

# AMERICAN EARTH

*ENVIRONMENTAL  
WRITING SINCE  
THOREAU*

## TEACHER'S GUIDE

- Lesson plans and close reading support for dozens of articles, essays, letters, poems & more
- Designed for Common Core and NGSS
- Ideal for ELA and science curricula
- Real-world projects
- Support for individual texts and entire units

*American Earth* Teacher's Guide copyright © 2014 by The Library of America. All rights reserved.

THE LIBRARY OF AMERICA, a nonprofit publisher, is dedicated to publishing, and keeping in print, authoritative editions of America's best and most significant writing. Each year The Library of America adds new volumes to its collection of essential works by America's foremost novelists, poets, essayists, journalists, and statesmen.

If you would like to request a free catalog and find out more about The Library of America, please visit our website at [www.loa.org](http://www.loa.org).

Image credits courtesy of: p. 2 Concord Free Public Library; p. 3 (top), 22, 41, 52 The New York Public Library; p. 3 (bottom) Mount Holyoke College Art Museum; pp. 4, 8, 9, 20, 38, 54 (bottom), 64 (right) The Library of Congress; p. 6, 64 (left), 68 The Metropolitan Museum of Art; p. 23 Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library; p. 1, 11, 24, 26, 36, 37, 49, 51, 53, 54 (top), 57, 74 and background cover photograph Shutterstock; p. 14 Counterpoint Press. Cover photographs of Alice Walker, César Chávez, Joni Mitchell, and N. Scott Momaday courtesy of Associated Press.

Cover and design: Pronk Media.

# Table of Contents

<i>Introduction</i> . . . . .	1
<b>1</b> Visionaries of the American Environmental Movement . . . . .	5
<b>2</b> Interconnected Earth . . . . .	19
<b>3</b> Wild America: From City to Country . . . . .	33
<b>4</b> Human Impact . . . . .	47
<b>5</b> Environmental Justice and Personal Responsibility . . . . .	63
 <i>Key Common Core State Standards and Performance Tasks</i> . . . . .	 79
<i>Correlation Chart</i> . . . . .	112

This curriculum guide has been developed in cooperation with the faculty and staff of Common Ground Environmental High School in New Haven, Connecticut, and underwritten by a grant from the Gould Family Foundation. Special thanks to Joel Tolman, Jeremy Stone, Lizanne Cox, and Joan Foran at Common Ground; to writer and educator Tom Naiman; to Nick Mandelkern and Miriam Aronin at the Summer Street Press; and to Hugh Roome, Lauren Tarshis, Kimone Johnson, and Danielle Mirsky of Scholastic Inc.

# Introduction

## Welcome

*American Earth* assembles writings and photographs that explore Americans' profound relationship with the natural world, from the 19th Century to the present. The creators of these seminal works have asked: *How has nature influenced us? How have we affected our planet and the other species that share it? How can we coexist and why is it important that we do?*

Especially in recent years, Americans have acquired a growing appreciation for the impact our behavior has on the Earth, for ill and for good. We have begun to recognize that the power of humans to change the natural world has grown significantly. We have begun to understand that human beings have choices and that we bear a responsibility for our actions, to ourselves, to other forms of life on this planet, and to future generations.



Upper and Lower Yosemite Falls

We also have a growing appreciation of the effect the natural world has on our lives. Our physical and biological dependency on nature has long been recognized as essential, but science has increasingly been discovering new complexities and depths to this relationship. And the natural world has also profoundly driven human thinking, psychology, religion, arts, indeed the whole of human life on this planet.

Beginning with Henry David Thoreau, American writers have explored this relationship. As Americans, they have found themselves surrounded and inspired by a continent of limitless richness and beauty. Simply put, American writers could not disregard the natural world, and this recognition has inspired a tradition of fine writing that is unique to America. Moreover, these writers have given us some of the finest writing in the American canon.

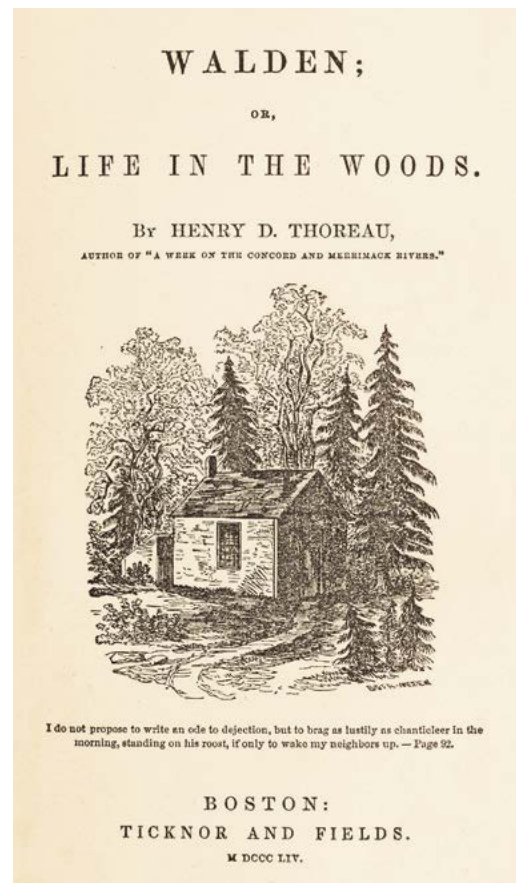
### Organization of this Guide

This accompaniment to *American Earth* for high school teachers and students is organized into five themed units:

1. Visionaries of the American Environmental Movement
2. Interconnected Earth
3. Wild America: From City to Country
4. Human Impact
5. Environmental Justice and Personal Responsibility

In its entirety, each unit is intended to take 2–3 weeks of classroom time. Combined, they could be used as a semester-long course. Other selections from *American Earth* could provide the subject matter for a second semester. Within each unit are activities aligned to Common Core and Next Generation Science Standards. These include close reading of particular texts, writing activities that draw on individual texts and comparison between texts, and culminating projects that involve synthesis of key ideas as well as connecting these historic writings to present-day issues in students' own communities and their own lives.

Following the five themed units are two resources that provide standards alignment and Common Core English Language Arts performance tasks for each of the documents in the *American Earth*



Title page of Henry D. Thoreau's *Walden* (1854)





Gifford Pinchot at Partlow Lake in New York's Adirondack Park (c. 1892)

anthology. Whether you are teaching English, Environmental Science, American History, Biology, or Earth Science, you will find writings in *American Earth* that will help you to inspire your students to think deeply about the world around them, its history, and the power of the written and spoken word.



*Hetch Hetchy Canyon* (1875),  
by Albert Bierstadt

### Introductory Activity American Earth Timeline

Before embarking on the writings in *American Earth*, it is an instructive introduction to the topic of environmental history to create a classroom exhibit using the Chronology that begins on page 977.

Each Chronology entry is preceded by the year in which the event occurred. Write each of these years on a separate small piece of paper and place the papers in a bag. (You may wish to limit the number of years to one or two per student in your class. If so, use the ones in the Chronology that represent the events you feel will be most interesting and/or relevant to your students. For example, if your focus is on the 20th Century, use only 20th Century events in the Chronology.) You also

may wish to assign specific events based on their length and accessibility to your students.

Once the papers, each with a year written on it, have all been placed in the bag, have each student reach in and select one or two cards. Provide each student with one or two sheets of 11" x 17" white paper and drawing or painting materials. Have students create a separate illustrated poster for each of the events they have selected. They should include within the poster a title as well as a caption that describes the significance of the event and that provides some indication of how they feel about it.

When the posters are completed, have students take turns posting them in chronological order. Before putting them up, students should briefly explain to the class the event his or her poster illustrates.

This activity will create a lasting exhibit that will provide context as your students read particular documents from *American Earth*. As you work through documents, you may wish to have students research local environmental issues to add key local events to the timeline exhibit. For example, you may wish to include the year a local park or protected area was created. As a follow-up activity, you also may wish to have students look across the events on their timeline in order to identify patterns and trends through these events. For example, challenge students to name a pattern and identify three or more events that support it, as well as any events that represent an exception.

*Dust Clouds over Texas Panhandle (1936)*, by Arthur Rothstein

