



Overview

When Henry Thoreau went to live in the woods of Walden Pond near Concord, Massachusetts, he was aware of the marginalized status of others who lived in these woods including Indigenous peoples, immigrants and formerly enslaved peoples. In this game-based learning experience, students are asked to explore the woods near Thoreau's cabin, seeking traces of the other individuals and groups who lived in the area before and during Thoreau's time there. As they explore, students will think critically about whose voices are left out of histories of this well-known place, and whose stories are not told. Supporting the 15-30 minute gameplay experience are a set of modular lessons that will extend and deepen these questions with discussions and activities that promote critical thinking about inclusive histories of Walden as well as the places where they themselves live.

Essential Question

- Whose voices and histories are left out of the story of a place?

Enduring Understanding

- It is important to analyze gaps in existing historical narratives by looking more closely at the traces and echoes of previous inhabitants in the places where we live.

C3 SOCIAL STUDIES FRAMEWORK ITEMS ADDRESSED BY THIS LESSON

D2.His.7.9-12.

Explain how the perspectives of people in the present shape interpretations of the past.

D2.His.8.9-12.

Analyze how current interpretations of the past are limited by the extent to which available historical sources represent perspectives of people at the time.

Subjects

Social Studies (Geography)

Gameplay Time

15-30 minutes with five options for related activities

Activity Time

Five activities ranging from 20-60 minutes each

Cost: Free

Age Range: 14-18

Languages

English. The game is also available with Spanish and French subtitles.

Materials

- Web-based game module
<https://www.waldengame.com/play-where-i-lived>
- Curriculum materials included in this PDF
- Related materials mentioned **in bold** are in the appendix at the end of this document

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Discover traces of previous inhabitants of Walden Pond represented by the audiovisuals of the game and by Thoreau in his texts.
- Compare and contrast differing perspectives on the history of Walden Pond.
- Research stories and traces of peoples who have lived in their own local area.
- Analyze whose stories may have been told about a place and whose stories may have been left out.



Warm-Up Activity (REMOTE-FRIENDLY)

Whose stories get told about Walden Pond?

Objectives

Students will be able to identify the histories of Walden Pond and analyze ways these histories might leave out the voices of some of the people who had lived there before Thoreau.

Activity Time

20 minutes

Materials

- Map of Walden Pond from the game
<https://www.waldengame.com/s/Map-of-Walden.png>
- Lost in the Shuffle cards
https://www.waldengame.com/s/Walden_Edu_Lost-in-the-Shuffle-Game.pdf
- Cards can be printed out on 8.5 by 11 paper to be cut up manually, or alternatively, professionally printed decks for the game can be purchased here: <https://www.thegamecrafter.com/games/walden-a-game-edu-lost-in-the-shuffle-cards>

Main Activity

Lesson Hook

The teacher will present a map of Walden Pond and will say “this is a historical site for a lot of reasons, including that the famous writer Henry David Thoreau lived there. Who else do you think lived there?” Students will say or write responses.

Lesson Prompts

Students and the teacher will play the Lost in the Shuffle card game. Directions for how to print and play it can be found here (https://www.waldengame.com/s/Walden_Edu_Lost-in-the-Shuffle-Game.pdf)

Exit Ticket

The teacher will ask the class: “how does the first story I read need to change to make sure the stories you all read can be heard?” The teacher may want to ask students to use the Critical Geography vocabulary included in the appendix to help answer this question.

Ideally, these terms would have been taught already in a social studies class unit, and students can briefly review them now. If they have not been taught already, the teacher may want to go over them together as a class.

Assessments

Students will jot down answers to the exit ticket question in a Google Doc or on slips of paper that will be turned in for the teacher to assess. The teacher will select several student answers and will read them out loud to the class and will respond to them, highlighting how their answers relate to issues of colonialism, imperialism, genocide, and marginalization.

Example of How to Frame The Follow-up Discussion

When tying the discussion back to Thoreau’s life at Walden Pond, the teacher might want to mention that the pond was *marginalized* land because it was hard to grow things there. It became a place where *marginalized people* lived. Thoreau had the privilege to choose to live there, but enslaved people lived there because they had no place else to live. Irish immigrants who were itinerant workers moving through the area as they built the railroad, constructed cheap, temporary shanties in the woods because it was the only place available to them to live. And previously, the Indigenous people of the Concord area, the Pennacook people, were decimated by disease, killed, or pushed out by European *colonization*. Many Indigenous peoples and historians today argue that the land now called Massachusetts was a site of *genocide*. By the time Thoreau got there, the woods were only “empty” of people because of this genocide.



Playing the Game (REMOTE-FRIENDLY)

Who else inhabited on the land where Thoreau conducted his experiment in living at the margins of society? What was their relationship to the society Thoreau was criticizing? Were they at the margins of this society or were they part of its expansion?

Objectives

Students will be able to identify traces of people and groups who have inhabited Walden Pond: enslaved peoples, Indigenous peoples, immigrant railroad workers, and industrial infrastructures that changed the woods.

Activity Time

30 minutes

Materials

- *Walden, a game* Where I Lived module
<https://www.waldengame.com/play-where-i-lived>
- Excerpts from *Walden; or, Life in the Woods*
https://www.waldengame.com/s/Walden_Edu_Where-I-Lived_Excerpts.pdf
- Bios of peoples mentioned in the game and excerpts
https://www.waldengame.com/s/Walden_Edu_Where-I-Lived_Bios.pdf

Main Activity

Lesson Hook

Play the game and seek out traces from the four groups. Traces are collected by inspecting (pressing “c” or clicking right mouse button over) visual artifacts found in the game and completing in-game activities.

Lesson Prompt

- Students will play the Where I Lived module (30 minutes).
 - ▷ If they are playing in pairs or groups, the teacher will encourage them to discuss their choices and thoughts about the game out loud with each other. The teacher should circulate and check in with each group.

- In the game, students may find a combination of these items:
 - ▷ Ancient artifacts of Indigenous peoples
 - ▷ Ruined shanties of immigrant railroad workers
 - ▷ Stone cellar holes from the homes of formerly enslaved peoples
 - ▷ Copy of *The Liberator* abolitionist journal
 - ▷ Items to be delivered for the Underground Railroad
 - ▷ Cleared forest area from the woodchopping industry
 - ▷ Ice block storage for industrial use
 - ▷ Equipment for completing an industrial survey job
- At the end of the module, students will review a journal containing traces of what they found, and will reflect on the essential question.

Exit Ticket

Students will answer in writing or in small group discussion: How, if at all, does Thoreau include the stories of each of these groups in his narrative? What stories did he leave out? Why do you think so? To answer this, students might want to review the excerpts from *Walden* included in this lesson.

Assessments

The teacher can collect and assess the exit ticket and the journal.



Post-Game Discussion (REMOTE-FRIENDLY)

How can we read between the lines of a historical narrative to find traces of people who have been left out of the story?

Objectives

Students will be able to identify who lived in the place where they live and analyze why they no longer live there.

Stretch goal: Students will be able to identify stories about the place where they live and analyze ways these stories might leave out the voices of some previous inhabitants.

Activity Time

30 minutes

Materials

- Critical Geography Questions asset/handout in the appendix of this document
- List of research sites, such as:
 - ▷ History of Walden Woods: <https://www.walden.org/explore-walden-woods/protecting-walden-woods-2/>
 - ▷ Native Land: <https://native-land.ca/>
 - ▷ WhatWasThere: <http://www.whatwasthere.com>

Main Activity

Lesson Hook

The teacher will present an image from a local place that suggests there were previous inhabitants (e.g. the last African-American church in a gentrified neighborhood, or a street sign for a street named after a local Indigenous nation). Students will each write down three questions they have about this picture and will discuss these questions in small groups or as a whole class.

Class Discussion

Students will choose two of the Critical Geography Questions in the handout in the appendix of this document. They will attempt to briefly answer each question by searching online and/or asking their peers. They will write down their answers and will share them with a partner or small group at a table or in an online video chat breakout room (answers should be 1-2 lines of information and do not need to be complete sentences). Students may need to consult the Critical Geography vocabulary listed on the handout to aid in their questioning.

The teacher may want to invite one or two students to share their answers with the whole class. The teacher will lead a discussion about student responses.

Example of How to Frame The Follow-up Discussion

It is interesting to notice that Thoreau, a white citizen of Concord, did not name or cite other white intellectuals from Concord in his book *Walden; or Life in the Woods*. Not even his mentor, Ralph Waldo Emerson, who had a profound influence on his work, was mentioned by name in the book. He did, however, name Brister Freeman, Zilpah White, Cato Ingraham and a number of immigrant workers and other marginalized people who lived and worked in Walden woods. The teacher might want to mention this and to ask students what it would mean to notice and show respect to people who are living at the margins of their communities. There is more info on these individuals in the biographies document included with this lesson: https://www.waldengame.com/s/Walden_Edu_Where-I-Lived_Bios.pdf.



Culminating Project-Based Learning Activity

Lost in the Shuffle: Expansion Pack (REMOTE-FRIENDLY)

Who has lived on the land where you live? Can you tell your story in a way that also honors theirs?

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Compare and contrast the local histories of various groups.
- Analyze why and how those stories relate to their own local histories.
- Write narratives about the experiences of peoples from the past and present.

Activity Time

At home, or one to two 45-min class periods

Materials

- *Lost in the Shuffle* deck (warm-up game), to be used as a mentor text for students to refer to as a model.
- Research websites, such as:
 - ▷ History of Walden Woods: <https://www.walden.org/explore-walden-woods/protecting-walden-woods-2/>
 - ▷ Native Land: <https://native-land.ca/>
 - ▷ WhatWasThere: <http://www.whatwasthere.com>
 - ▷ Local histories from town or city museum resources, and/or relevant Wikipedia page.

Main Activity

Lesson Hook

The teacher says, “We are going to create our own deck of cards now to tell stories about the places where we live”

Lesson Prompt

- Students will start with this prompt, to be displayed on a physical or digital whiteboard: “YOU live in [your town/city] located near [physical or famous landmark], in the state of [your state].” Next to it, write this question: “How can YOU finish telling this story?”
- Their decks will follow the same process of characters interrelating that is currently used in the opening activity. The opening activity’s deck will serve as a mentor text, a template to guide design. *It is not necessary to teach the warm-up lesson to teach this lesson; when designing new cards, students can refer to the warm-up deck.*
 - ▷ The categories can be the same or similar: enslaved peoples, immigrant workers, Indigenous peoples, European Americans, etc., as these are relevant everywhere in the U.S.:
 - ▷ One category can include the student and their history.
 - ▷ Students can choose 1-3 categories, or could work in groups on different categories to assemble one complete deck.
- After creating the deck, students can rotate decks and play each others’ games. They will shuffle their expansion pack deck and draw five cards at random. Starting with the intro sentence on the whiteboard, they will read each card out loud to a peer or group, as if it is part of a story. The teacher will prompt them to think about the ways that each of the categories is or is not reflected in their story and how the categories interrelate.

Exit Ticket

How do historians construct a narrative to understand the past?

Assessments

Student created games and responses to the exit ticket.



Appendix: Related Materials

Critical Geography Vocabulary

Name _____

Where I Lived Lesson

Date _____

Marginalized

Pushed to the edge of society. Definition paraphrased from [Vocabulary.com](https://www.vocabulary.com).

Colonialism

The policy or practice of acquiring full or partial political control over another country, occupying it with settlers, and exploiting it economically. Source of definition: [Google Dictionary](https://www.google.com/dictionary).

Imperialism

The state policy, practice, or advocacy of extending power and dominion, especially by direct territorial acquisition or by gaining political and economic control of other territories and peoples. Source of definition: [Encyclopedia Britannica](https://www.britannica.com).

Genocide

The deliberate killing or system destruction of a large number of people from a particular nation or ethnic group with the aim of destroying that nation or group. Source of Definition: [Google Dictionary](https://www.google.com/dictionary).



Appendix: Related Materials

Critical Geography Questions

Where I Lived Lesson

Name _____

Date _____

Questions about who lived here

1. Who has lived in your house, in your neighborhood, your town, etc. before you?

2. Why are the streets where you lived named what they are? Can you discover the origins of these names?

3. Who named the lands, animals, plants, fungi, etc.?

4. Who built the buildings? Were the buildings used for different purposes originally? If so, what were they built for?

Questions about the stories of your area

1. What stories do people tell about the place where you live?

2. What are some stories that haven't been written down, or are hard to find?



Appendix: Related Materials

Critical Geography Questions

Where I Lived Lesson

Name _____

Date _____

Questions about people who were displaced from here

1. Who were in the groups living here who aren't here anymore?

2. Why aren't these groups living here anymore? What happened?

3. Where are they now?

4. What are they doing now?

Questions about silences and gaps in stories

1. What are some gaps or holes in these stories? Whose voices are being left out?

2. Is the area where you live in the center of things, or at the margins of society? Has it always been that way? How does that affect the stories we tell about this place?