

“Nook Farm” and the Formation of American Literary Communities

Time: 1 week

English: High School

DESIRED RESULTS

What are the “big ideas” that drive this lesson?

- ❖ Throughout American history writers have sometimes gathered in “literary communities,” choosing to live in proximity with each other for the intellectual stimulation that social interaction often affords. In this lesson, students will use their research skills to become familiar with and understand the influences of these communities in the United States, particularly in Concord, Nook Farm, Harlem, and Greenwich Village.

What are the “essential questions” that students must answer in order to understand the “big ideas?”

- ❖ What are some examples of famous literary communities in American history?
- ❖ What attracts American writers to these communities?
- ❖ What makes these communities different or ‘special?’
- ❖ Are the unique elements of these communities attributable to more historical, social, economic or geographic factors?
- ❖ Why do American literary communities eventually decline as such?
- ❖ What legacy (intellectual, physical, economic, etc.) has remained after these communities ceased to exist?

CORE UNDERSTANDINGS

Identify what students will know and/or be able to do.

- ❖ Students will be able to analyze information regarding the development of a “literary community.”
- ❖ Students will be able to identify and investigate the attributes and characteristics of the various communities.
- ❖ Students will participate in a group setting, developing their skills in collaboration with peers.

LIST SUGGESTED ASSESSMENT(S)

- ❖ Demonstration of proficient research skills during the process of researching an assigned literary community.
- ❖ Successful collaboration as a team member researching an assigned literary community.
- ❖ Successful collaboration as a team member making an oral presentation on the unique attributes of their assigned community—attributes that contributed to its creation and development as a literary community.

LEARNING EXPERIENCES

What are the specific activities and sequence of instruction that will be used to engage students in this lesson?

(Note: This lesson may be best implemented in collaboration with your school’s media specialist, who can assist in creating a readily available set of sources for students to use, and provide additional support as students begin their research.)

1. Students will be divided into four groups. Each group will be assigned a focus one of the following American literary communities:
 - Nook Farm

- Concord
 - Harlem
 - Greenwich Village
2. Students will be informed that each of these communities were once gathering places for some of America’s most influential writers at different times of our nation’s history. Their task will be to try and figure out “why?” In other words, they will determine what qualities of the community were key to its success.
- a. In particular, students should be able to present:
 - a.i. A short list of its most prominent writers and an explanation of the contributions that each of these individuals made to the success of the community
 - a.ii. An explanation of how the historic, social, economic, political, and geographic features of the community contributed to its development as a literary community.
3. Each student group will work together to research their assigned community. They may draw on electronic sources as well as pamphlets from the tourist bureaus of the day and/or letters written by the writers about their community, such as Mark Twain’s significant reflections about what he loved about Hartford, and the Nook Farm region.
4. Once they have completed their research, students will create a poster board or PowerPoint presentation of the information they have gathered and present, as a group, their findings to their classmates.

“COMMON CORE” CONNECTIONS:

- ❖ [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.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.

- ❖ [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.2](#) Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.
- ❖ [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.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.

MATERIALS AND ATTACHMENTS

- ❖ Internet Databases
- ❖ Access/instruction with PowerPoint or poster material

SUGGESTED LESSON EXTENSIONS TO ENHANCE STUDENT LEARNING

- ❖ Have students compare one of the other writer 'hotspots' to the one that they have researched to have them see the overall similarities and differences in these places and why they were important to the writers during that time period.

