answer the focus question. The video uses a metacognitive approach to model the targeted reading comprehension skills.</p>