

Lesson Title:

The Daoists of Concord: Connecting American Transcendentalism with the Chinese Daoist Philosophy

Class and Grade level(s): American Literature (11th grade)

Goals and Objectives**The student will be able to:**

- Understand the Asian analogues to Thoreau's thoughts through a comparison of selections from Walden and Daoist primary source documents.
- Understand the Asian analogues to Emerson's thoughts through comparison of selections from Emerson's writing and Daoist primary source documents.
- Understand the structure of the compare/contrast rhetorical mode.

Time required/class periods needed

Four days: Three class periods for reading and compare/contrast exercise, one period for drafting.

(NB: This time requirement does not include class time spent reading, discussing, and responding to selections from Emerson and Thoreau.)

Primary source bibliography

<http://search.freefind.com/find.html?id=70726870&pageid=r&mode=all&n=0&query=Daoism>
<http://daoistfoundation.org/> (Daoism Readings)

http://search.freefind.com/find.html?q=Legalism&id=70726870&pageid=r&_charset_=UTF-8&bcd=%C3%B7&scs=1&query=Dao+de+Jing&Find=Search&mode=ALL&search=all (Dao de Jing)

Essays by Ralph Waldo Emerson at Project Gutenberg: <http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/16643>
Thoreau, Henry David. *Walden*.

(Searchable e-text available at <http://etext.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/ThoWald.html>)

These can also be read in actual book form: check with your librarian.

Other resources used

<http://www.religioustolerance.org/taoism.htm>

<http://daoistfoundation.org/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UJq030c6XFk> (Daoism: An Overview)

Required materials/supplies

In addition to the sources given above, teachers may want to provide graphic organizers for compare/contrast activities (Venn diagram, T-chart, etc.), in accordance with the needs of your class. A good place to find these is the following web site:

<http://www.educationoasis.com/printables/graphic-organizers/>

Vocabulary

n/a

Procedure

Essential Questions (Connecting the readings to the big picture and, from there, to students' lives.)

- In order to have a fulfilling life, how should a person live?
- What sorts of things should a person live for?
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Day 1. Guided Inquiry

Big Question: What ideas are central to Daoism?

1. Assess prior knowledge through a quickwrite/brainstorm: Have students list or web everything they know (or have heard about) Daoism. Encourage them to avoid editing and write everything they think even if they worry that it might be wrong. Have students share their responses with peers (pair, share). Solicit responses from the class and generate a class list on the board.
2. Show "Taoism" video (roughly 4 minutes). Have students add/correct the list on the board.
3. Assign Daoism readings (print handouts, or online versions). Before reading, have students make predictions about what ideas they will find in the readings. Have students take notes while reading. Allow class time for students to begin reading and ask questions.

HW: Finish readings (adjust length and complexity in accordance with readiness of students)

Day 2.

1. Arrange students in small groups. As a comprehension check, have each student write an answer to yesterday's Big Question on an index card. Encourage students to avoid bullet points, and instead write in complete sentences. Collect.
2. Disseminate index cards to groups, making sure each group gets cards from other students. Each group needs to complete a giant concept map of Daoism. They may use mistakes or misconceptions from the index cards to complete the lower right-hand portion of the concept map. Circulate to answer any specific questions the groups have about concepts in the reading. **(Concept map templates can easily be found by googling "Concept map templates")**
3. Groups present their concept maps. Focus whole-group discussion on each group's ranking of "key ideas" as a way to encourage students to engage with the material and identify important concepts from the reading. Ask questions such as: Do you agree with these rankings? How would you have ranked item X? Where in the reading did you find that idea? Et cetera.
4. Collect index cards as formative assessment.
5. Hang concept maps on the wall.

HW: Read selected essays by Emerson and excerpts from Thoreau.

Day 3. Socratic Seminar

1. Have students prepare three questions on their own connecting Daoism and the philosophies of Emerson and Thoreau. Discuss these questions in class.
2. After seminar, allow students time to write reflections about what they learned during the day's discussion (in addition to the regular discussion reflections: what went well? how could you improve our next discussion? etc.).

Day 4. In-class Essay

Big Question: What similarities can we find between Daoism and Emerson or Daoism and Thoreau's *Walden*? Where do these writers diverge from the core principles of Daoist philosophy?

Writing prompt: Which tradition—American Transcendentalism or Daoism—offers the most practical or compelling answer to our Essential Question? (In order to have a fulfilling life, how should a person live, and what sorts of things should a person live for?) Please defend your answer with carefully selected references to *both* traditions.

Assessment/evaluation

Formative:

Discussion

Index cards

Concept maps

Socratic seminar

Final Essay which will be evaluated on the clarity and accuracy with which they present the ideas of both American Transcendentalism and Daoism.