

Tree's Like Me Weren't Meant To Live If...

The Basics

Time Required

2-3 class periods

Subject Areas

High School Social Studies, Environmental Science

Contemporary America, 1968-present

Common Core Standards Addressed:

Writing Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies 6-12

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The Lesson

Introduction

“The lumberjacks of yesteryear in Maine and the Great Lake States went into the woods in the fall and did not come out until the logs boomed down the streams in the Spring. During those winter nights in the shanties if the lumberjacks, or shantyboys, had any entertainment, they furnished it themselves.” (Quoted from *Folk Music of the United States: Songs of the Michigan Lumberjacks*). It was during those times that many songs and ballads were composed (*Songs*, Preface). “Ye Noble Big Pine Tree” is a unique song in that it does not contain the most common topics found in lumberjack songs, women, drinking, and poor working conditions. Instead it relays a lumberjack’s thought process when he encounters “the forest king.”

The words and music of “A Day in the Life of a Tree” from the album *Surf’s Up* was written by Brian Wilson and John F. Rieley of the Beach Boys.

Guiding Questions

What does the saying “a picture is worth a thousand words” mean?

What does it mean to be an environmentalist? How has this term changed in the history of the United States?

Learning Objectives

- Students will be able to analyze primary source documents in the form of songs and photographs.
- Students will be able to compare and contrast two songs.

- Students will independently research and properly cite various time periods of the environmental movement.
- Students will be able to evaluate the progression of the environmental movement through the evaluation of one of the following: a children’s book, lyrics of a song or the development of conservationist or preservationist movements.

Preparation Instructions

Songs Used in Lesson:

- “A Day in the Life of a Tree” by the Beach Boys from the album *Surf’s Up*. Lyrics can be found in *The Beach Boys*. Hollywood, California: Brother Publisher, 1972. p 86-87.
- “Ye Noble Big Pine Tree” by “Shan T. Boy” Mr. W. N. Allen. Lyrics can be found in *Ballads and Songs of the Shanty- Boy*. Ed. Franz Rickaby. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1926. p 62-64.

Lesson Activities

1. First allow students to look at the photograph by Ansel Adams titled “Oak Tree, Snowstorm” and answer the following questions:

- What is the mood of this photograph?
- What message is Ansel Adams trying to convey to his audience?

2. Next, the students will read/sing the lyrics to W.N. Allen’s songs, “Ye Noble Big Pine Tree” and answer the following questions:

- Write down the images that the music paints.
- What vivid metaphors, similes, nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs are in the lyrics?
- Who wrote the song?
- Who is the intended audience?
- What values are represented in the song?
- What connections can you make between Ansel Adams’ photograph and W. N. Allen’s song?

3. Then the students will take a further look into the life of a “shanty-boy” by looking at photographs and answering questions. Some suggested photographs:

- The website White Pine Logging, Part I- contain photographs of sleds loaded high with white pines trees.
- The website, American Memory, has beautiful panoramic photographs such as: “Laying low the mighty, redwood forest, Humboldt County, California”(1915); “Wonderful scenes mid the giant redwood on the line of the Northwestern Pacific R.R” (1912); “The Father of the forest, Cal., Rerwood [sic] Park” (1907).
- Also trying searching for the keywords such as loggers, lumberjacks and redwoods.

4. After viewing the photographs, ask:

- What is the purpose of these photographs?
- What values are expressed in these photographs?

- Compare the message in the photographs with the message of the song “Ye Noble Big Pine Tree.”
- Research the environmental movement during this time period the song “Ye Noble Big Pine Tree” was sung.

5. Further the discussion by introducing the apparent shift in American values with regard to the environment. In *Sociology: A Down-To-Earth Approach*, James Henslin states, “values, both held by individuals and those representing a nation or people, can undergo deep shifts.” One example of a value shift or emerging value is concern for the environment. “During most of U.S. history, the environment was seen as a challenge—a wilderness to be settled, forests to be chopped down, rivers and lakes to be fished, and animals to be hunted.” “It is difficult for many of us to grasp the pride with which earlier Americans destroyed trees that took thousands of years to grow.” “Today Americans have developed a genuine and (we can hope) long-term concern for the environment” (Henslin, 56).

6. Next show another photograph by Ansel Adams titled, “Tree, Stump and Mist, Northern Cascades” while listening to the song “A Day in the Life of a Tree.” Have the students answer the following questions:

- Write down the images that the music paints.
- What vivid metaphors, similes, nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs are in the lyrics?
- Who wrote the song?
- Who is the intended audience?
- What values are represented in the song?
- What connections can you make between Ansel Adams’ photograph and the “A Day in the Life of a Tree”?
- Compare the message of the songs, “A Day in the Life of a Tree” and “Ye Noble Big Pine Tree.”

Assessment

Each student will select one of the following culminating activities. They are expected to do independent research and properly cite all sources used.

- Option #1: Read either the *Giving Tree* by Shel Silverstein or *The Lorax* by Dr. Seuss. Then rewrite the story for adults while incorporating facts from independent research.
- Option #2: Analyze the lyrics and the social/historical time period of one of the following songs:
 - “Woodman, Spare that Tree” by George Pope Morris (1830)
 - “Woodman, Woodman, Spare that Tree” by Irving Berlin and Vincent Bryan (1911)
- Option #3: The environmental movement splits in two: conservationists and preservationists. Pick one of the movements that you support personally. Research main issues of movement and why you support it.

Upper Level Grades:

- Students can draw, find visuals in magazines/clip art/ internet, or take local photographs that correlate with the lyrics to either the “Ye, Noble Big Pine Tree” or “A Day in the Life of a Tree.”

Middle School and Elementary School:

Rewriting Lyrics

- Have the students rewrite the song “A Day in the Life of a Tree” by turning it into an apology.
- Have the students rewrite the song by focusing on other environmental issues.

Research

- Students can research Paul Bunyan and Johnny Appleseed.

Bodily Kinesthetic

- Students can act out the song “A Day in the Life of a Tree”

Literature:

- Albert, David H. “Gaura Devi Saves the Trees.” *Spinning Tales Weaving Hope: Stories of Peace, Justice and the Environment*. Ed. Ed Brody. Philadelphia: New Society Publishers, 1992. This book is based on a true story that took place in the village of Reni, in India near the Tibetan border, on March 26, 1974.
- Compare songs to Joyce Kilmer poem “Trees”

Resources

Lyrics

“A Day in the Life of a Tree” available at
http://www.surfermoon.com/lyrics/surfs_up.html#8

“Ye Noble Big Pine” available at
<http://books.google.com/books?id=xMcoBt-fQtIC&q=ye+noble+big+pine+tree#v=snippet&q=ye%20noble%20big%20pine%20tree&f=false>

Other Resources Used in Lessons:

Adams, Ansel. “Oak Tree, Snowstorm” and “Tree, Stump and Mist, Northern Cascades” viewable at The Ansel Adams Gallery <http://www.anseladams.com/>

“Laying low the mighty, redwood forest, Humboldt County, California.”(1915); “Wonderful scenes mid the giant redwood on the line of the Northwestern Pacific R.R.” (1912); “The Father of the forest, Cal., Rerwood [sic] Park.” (1907) all viewable at The American Memory <http://memory.loc.gov>.

Henslin, James. *Sociology: A Down-To-Earth Approach*. Prentice Hall, 2002. p 56.

Seuss, Dr. *The Lorax*. New York: Random House, 1st edition 1971.

Silverstein, Shel. *Giving Tree*. New York: HarperCollins Children’s Books, 1st edition 1964.

Songs of the Michigan Lumberjacks [Preface of the sound recording]. Ed. E.C. Beck. Washington D.C.: Library of Congress Recording Laboratory, 1965. (Copy located at the University of Pittsburgh Music Library)

“Woodman, Spare that Tree” written by George Pope Morris. Music by Henry Russell.

<http://www.contemplator.com/america/woodman.html>

Other Resources not used in lessons:

Political Cartoons:

Off the Mark- Environmental Cartoons by Mark Parisi.

Go to <http://offthemark.com/main.htm> then click on Environment cartoons

Additional Photographs in Ansel Adams Gallery <http://www.anseladams.com/> (Ansel Adams Calendars are a great cost effective way to collect quality prints.)

- Aspens
- NM Horizontal Aspens
- NM Vertical Jeffrey Pine
- Sentinel Dome MP 118 Aspens
- Dawn Early Morning
- Merced River Tree
- Stump and Mist
- Northern Cascades Oak Tree
- Sunset City

Music

Environmentalism in Song.

http://www.planetaryexploration.net/patriot/enviros_in_song.html

The American Memory <http://memory.loc.gov> has scanned the original sheet music of the following songs. Some have illustrated covers.

- Woodman spare that tree
- Woodman spare that tree polka
- Woodman spare that tree! quick step
- Woodman! Spare that tree! Woodman, spare that tree. H. De Marsan
- Woodman, spare that tree. J. Andrews, No. 38 Chatham St., N. Y. [n. d.]

Short but Informative Books:

Dobson, Andrew. *Citizenship and the Environment*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2003. This book makes a connection between citizenship and the environment. Dobson expresses his belief that high school teachers have the ability to make ecological citizens.

Kline, Benjamin. *First Along the River: A Brief History of the U.S. Environmental Movement*. San Francisco: Acada Books, 1997. In only 140 pages this books highlights the foundations of the environmental movement in the United States. Major historical figures and events are located in the extensive glossary. This is great for teachers!

Nelson, Gaylord. *Beyond Earth Day: Fulfilling the Promise*. Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2002. Nelson's purpose in writing this book is "to pick up where we left off thirty years" after the first Earth day. It highlights the most serious threats to the United States and calls for a renewed sense of purpose and energy in the current environmental movement.

Rothman, Hal K. *The Greening of a Nation? Environmentalism in the United States Since 1945*. Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1998. This book traces the last 50 Years of environmental history. It recounts the vigor that characterized the environmental movement until 1974, when the economy began to turn. It claims that there is a contradiction in the proclamations of environmentalists today and their actions.

Helpful Electronic Researching Resources for Students

Environmental History Timeline

<http://www.runet.edu/~wkovarik/hist1/timeline.new.html>

The Evolution of the Conservation Movement <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/ammem/amrvhtml/conshome.html>

Temperate Forest Foundation

<http://www.forestinfo.org?Discover/facts.htm>