

3 Wild America: From City to Country

Introduction

Often when we think of nature, we think only of pristine wilderness. Yet at least since the time of Thoreau, American writers have recognized, appreciated, and advocated for nature in places as different from each other as the mountains and valleys of Yellowstone and the concrete canyons and urban parks of our largest cities. The work of these writers has contributed to the growth of perhaps the world's greatest system of national parks and the reappearance of "wild nature" to even our most densely populated places, as evidenced by the presence of cougars in the San Francisco Bay Area and coyotes and peregrine falcons in New York City. The documents in Unit 3 highlight the role of nature in varied environments, and how humans and other organisms interact in settings ranging from the most urban to the most wild. These documents serve as a basis for considering what we mean by terms such as *natural*, *wilderness*, and *cities*. As students read these passages, encourage them to think about the place where they live, the role of nature, and its impact on their own lives.

Objectives

1. Students will explore how great environmental writers have portrayed the relationship between humans and nature, in places ranging from urban to wild, by analyzing what their texts say explicitly and implicitly, their choice of words and phrases. They will use evidence within the texts to determine and compare the authors' points of view to other points of view.
2. Students will conduct research, synthesize multiple sources and their own observation, and use technology to create a presentation on nature in their own community.

Core Passages and Images

Close Reading Passage: from *Huckleberries*, by Henry David Thoreau (pages 31–32)

1. from *Humbugs of the World*, by P. T. Barnum (pages 81–83)
2. from *A Review of Recent Changes, and Changes which Have Been Projected, in the Plans of the Central Park*, by Frederick Law Olmsted (pages 121–122)
3. from *A Review of Recent Changes, and Changes which Have Been Projected, in the Plans of the Central Park*, by Frederick Law Olmsted (pages 124–125)
4. “Nature near Home,” by John Burroughs (pages 168–171)
5. “Birds that Are New Yorkers,” by Donald Culross Peattie (pages 245–246)
6. from *The Life and Death of Great American Cities*, by Jane Jacobs (pages 359–361)
7. from the Wilderness Act of 1964, by Howard Zahniser (pages 392–394)
8. from *Refuge: An Unnatural History of Family and Place*, by Terry Tempest Williams (pages 739–742)
9. Image 44: Charles Pratt, *Woman and Flowering Tree, Hoboken, New Jersey*
10. Image 45: Phillip Hyde, *South Rim in Winter, Grand Canyon, Arizona*

Standards

Common Core State Standards

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.9-10.3 Analyze how the author unfolds an analysis or series of ideas or events, including the order in which the points are made, how they are introduced and developed, and the connections that are drawn between them.

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.9-10.5 Analyze in detail how an author’s ideas or claims are developed and refined by particular sentences, paragraphs, or larger portions of the text (e.g., a section or chapter).

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.11-12.6 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.

RI.11-12.7 Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words in order to address a question or solve a problem.

RH.9-10.1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information.

RH.9-10.6 Compare the point of view of two or more authors for how they treat the same or similar topics, including which details they include and emphasize in their respective accounts.

RH.11-12.6 Evaluate authors' differing points of view on the same historical event or issue by assessing the authors' claims, reasoning, and evidence.

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.

RST.9-10.7 Translate quantitative or technical information expressed in words in a text into visual form (e.g., a table or chart) and translate information expressed visually or mathematically (e.g., in an equation) into words.

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.9-10.7 Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

W.11-12.7 Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

Next Generation Science Standards

HS-LS2-7 Design, evaluate, and refine a solution for reducing the impacts of human activities on the environment and biodiversity.

HS-LS2-8 Evaluate the evidence for the role of group behavior on individual and species' chances to survive and reproduce.



Motivate

Ask students to look at Images 44 and 45. These photos show two very different environments. Invite students to discuss the photos in small groups and then share their ideas with the class. Ask students to consider these questions:

- How do the two photos represent different portraits of America?
- Is one of the two photos a more accurate portrait of America? Why or why not?
- What roles do these two types of environments play in American ideas about nature?



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 **John Burroughs's "Nature near Home"** on pages 168–171, as well as the introduction to all the Burroughs texts on page 145. Have them analyze the following sentence on page 169: "Familiarity with things about one should not dull the edge of curiosity or interest." Ask students to explain in their own words what Burroughs is saying in this sentence and to identify how this idea is developed and refined in later parts of the text. Ask students to also explain whether the idea expressed in this sentence is true in terms of their own experience of nature in the place where they live. (RI.9-10.5)
2. *In **Jane Jacobs's *The Death and Life of American Cities*** have students read the paragraph at the bottom of page 359 and the top of page 360 and the paragraphs at the bottom of page 360 and the top of page 361. In these paragraphs, Jacobs warns of the possible ill effects of "sentimentalizing" nature. In small groups or as a full class, have students clarify what Jacobs means by sentimentalizing nature, including suggesting examples. Then ask students to evaluate the author's claims about the effects of such sentimentalizing. (RI.9-10.4; RI 9-10.8)
3. Have students read pages 739–742 in the passage from **Terry Tempest Williams's *Refuge: An Unnatural History of Family and Place***. Have students create a graph of the data provided on



Brown Creeper

how the level of the lake has changed over time. You may also wish to have them create a diagram of Great Salt Lake based on the information in the text about the shape and depth of the lake. Allow students to do additional research to locate relevant information beyond what is provided in the text. (RST 9-10.7)



Close Reading

Henry David Thoreau's *Huckleberries* (pages 31–32)

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Vocabulary

detriment, *n*, the state of being harmed or damaged

corporation, *n*, a group of people elected to govern a city, town, or borough

adorned, *v*, made more beautiful or attractive

utilitarian, *adj*, designed to be useful or practical rather than attractive

monopolize, *v*, obtain exclusive possession or control of

Close Reading Comprehension Questions

Have students read the Close Reading Text, the passage from **Henry David Thoreau's *Huckleberries***, on their own. Direct students to reread the part of the passage from the top of page 31 to the paragraph ending “after ten years more” in the middle of page 32. Have them answer the following close reading questions:



Great Salt Lake

1. What elements does Thoreau value in a town? *natural features such as rivers with waterfalls, meadows, lakes, hills, cliffs, rocks, forests, and ancient trees* Why does Thoreau value these features? *because they are both beautiful and educational* How does Thoreau suggest towns and cities should go about preserving their natural features? *Each town should have a committee devoted to preserving these features, and particularly rare or valuable natural features should be treated as belonging to the public.* (RI.9-10.1; HS-LS2-7)
2. Based on this passage, make an inference about how Thoreau views city living. *Possible answer: as a necessary evil, or as inferior to living in the country.* What evidence from the text supports this inference? *This sentence suggests that Thoreau sees country living as better than city living: “Let us try to keep the new world new, and while we make a wary use of the city, preserve as far as possible the advantages of living in the country.”* (RI.9-10.1)
3. Compare and contrast the way the town has used the river and the way Thoreau believes the town should use the river. *The town has used the river only for water traffic and occasional bridge crossings. Thoreau suggests that the town should also focus on allowing residents to enjoy the river’s beauty by making the banks public spaces that feature walkways and trees.* (RI.9-10.1; HS-LS2-7)
4. What is Thoreau’s purpose in this passage? *Possible answer: to increase readers’ awareness of the importance of natural features and to convince readers to appreciate, preserve, and enhance natural areas, especially in towns.* How does Thoreau’s language contribute to the power and persuasiveness



of his text? *Possible answer: Thoreau’s text is a mixture of the personal and the general. His own passion for the subject and for certain features of the natural landscape shine through in his writing. At the same time, he addresses more general questions about natural features and landscapes in a practical way with which more readers may identify.* (RI.11-12.6)

Henry David Thoreau



Close Reading Comprehension Questions

1. What elements does Thoreau value in a town? Why does Thoreau value these features? How does Thoreau suggest towns and cities should go about preserving their natural features?
2. Based on this passage, make an inference about how Thoreau views city living. What evidence from the text supports this inference?
3. Compare and contrast the way the town has used the river and the way Thoreau believes the town should use the river.
4. What is Thoreau's purpose in this passage? How does Thoreau's language contribute to the power and persuasiveness of his text?



Comparing Texts

1. Have students write a short explanatory essay answering this question: Based on the views he expresses in *Huckleberries*, what would **Henry David Thoreau** think of the **Wilderness Act of 1964**? Responses should detail the purpose and provisions of the act and explain Thoreau's potential response to each. (RH.11-12.6; HS-LS2-7)
2. *Have students write a short explanatory essay comparing **P. T. Barnum** and **Frederick Law Olmsted's** views of the role of New York City's Central Park. Ask students to explain which elements of the park each writer considers essential and why. Then ask students to use the information from the two texts to draw conclusions about American views of nature and cities in the late 19th century. (RH.9-10.6; RH.11-12.9)
3. Have students make a Venn diagram to compare and contrast **John Burroughs** and **Donald Culross Peattie's** observations and descriptions of local birds. Then invite students to discuss what these descriptions reveal about each author's view of nature and about the place where each author lives. (RI.11-12.7)



Making Connections to Today

In "Nature near Home," **John Burroughs** writes about experiencing nature where you live. Many of the other authors in this unit have done just that. Have students apply Burroughs's advice to become observers of their own area and to use a variety of media to document and communicate their findings. Encourage students to use reference books or Web sites to identify plants and animals they observe. The media produced by students could include:

- A photo-essay identifying things they define as "wild" in their community
- A journal, in which students visit a natural place a number of times and write and sketch their observations: the sights, sounds, and emotions they experience in that place
- A nature guide for visitors to a nearby natural place, suggesting particular walks and identifying highlights of what a visitor should look for and might see

Whatever their chosen media, using the core texts as inspiration students should explain what the terms *natural* and *wilderness* mean in the context of where they live.

Have students present their projects and then have a discussion about their findings and ideas. To help spur discussion, ask questions such as the following:

- Were any of the natural features you or a classmate observed a surprise to you? Which ones, and why? Are there differences of opinion in the class about what is natural and what is not?



A Bear Faced Steal (1905)

- How are your observations similar to and different from those of the authors of texts we have read in this unit?
- What public or private measures would help enhance people's experiences of nature in our area? How are these measures related to those proposed by authors such as **Henry David Thoreau**?
- How might people benefit from better experiences of nature in this area? Does the information in these projects succeed in furthering this goal?

(W.9-10.6; W.9-10.7)



Core Passages Assessment Questions

Have students answer these questions individually. Questions are printed on separate pages that can be reproduced for students.

Question #	Correct Answer(s)	Standard(s)
1	D	(RI.9-10.1)
2	C	(RI.9-10.5)
3	B	(RI.9-10.1)
4	C	(RI.9-10.1, HS-LS2-8)
5	A, E, F	(RI.9-10.1, HS-LS2-8)
6	B	RI.9-10.3)
7	A	(RI.9-10.1)
8	C	(RI.9-10.1)

UNIT 3



Wild America: From City to Country

Core Passages Assessment Questions

1. Reread the passage from **P. T. Barnum's *The Humbugs of the World*** (pages 81–83). Based on this passage, when does Barnum—himself known for using striking advertisements—object to advertising?
 - A when it uses religion to sell a product
 - B when it advertizes quack medicines or rum
 - C when it uses large letters and obtrusive colors
 - D when it is in the middle of a natural landscape
2. Reread the passage from **P. T. Barnum's *The Humbugs of the World*** (pages 81–83). In this passage, what is the effect of Barnum comparing a natural landscape to a beautiful wife or daughter?
 - A It recognizes that nature is incomplete without humans.
 - B It suggests that readers' family life can be a part of living in harmony with nature.
 - C It emphasizes the reader's connection to and responsibility to protect the landscape.
 - D It highlights the idea of natural human beauty by comparing it to an untouched wilderness.
3. Reread from the top of page 121 through the top of page 122 in the passage from ***A Review of Recent Changes, and Changes which Have Been Projected, in the Plans of the Central Park***, by **Frederick Law Olmsted**. According to the text, why does Olmsted believe that it is important that Central Park be so large?

- A It will be in an area that is not suitable for other uses.
 - B It will not be overwhelmed by surrounding buildings and traffic.
 - C It will be easy to reach from any place on the island of Manhattan.
 - D It will be able to accommodate New York's many millions of residents.
4. Reread **Donald Culross Peattie's "Birds that Are New Yorkers"** (pages 245–246). Which phrase from the text refers to one necessary characteristic for both birds and people that live in the city?
- A "the spirit of discovery, true scientific discovery"
 - B "Mendelian strains, bred, interbred, and bred out again to the normal"
 - C "the ability to survive constant association with human beings"
 - D "experiences as social denizens of the vast human rookery we call a city"
5. Reread **Donald Culross Peattie's "Birds that Are New Yorkers"** (pages 245–246). According to the author, birds living in the city face more disadvantages than advantages. Which three of the following are advantages for a bird living in the city?
- A shelter in winter
 - B bright lighting at night
 - C a jumble of valleys and canyons
 - D strong updrafts from tall buildings

- E** little competition from other species
 - F** refuse piles available for scavenging
 - G** the supply of insects and grain for food
 - H** the presence of other animals such as cats and rats
6. Reread the paragraph at the bottom of page 359 and the top of page 360 in the passage from **Jane Jacobs's *The Death and Life of American Cities***. In this paragraph, what does Jacobs's analogy between human cities and prairie dog colonies and oyster beds suggest?
- A** that human cities are unique in nature
 - B** that humans and their cities are part of nature
 - C** that humans have better building abilities than other species
 - D** that only humans, and not other species, can survive in human cities
7. Reread the passage from the **Wilderness Act of 1964**, by **Howard Zahniser** (pages 392–394). According to the act, which area would be considered wilderness?
- A** a 6,000-acre forest
 - B** a 1,200-acre nature park
 - C** a 7,500-acre stretch of farmland
 - D** a 5,000-acre suburban tract with strict zoning restrictions

8. Reread pages 739–742 in the passage from **Terry Tempest Williams’s *Refuge: An Unnatural History of Family and Place***. Based on the text, what is significant about the lake level of 4206'?
- A It is the lake’s historic lowest level.
 - B It is the lake’s historic highest level.
 - C It is the level at which the bird refuge would flood.
 - D It is the level at which the airport would be under water.