

Reading Reflections Unit

Chapter One

Background

This unit presents a set of activities that orient students to the life of John Muir and the key influences in his life that shaped his actions.

1. **John Muir Biography** is a reading activity paired with student study questions and class discussion.
2. **John Muir Reading Reflection Project** uses his quotations as a basis for students to understand his passion and concern about the natural world.
3. **Timeline** is an opportunity to highlight important moments in the life of John Muir with important moments and activities in the student's life.

Lesson One: John Muir Biography

Ch. 1 Lesson One

Background

Many authors before and since John Muir's death have written about Muir. Since each author expresses a different aspect of this complex man, reviewing multiple selections provide even more insight into Muir's values and philosophy.

Objectives

1. Complete a set of student study questions describing biographical information about the life of John Muir.
2. Actively participate in a class discussion regarding reading material, movies or audio recordings.

PROCEDURES

1. Assign students to read either *John Muir, America's First Environmentalist* by Kathryn Lasky or *John Muir, Protecting and Preserving the Environment* by Henry Elliot. Students may read alone or with a parent.
2. Listen to audio recording of *John Muir and Stickeen*, as told by Garth Gilchrist in class.

3. Watch a YouTube.com video during class. Encourage students to watch others at home with family members.
4. Encourage interested students to read other materials from the student bibliography as desired. Many selections are written for a high grade reading level and may require a parent's assistance with reading. The parent may also aloud to the student. *Listed selections are available for check out at public libraries.*
5. Encourage students to share their reading materials with their parents so they can begin discussions at home in the following areas: a) the need for and importance of conservation and b) how students can become involved in their own community.

References

Literature

Elliot, H. (2009). *John Muir, Preserving and Protecting the Environment*. Crabtree Publishing Company: New York, NY.

Lasky, K. (2006). *John Muir, America's First Environmentalist*. Candlewick Press: Cambridge, MA.

Audio recordings

Gilchrist, G. (2000). *My life of adventures. John Muir*. On CD. Dawn Publications: Nevada City, CA

Gilchrist, G. (2000). *Stickeen and John Muir's other animal adventures*. On CD. Dawn Publications: Nevada City, CA.

****Videos***

Biography of John Muir, No. 1 "A glorious journey" 10 min. view at <http://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=-CDzhIvugw8>

*A selection of additional videos are listed in Student Bibliography

Common Core Standards

Reading Standards for Literature

Third grade. 1,3,4,7

Fourth grade. 1,3,4,7

John Muir Biography Study Questions

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On a separate sheet of paper write the question or statement and respond in 2 or 3 complete sentences. Include details as needed so your answer is as complete and clear as possible.

1. What was one of John Muir's first encounters with nature as a young boy?
2. Describe one or more of Muir's inventions.
3. List three places in the United States that he visited.
4. What was the reason he went on his 1,000-mile walk to the Gulf of Mexico? Describe one or more of the experiences he shared about his journey.
5. What did Muir discover about how Yosemite was formed?
6. What else did Muir do in Yosemite?
7. Describe one or more of his "high adventure" activities.
8. Why was John Muir living on a ranch?
9. Describe what motivated Muir to spend his life protecting the wilderness.
10. Did John Muir act alone or did he have support to make changes happen? If so, name two people that helped John Muir make changes.
11. What were the subjects that Muir wrote about in his articles, books and journals?

John Muir Biography Study Questions Answer Sheet

What was one of John Muir's first encounters with nature as a young boy?

He was with his brother searching tide pools for crabs and other interesting creatures of the sea near his childhood home in Scotland. He climbed the walls of the ruins of Dunbar Castle. Muir regularly visited the shore and the meadows where he could study the creatures.

Describe at least one of John Muir's inventions.

1. Study desk
2. Sawmill was used in a stream to cut wood
3. Barometers

What was the reason he went on his 1,000-mile walk to the Gulf of Mexico? Describe one or more of the experiences he shared about his journey.

John Muir knew he could not work in a factory again because there was so much to explore and learn about the outdoors. For the first time in his life, he saw tall trees and dense forests. He saw high mountains and deep valleys. Muir took note of flowering plants. There were kind families that offered him food and shelter.

List three places in the United States that Muir visited.

Yosemite National Park	San Francisco
Alaska	New York
Mt. Whitney	Niagara Falls
Lake Superior	Kings Canyon

What did he discover about how Yosemite was formed?

Glaciers had cut their way through the rocks to carve the Yosemite Valley. He measured the height and width of rocks and boulders as evidence. Many people disagreed with him at the time, although later he was proven to be right.

What else did John Muir do in Yosemite Valley?

John Muir was a nature guide, leading visitors to his favorite scenic spots. As a guide, he pointed out the evidence of rocks carved by glaciers in several locations. He was also a shepherd. He also met President Roosevelt to camp in Yosemite to convince him how important it was to establish Yosemite as a national park for the public good.

Name some of his “high adventure” activities.

1. John Muir climbed Mt. Whitney when there was a severe snowstorm and it was extremely cold. His body was frozen and he decided not to keep climbing in that weather.
2. He climbed Mt. Shasta. During his climb the weather changed and it started to snow heavily.
3. A third high adventure activity was when he climbed to the top of a Douglas-fir during a windstorm to listen to the needles sing in the wind.

Why did John Muir live on a ranch?

John Muir married John Strentzel's daughter. Strentzel owned a large fruit ranch in Martinez, CA. When Muir married Louie, they lived on the ranch and raised their family. John managed the ranch after his father-in-law died.

What motivated John Muir to spend his life protecting wild lands?

He believed that the wonders of nature in America should be preserved as national parks for people to visit and enjoy. He loved the wilderness and finding out more about nature. When Muir saw indications that man was destroying natural areas, he decided to share his experiences with others by writing articles and books.

Did John Muir act alone or did he have support to make changes happen? If so, name two people who supported him?

No, John Muir did not act alone most of the time. He had support from Ezra and Janine Carr, John Swett and Teddy Roosevelt. Muir helped to form the Sierra Club. By working together, Congress

passed laws that protected the wilderness and created national parks for people to enjoy, instead of being destroyed by logging.

List some of the topics that Muir wrote about.

Glaciers

Trips to Alaska

His first summer in the Sierra

Stickeen

Saving wilderness

Preserving Yosemite as a National Park

Mountains of California