

# 1 Visionaries of the American Environmental Movement

## Introduction

From the beginning, American environmental thinking has been inspired and shaped by great writing. The texts in Unit 1 range over 150 years and address a variety of topics. Although the authors' points of view vary, they are all giants of American environmental writing and action. Each has helped bring the environment to the forefront as a social and political issue, and each writer's language has inspired countless other writers and activists. As students read these passages, encourage them to search for their own inspiration from these texts and authors.

Before embarking on the texts in this unit, you may wish to have a class discussion of the question, "What constitutes great writing?" Ask students what the term "great writing" means to them. Initiate a class discussion that results in a list of the elements that might be included in a definition. Such a list might include, but would not be limited to, the following: originality, beautiful language, thought-provoking, awe-inspiring, action-motivating. Once you have such a class list, focus the discussion on environmental writing. Do students feel the term "great environmental writing" suggests additions or subtractions to the class list you have made, or emphasis on particular components of the list that would differentiate great environmental writing from great writing in general? Keep these lists posted as you embark on the readings in *American Earth*. Refer to them in your discussions and analysis of particular texts, as a way of encouraging students to appreciate the quality of particular authors, texts, and the *American Earth* collection as a whole. Also suggest that students refer to these terms in the course of their own writing.

### Objectives

1. Students will determine the themes and central ideas of photos and landmark texts of the environmental movement. They will analyze the authors' points of view and how content and style contribute to the power and persuasiveness of writing.
2. Through discussion, writing, presentations, and art, students will demonstrate their understanding of the effect human culture has on the natural world, as well as of how human life and thought have been influenced by our changing relationship to nature. They will determine the meaning of particular words and phrases, cite evidence in the texts to support their evaluations of claims, arguments, and their own inferences about the environmental movement.

### Core Passages and Images

**Close Reading Passage:** Speech at the Kyoto Climate Change Conference, by Al Gore (pages 856–859)

1. from *Journals*, Saturday March 19th 1842 entry, by Henry David Thoreau (pages 3–4)
2. from *Journals*, Tuesday Dec 30th entry, by Henry David Thoreau (pages 6–7)
3. from *Walden*, by Henry David Thoreau, “If I wished a boy . . . I should have known more about it.” (page 17)
4. from *A Thousand-Mile Walk to the Gulf*, by John Muir (pages 86–89)
5. from *A Wind-Storm in the Forests*, by John Muir (pages 93–95)
6. To Frank Michler Chapman, by Theodore Roosevelt (pages 130–131)
7. “This Land Is Your Land,” by Woody Guthrie (pages 258–259)
8. “Manifesto: The Mad Farmer Liberation Front,” by Wendell Berry (pages 505–506)
9. Image 12: Charles Leander Weed, *Yosemite Valley from Mariposa Trail*
10. Image 24: Theodore Roosevelt and John Muir



*Artists' Falls, North Conway (1854),*  
by James Wallace Black

## Standards

### Common Core State Standards

**RL.9-10.2** Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

**RI.9-10.1** Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

**RI.9-10.2** Determine a central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

**RI.9-10.4** Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language of a court opinion differs from that of a newspaper).

**RI.9-10.8** Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is valid and the evidence is relevant and sufficient.

**RI.11-12.1** Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.

**RI.11-12.6** Determine the author's point of view or purpose in a text in which the rhetoric is particularly effective, analyzing how the style and content contribute to the power, persuasiveness, or beauty of the text.

**RH.11-12.9** Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources.

**W.9-10.2** Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

**W.9-10.6** Use technology, including the Internet, to produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products, taking advantage of technology's capacity to link to other information and to display information flexibly and dynamically.

**W.9-10.8** Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the usefulness of each source in answering the research question; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.

**W.11-12.9** Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

### Next Generation Science Standards

**HS-ESS3-5** Analyze geosciences data and the results from climate change models to make an evidence-based forecast of the current rate of global or regional climate change and associated future impacts to Earth systems.



## Motivate

Ask students to examine Images 12 and 24. Both of these photographs were taken in what is now Yosemite National Park. Invite students to discuss the photos in small groups and then share their ideas with the class. Ask students to consider the following questions:

- What information can you learn from the photo captions that helps explain the context of each photo?
- What is the central idea of each photo? How did you determine this?
- Based on the information in the captions and on the photos themselves, how are the points of view of the photographers and any people shown in the photos similar and different?
- In what ways do these photos express a vision of the American relationship between humans and nature?



Theodore Roosevelt and John Muir at Glacier Point, Yosemite (1903)



## Explore

Each activity in this section focuses on the work of an individual author. Activities in later sections involve comparing the works of more than one author. Activities marked with an asterisk (\*) are more suited to strong readers.

1. Have students read the introduction to Henry David Thoreau on pages 1–2, the journal entry for Tuesday Dec 30th on pages 6–7, and the paragraph from *Walden* on page 17. The introduction explains that, early in his career, Thoreau was dismissed from one school for refusing to whip students and is credited with inventing the field trip at the school he opened with his brother. Have a discussion in which you ask students to relate these early experiences to the ideas presented in Thoreau's journal and in *Walden*. Then have students write an explanatory essay in response to the following question: How are Thoreau's refusal to whip students and his desire to bring students on field trips into nature reflected in the feelings expressed in his journal and the paragraph from *Walden*? (RI.9-10.1; RI.11-12.1; RH.11-12.9; W.9-10.2)
2. Have students read John Muir's *A Wind-Storm in the Forests* from the start of the last paragraph on page 95 ("Toward midday . . .") to the end of the last full paragraph on page 95 (" . . . as from fear"). Ask students to make a list as they read of the key descriptive words and emotions expressed in the passage.

When their reading and lists are complete, have students draw on their creativity to communicate Muir’s experience through poetry, drawing, or painting. Emphasize that in their creative re-creations students should strive to include not only the physical aspects of the scene but its emotional content as well. (RI.9-10.4)

3. Have students read the introduction to Theodore Roosevelt and the letter to Frank Michler Chapman on pages 129–131. Like many early conservationists, Roosevelt was an avid hunter; specimens he collected are still on display in museums around the country. Have students consider whether Roosevelt’s hunting is consistent or at odds with the ideas expressed in his letter. You may wish to hold a class debate in which student groups advocate for each point of view. (RI.9-10.1; RI.11-12.1; RH.11-12.9)
4. \*Have students read aloud Wendell Berry’s “Manifesto: The Mad Farmer Liberation Front.” Then, have students work in groups to analyze the text. Ask them to focus on the following questions in their analysis:
  - What does Berry mean by the sentence, “So, friends, every day do something that won’t compute.” How does this sentence relate to the larger themes of the poem?
  - Why do you think the poem is called “Manifesto: The Mad Farmer Liberation Front”? Use specific examples in the text to support your conclusions.
  - How is gender used in the poem? Do you think Berry would be likely to write the portions of the poem dealing with gender differently today than he did in 1973?

(RI.9-10.4; RI.11-12.1)



*Trees and Cabin with Yosemite Falls in Background* (1861), by Carleton Atkins



## Close Reading

### Al Gore's Speech at the Kyoto Climate Change Conference

 Lexile®: measure = 1240L

#### Vocabulary

**depletion**, *n*, reduction in the number or quantity of something

**temperate**, *adj*, relating to a region or climate characterized by mild temperatures

**boreal**, *adj*, relating to or characteristic of the climatic zone south of the Arctic, especially the cold temperate region dominated by taiga and forests of birch, poplar, and conifers

**wellspring**, *n*, an original and bountiful source

**humility**, *n*, a modest or low view of one's own importance; humbleness

**emission**, *n*, a discharge of something, especially gas or radiation

**greenhouses gas**, *n*, a gas that contributes to the greenhouse effect by absorbing infrared radiation, for example carbon dioxide and chlorofluorocarbons

**implementation**, *n*, the process of putting a decision or plan into effect

**initiative**, *n*, an act or strategy intended to resolve a difficulty or improve a situation; a fresh approach to something

#### Close Reading Comprehension Questions

Have students read the Close Reading Text, Al Gore's Speech at the Kyoto Climate Change Conference, on their own. Direct students to reread, aloud in small groups, the part of the speech from the paragraph beginning, "But the most vulnerable . . ." on page 856 to the paragraph ending "And it is working" on page 857. Have them work in their groups to answer the following close reading questions (Note: The questions appear in reproducible form on page 12.):

1. What is Gore's claim in the last two full paragraphs on page 856 (from "But the most vulnerable . . ." to ". . . the last 10,000 years")? *Gases created by humans are trapping the sun's radiation around Earth and causing Earth's climate to change and become warmer.* What evidence does Gore present to support this claim? *The year of the speech, 1997, was the hottest on record. Nine out of ten of the last years have been among the ten hottest on record.* Explain whether Gore's evidence is relevant and sufficient to support his claim, including why or why not. *Possible answer: Gore's evidence is relevant and sufficient. It relates directly to his claim that Earth's climate is becoming warmer. However, it does not directly address the*

*cause of this warming, so more evidence would be needed to support that part of the claim. (RI.9-10.8; HS-ESS3-5)*

2. What additional consequences of climate change does Gore predict? *He predicts worse floods, droughts, diseases, pests, crop failures, and famines; melting glaciers; stronger storms; and rising seas. Make inferences about how climate change could lead to these consequences. Possible answer: A changing or warmer climate could affect weather patterns, leading to more severe storms and more or less rain. As a consequence, crops could fail and pests and diseases could move to new areas. Warmer temperatures would melt glaciers, which are made of ice, and the water from this melting would cause the level of the sea to rise. (RI.11-12.1)*
3. In the paragraphs on page 857 beginning “Our fundamental challenge . . .” and ending “And it is working,” what steps does Gore suggest to try to address the problem of climate change? *Set and enforce limits on emission of gases that cause warming, and create markets for new technology and ideas to further cut emissions. (RI.9-10.1)*
4. In these paragraphs, Gore invokes religious language and appeals to the various nations gathered in Kyoto. What is the effect of each kind of rhetoric on Gore’s speech? *Possible answer: The religious language gives the cause a universal grandeur, as well as appealing to believers. The appeals to the representatives of all the nations attending the conference could make them feel included and responsible for participating in the changes Gore suggests. (RI.11-12.6)*
5. Reread the last two paragraphs of Gore’s speech on page 859, beginning with “So let us press forward.” How do the content and tone of Gore’s conclusion add to the meaning and persuasiveness of the speech? *Possible answer: Gore adds to the meaning and persuasiveness of the speech by once again stressing his central point about the human-Earth relationship in the conclusion. His hopeful tone, based mainly on the ideas of transcending differences and changing direction, also adds to the meaning and persuasiveness of the speech. (RI.11-12.6)*



Al Gore



## Close Reading Comprehension Questions

1. What is Gore's claim in the last two full paragraphs on page 856 (from "But the most vulnerable . . ." to ". . . the last 10,000 years")? What evidence does Gore present to support this claim? Explain whether Gore's evidence is relevant and sufficient to support his claim, including why or why not.
2. What additional consequences of climate change does Gore predict? Make inferences about how climate change could lead to these consequences.
3. In the paragraphs on page 857 beginning "Our fundamental challenge . . ." and ending "And it is working," what steps does Gore suggest to try to address the problem of climate change?
4. In these paragraphs, Gore invokes religious language and appeals to the various nations gathered in Kyoto. What is the effect of each kind of rhetoric on Gore's speech?
5. Reread the last two paragraphs of Gore's speech on page 859, beginning with "So let us press forward." How do the content and tone of Gore's conclusion add to the meaning and persuasiveness of the speech?





### Comparing Texts

Find recordings of Woody Guthrie singing “This Land Is Your Land” and Kate Smith singing “God Bless America.” (Both recordings are easily located online.) Assign students to listen to both recordings as homework and/or play them in class. Then, have students write a paragraph comparing and contrasting the central idea of each song and the authors’ points of view. (RI.9-10.4; RI.11-12.6; W.9-10.2)



### Making Connections to Today

Tell students that your class will stage a conference entitled “Visions of the American Environment.” Students will work in groups to create a multimedia presentation of their own view of the state of the environment today, followed by their vision of what it could look like in 50 years. Using many of the core texts in this unit as inspiration, students should think about both the state of the environment and how we relate to it: how changes in our closeness and connection to nature might have affected not only the physical environment but society, culture, and people’s lives and values. Students should select one core text from *American Earth* as their primary inspiration and use the language, vocabulary, style, topic, or other aspects of the original text as a starting point for their own presentation. They should also be encouraged to draw on other texts if they feel they are relevant.

As part of their research, encourage students to use a variety of sources of information, which may include newspapers, advocacy organizations, and interviews. It will be especially useful for students to interview members of their own community that represent a diversity of viewpoints, including parents, children, senior citizens, merchants, and politicians. They should also be sure to include ethnic and economic diversity within the pool of people they interview, and to note any differences or trends they discover that might be attributed to such factors.

You may wish to treat the event like a real academic conference, with each group writing an abstract that is gathered in a booklet. Have each group choose a college or university to represent and create name tags. Invite parents or other classes to attend the presentations. After each group’s presentation, have a brief class discussion. To spur discussion, ask questions such as the following.

- What aspects of the original text do you think inspired this presentation?
- How do you think the author of the original passage would react to the issues raised in this presentation?
- Is the presentation of the status of the environment today a positive or a negative one?
- Does the presentation suggest the environment will improve or worsen during the next 50 years? How?

- What evidence does the presentation draw on to support its claims?
- Does the presentation appeal to the audience's emotions? How?
- Is the presentation convincing? Why or why not?

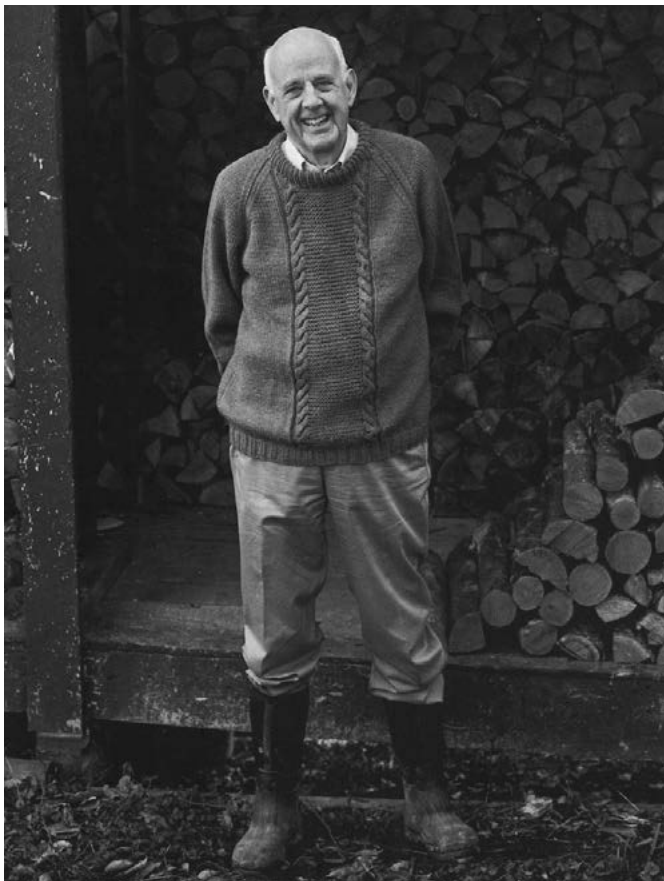
(W.9-10.6; W.9-10.8; W.11-12.9)



### Core Passages Assessment Questions

Have students answer the questions below on their own. Questions are printed on pages 15–18 to be reproduced for students.

Question #	Correct Answer(s)	Standard(s)
1	C, F	(RI.9-10.1)
2	A	(RI.9-10.4)
3	A	(RI.9-10.8)
4	D	(RI.11-12.6)
5	D	(RI.9-10.2)
6	B	(RI.9-10.2)
7	D	(RI.9-10.2)
8	C	(RI.9-10.4)



Wendell Berry,  
by Guy Mendes

## UNIT 1



## Visionaries of the American Environmental Movement

## Core Passages Assessment Questions

1. Reread the Saturday March 19th 1842 entry in **Henry David Thoreau's *Journals*** (pages 3–4). In this entry, Thoreau suggests that nature can be understood from different points of view. Which two pieces of evidence from the text support this statement?
  - A “I walk in the fields of Concord and meditate on . . . the unexhausted energies of this new country.”
  - B “The earth is strewn with relics of a race which has vanished as completely as if trodden in with the earth.”
  - C “I find it good to remember the eternity behind me as well as the eternity before.”
  - D “Where ever I go I tread in the tracks of the Indian.”
  - E “The crows flew over the edge of the woods, and wheeling over my head seem to rebuke.”
  - F “If I consider its history it is old—if its destiny it is new—I may see a part of an object or the whole.”
2. Reread this phrase in the Saturday March 19th 1842 entry of **Henry David Thoreau's *Journals*** (page 4): “Nature has her russet *hues* as well as green—.” What is the meaning of the word “hues” as used in this phrase?
  - A colors
  - B seasons
  - C times of day
  - D reddish browns

3. Reread the part of the excerpt of **John Muir's *A Thousand-Mile Walk to the Gulf*** beginning "The world, we are told . . ." through the end (pages 86–89). In this section, Muir argues against the claim that the world was made especially for man. Which evidence from the text is not relevant to this argument?
- A "Whales are storehouses of oil for us, to help out the stars in lighting our dark way until the discovery of the Pennsylvania oil wells."
  - B "Nature's object in making animals and plants might possibly be first of all the happiness of each one of them."
  - C "This star, our own good earth, made many a successful journey around the heavens ere man was made."
  - D "Venomous beasts, thorny plants, and deadly diseases of certain parts of the earth prove that the whole world was not made for him."
4. Reread the paragraphs from **John Muir's *A Thousand-Mile Walk to the Gulf*** beginning "But if we should ask . . ." and ending ". . . beyond our deceitful eyes and knowledge" (pages 87–88). In these paragraphs, Muir asks a number of questions. How do these questions contribute to the power of Muir's argument?
- A They draw the reader into the author's quest for answers.
  - B They make the author seem approachable and inquisitive.
  - C They introduce new scientific ideas to promote further research.
  - D They challenge the belief that everything in the world was made for humans.

5. Reread **Theodore Roosevelt's** letter *To Frank Michler Chapman* (pages 130–131). In which sentence from the text does Roosevelt use an analogy to communicate the idea of loss?
- A “I would like to see all harmless wild things, but especially all birds protected in every way.”
  - B “Spring would not be spring without bird songs.”
  - C “A tanager or a cardinal makes a point of glowing beauty in the green woods.”
  - D “I feel just as if the works of some great writer had perished.”
6. Which of the following sentences best states an important theme found in **Woody Guthrie's** song “*This Land Is Your Land*” (pages 258–259)?
- A Nature in America speaks only to select individuals.
  - B The American landscape is intertwined with our existence as free citizens.
  - C Residents must constantly struggle against the American climate.
  - D Americans have manipulated the landscape to build farms and wheat fields.
7. Which of the following sentences objectively summarizes **Wendell Berry's** poem “*Manifesto: The Mad Farmer Liberation Front*” (pages 505–506)?
- A Berry's suggestions for a return to nature are utopian, not practical.
  - B Berry balances his negative view of modern living with praise for traditional values.

- ⋮

**C** Berry describes a responsible vision of human interaction with the environment.
  - D** Berry criticizes aspects of modern life and advocates alternate ways of living in relation to nature.
- 8.** Reread this sentence from **Al Gore’s Speech at the Kyoto Climate Change Conference** (page 857): “To do so requires *humility*, because the spiritual roots of our crisis are pridefulness and a failure to understand and respect our connections to God’s Earth and to each other.” Which word or phrase from the sentence has a meaning that is the opposite of “humility”?
- A** spiritual roots
  - B** crisis
  - C** pridefulness
  - D** failure to understand