

Curriculum Development  
In the Fairfield Public Schools

**FAIRFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS**  
FAIRFIELD, CONNECTICUT

**CALL OF THE WILD**

Board of Education Approved 05/23/2006

# **CALL OF THE WILD**

## **Statement of Purpose**

This course offers students an opportunity to connect experiences in nature with reading and writing. Students are required to put into practice their accumulated language arts skills as they think critically in order to enrich their relationships to the natural world through the study of texts and experiential learning.

## **Audience**

Grade 12 (Grade 11 students as an additional course to their full-year junior English course)

## **Prerequisite**

Successful completion of sophomore English for juniors, of junior English for seniors.

## **Design and Description**

Call of the Wild utilizes a wide range of literature and media, challenging students to continually reexamine their relationship with nature. Major attention will be paid to assessing the role that nature does or should play in modern life. Texts include novels, films, essays, stories, poems, artwork, and music. Writing assignments include critical analysis, narrative reflection, and field journaling. All reading and analysis for Call of the Wild require an introspective spirit of philosophical inquiry and the ability to make connections and articulate common themes.

In addition to analyzing and responding to literature, students are expected to participate in experiential activities that take place within wilderness settings. A day hike in nearby rural Connecticut extends the students' appreciation of the images often utilized in nature writing, such as old stone walls, the New England farm, trees, beaver lodges, and wilderness sounds. Students are afforded the opportunity to step out of a busy routine and closely observe the beauty and significance of their own local landscape. The backpacking trip on the Appalachian Trail in north-west Connecticut provides an intensive physical and psychological adventure that draws the students together socially, stimulates individual growth, and further motivates interest in the role of wilderness in their own lives. Students are also required to document their independent experiences in nature in their field journals.

## **Goals**

Students will:

- further develop their collaborative skills by participating in serious class discussion which demands alert listening and substantive responding.
- identify and articulate their own values and attitudes towards nature – related themes and topics of the course through introspection fostered by ongoing collaborations, their extensive class notes about readings, class discussions, impromptu writing, and formal writing assignments.
- construct a glossary from readings and discussions comprised of vocabulary specific themes of the course.
- develop sophisticated analytical reading skills for fiction and non-fiction that include identification of theme, purpose, and narrative style.

- write well-organized, concise, and well-supported expository essays in nature which incorporate the themes of the course.
- write well-organized, concise, and well-supported narrative essays about their own experiences in nature which reflect an understanding of nature writing and which may be used as the basis for a college essay.
- document and reflect upon independent experiences in local natural settings by keeping a field journal.
- conduct an independent study stemming from the focus questions of the course and deliver an engaging presentation on that project.
- demonstrate a willingness and some ability to participate in all of the experiential components of the course.

### **Course Objectives**

Students will be able to:

- evaluate the universality of the two focus questions for this unit.
- articulate the personal implications of a philosophical inquiry.
- identify a central emerging theme and explore that theme within several relevant texts.
- identify the salient aspects of class discussion and readings by keeping extensive notes.
- analyze emerging theme through class collaboration.
- explore multiple definitions of wilderness and their implications for our relationship to nature.
- examine the hero quest motif and specifically explore and evaluate the actions of literary and/or historic figures.
- identify specific archetypal patterns including the hero's journey into the unknown(wilderness) and the father figure.
- connect the focus questions of the course and major themes to their reading of a book length memoir.
- examine the need for and possibility of finding release and renewal in nature without jeopardizing healthy and responsible relationships with society.
- identify the essential elements of a "listening point," and consider those elements in the discovery of their own local listening point.
- closely observe and document specific elements in nature through the completion of field journal entries.
- develop and articulate various inventive expressions of their communion with the natural world, which may include: haiku, free-writes, photography, and sketches.
- demonstrate an understanding of and an appreciation for the power of stories, rituals and heritage in Native American cultures in comparison to their own lives.
- evaluate the notion that modern society diminishes our awareness of landscape and the basic cycles of nature.
- analyze a full-length literary text in light of the focus questions of this unit.
- conduct interviews.
- research the story behind an important object in their home, their town, or their religion.
- develop and demonstrate an appreciation for ways that natural history and human history have shaped local landscapes.

- demonstrate sense of curiosity, imagination and wonder by closely observing seemingly commonplace features of the land (growth patterns, stone walls and other relics of human history, markers of geologic time).
- reflect on the country walk experience through classroom activities.
- acquire and practice the essential skills and ethics of safe and responsible travel through the backcountry (Leave No Trace, Honor Code, Gear and Food Preparation).
- develop a heightened awareness of their role within the dynamics of a group endeavor.
- develop an understanding of nature writing.
- reflect upon their experiences in nature.
- plan and explore their own line of inquiry that addresses one of the focus questions of the course.
- pursue some experiential enrichment beyond library or computer-based research such as: personal interviews with experts, a visit to a museum, self-designed field experience, participation in a community group or activity, reading a teacher-approved supplemental book, designing and conducting a survey.
- present a polished multi-media presentation of their findings.
- connect a full-length text, which has been read and journaled extensively, to the larger themes of the course.
- analyze themes of the course by participating in discussion of supplemental readings.

### **Skill Objectives**

Students will:

- demonstrate sentence variety (coordination and subordination; use of sentence fragments) in their writing.
- demonstrate consistency of voice.
- punctuate restrictive and non-restrictive clauses correctly.
- demonstrate appropriate diction by avoiding clichés, jargon, slang, and colloquialisms: using vivid language.

### **English Standards**

*Reading and Responding - Students read, comprehend and respond in individual, literal, critical and evaluative ways to literary, informational and persuasive texts in both print and multimedia formats.*

**Students use appropriate strategies before, during and after reading in order to construct meaning.**

Students will identify, use and analyze text structures.

**Students interpret, analyze and evaluate text in order to extend understanding and appreciation.**

Students will discuss and respond to texts by making text-to-self, text-to-text and text-to-world connections.

**Students select and apply strategies to facilitate word recognition and develop vocabulary in order to comprehend text.**

Students will develop vocabulary through listening, speaking, reading and writing.

***Exploring and Responding to Literature - Students read and respond to classical and contemporary texts from many cultures and literary periods.***

**Students recognize and appreciate that contemporary and classical literature has shaped human thought.**

Students will discuss, analyze and evaluate how characters deal with the diversity of human experience and conflict.

***Communicating with Others - Students produce written, oral and visual texts to express, develop and substantiate ideas and experiences.***

**Students use descriptive, narrative, expository, persuasive and poetic modes.**

Students will use oral language with clarity, voice and fluency to communicate a message.

Students will use the appropriate features of persuasive, narrative, expository or poetic writing.

Students will write to delight in the imagination.

**Students prepare, publish and/or present work appropriate to audience, purpose and task.**

Students will determine purpose, point of view and audience, and choose an appropriate written, oral or visual format.

Students will apply the most effective processes to create and present a written, oral or visual piece.

Students will revise texts for organization, elaboration, fluency and clarity.

Students will research information from multiple sources for a specific purpose.

Students will evaluate the validity of primary and secondary sources of information to authenticate research.

Students will publish and/or present final products in a myriad of ways, including the use of the arts and technology.

***English Language Conventions - Students apply the conventions of Standard English in oral and written communication.***

**Students use Standard English for composing and revising written text.**

Students will demonstrate proficient use of proper mechanics, usage and spelling skills.

Students will use resources for proofreading and editing.

### **Essential Questions**

- How do we understand what we read?
- How does literature enrich our lives?
- How do we write, speak and present effectively?
- How do we use the English language appropriately to speak and write?

### **Focus Questions**

- What are some of the essential symbols of humanity's relationship with the natural world, and how are these symbols reflected in literature and in our lives?
- Specifically, what is the basic hero quest motif, and how does it reflect the conflicting influences of social and natural forces on the spirit of youth, both in literature and in life?
- What are the essential elements of a "wilderness" experience, and what part do these elements play in the quest for a satisfying and meaningful life?
- In what ways has modern suburban America (Fairfield) grown detached from the basic influences and cycles of nature?
- What means can be employed to recognize and reestablish connections to and respect for the basic influences and cycles of nature?
- How can close examination of natural phenomena reveal truths about our own psychology?
- How can knowledge of local history, legends, stories, and landscapes enhance our appreciation of and respect for place?
- In what ways does technology alienate humanity from nature? How can technology be brought into harmony with nature?
- What is the essential philosophical difference in viewing nature between mainstream Western and Native American attitudes?
- Why do the "mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation," and what can be done to avoid it?
- What role do solitude and silence play in enhancing our relationships with nature and with one another?
- How can appropriate balances be developed between the interests of the environment and those of our commercial society?
- In what ways do physical challenge and adventure in the natural world promote personal growth?

## **UNITS of STUDY**

### **Unit 1: Lives Out of Balance**

#### **English Standards**

*Reading and Responding - Students read, comprehend and respond in individual, literal, critical and evaluative ways to literary, informational and persuasive texts in both print and multimedia formats.*

**Students interpret, analyze and evaluate text in order to extend understanding and appreciation.**

Students will discuss and respond to texts by making text-to-self, text-to-text and text-to-world connections.

#### **Essential Question**

- How do we understand what we read?

#### **Focus Questions**

- Why do the "mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation," and what can be done to avoid it?
- In what ways has modern suburban America(Fairfield) grown detached from the basic influences and cycles of nature?

#### **Core Topic**

- Lives Out of Balance

#### **Unit Objectives**

Students will be able to:

- evaluate the universality of the two focus questions for this unit.
- articulate the personal implications of this philosophical inquiry.
- identify a central emerging theme and explore that theme within several relevant texts.
- identify the salient aspects of class discussion and readings by keeping extensive notes.
- analyze emerging theme through class collaboration.

#### **Assessment**

- Reflection, referencing specific literary texts

#### **Pacing**

2 Weeks

## Unit 2: One Foot In; One Foot Out

### English Standards

*Reading and Responding - Students read, comprehend and respond in individual, literal, critical and evaluative ways to literary, informational and persuasive texts in both print and multimedia formats.*

**Students select and apply strategies to facilitate word recognition and develop vocabulary in order to comprehend text.**

Students will develop vocabulary through listening, speaking, reading and writing.

*Exploring and Responding to Literature - Students read and respond to classical and contemporary texts from many cultures and literary periods.*

**Students recognize and appreciate that contemporary and classical literature has shaped human thought.**

Students will discuss, analyze and evaluate how characters deal with the diversity of human experience and conflict.

*Communicating with Others - Students produce written, oral and visual texts to express, develop and substantiate ideas and experiences.*

**Students use descriptive, narrative, expository, persuasive and poetic modes.**

Students will use the appropriate features of persuasive, narrative, expository or poetic writing.

**Students prepare, publish and/or present work appropriate to audience, purpose and task.**

Students will apply the most effective processes to create and present a written, oral or visual piece.

Students will revise texts for organization, elaboration, fluency and clarity.

*English Language Conventions - Students apply the conventions of Standard English in oral and written communication.*

**Students use Standard English for composing and revising written text.**

Students will demonstrate proficient use of proper mechanics, usage and spelling skills.

Students will use resources for proofreading and editing.

### Essential Questions

- How do we understand what we read?
- How does literature enrich our lives?
- How do we write, speak and present effectively?
- How do we use the English language appropriately to speak and write?

### Focus Questions



- What are the essential elements of a "wilderness" experience, and what part do these elements play in the quest for a satisfying and meaningful life?
- What are some of the essential symbols of humanity's relationship with the natural world, and how are these symbols reflected in literature and in our lives?
- Specifically, what is the basic hero quest motif, and how does it reflect the conflicting influences of social and natural forces on the spirit of youth, both in literature and in life?

### **Core Topic**

- One Foot In; One Foot Out

### **Unit Objectives**

Students will be able to:

- explore multiple definitions of wilderness and their implications for our relationship to nature.
- examine the hero quest motif and specifically explore and evaluate the actions of Chris McCandless and other literary and/or historic figures.
- identify specific archetypal patterns including the hero's journey into the unknown(wilderness) and the father figure.
- connect the focus questions of the course and major themes to their reading of a book length memoir.

### **Skills Objective**

Students will:

- demonstrate sentence variety (coordination and subordination; use of sentence fragments) in their writing.

### **Assessment**

- Exploratory essay referencing specific literary texts

### **Pacing**

2 Weeks

## **Unit 3: The Listening Point**

### **English Standards**

*Communicating with Others - Students produce written, oral and visual texts to express, develop and substantiate ideas and experiences.*

**Students use descriptive, narrative, expository, persuasive and poetic modes.**

Students will use the appropriate features of persuasive, narrative, expository or poetic writing.

Students will write to delight in the imagination.

**Students prepare, publish and/or present work appropriate to audience, purpose and task.**

Students will apply the most effective processes to create and present a written, oral or visual piece.

Students will revise texts for organization, elaboration, fluency and clarity.

*English Language Conventions - Students apply the conventions of Standard English in oral and written communication.*

**Students speak and write using standard language structures and diction appropriate to audience and task.**

**Students use Standard English for composing and revising written text.**

Students will demonstrate proficient use of proper mechanics, usage and spelling skills.

Students will use resources for proofreading and editing.

### **Essential Questions**

- How do we write, speak and present effectively?
- How do we use the English language appropriately to speak and write?

### **Focus Questions**

- What role do solitude and silence play in enhancing our relationships with nature and with one another?
- What means can be employed to recognize and reestablish connections to and respect for the basic influences and cycles of nature?
- How can close examination of natural phenomena reveal truths about our own psychology?
- How can appropriate balances be developed between the interests of the environment and those of our commercial society?
- In what ways does technology alienate humanity from nature? How can technology be brought into harmony with nature?

### **Core Topic**

- The Listening Point

### **Unit Objectives**

Students will be able to:

- examine the need for and possibility of finding release and renewal in nature without jeopardizing healthy and responsible relationships with society.
- identify the essential elements of a “listening point,” and consider those elements in the discovery of their own local listening point.
- closely observe and document specific elements in nature through the completion of field journal entries.
- develop and articulate various inventive expressions of their communion with the natural world, which may include: haiku, free-writes, photography, and sketches.

### **Skill Objective**

Students will:

- demonstrate consistency of voice.

### **Assessment**

- Field journal entries

### **Pacing**

3 Weeks

## Unit 4: Landscape and the Human Story

### English Standards

*Communicating with Others - Students produce written, oral and visual texts to express, develop and substantiate ideas and experiences.*

**Students prepare, publish and/or present work appropriate to audience, purpose and task.**

Students will research information from multiple sources for a specific purpose.

### Essential Question

- How do we write, speak and present effectively?

### Focus Questions

- What is the essential philosophical difference in viewing nature between mainstream Western and Native American attitudes?
- How can knowledge of local history, legends, stories, and landscapes enhance our appreciation of and respect for place?

### Core Topic

- Landscape and the Human Story

### Unit Objectives

Students will be able to:

- demonstrate an understanding of and an appreciation for the power of stories, rituals and heritage in Native American cultures in comparison to their own lives.
- evaluate the notion that modern society diminishes our awareness of landscape and the basic cycles of nature.
- analyze a full-length literary text in light of the essential questions of this unit.
- conduct interviews.
- research the story behind an important object in their home, their town, or their religion.

### Skill Objective

Students will:

- punctuate restrictive and non-restrictive clauses correctly.

### Assessment

- Personal archaeology assignment, demonstrating research and reflection

### Pacing

3 Weeks

## Unit 5: The Country Walk

### English Standards

*Reading and Responding - Students read, comprehend and respond in individual, literal, critical and evaluative ways to literary, informational and persuasive texts in both print and multimedia formats.*

**Students interpret, analyze and evaluate text in order to extend understanding and appreciation.**

Students will discuss and respond to texts by making text-to-self, text-to-text and text-to-world connections.

*Communicating with Others - Students produce written, oral and visual texts to express, develop and substantiate ideas and experiences.*

**Students use descriptive, narrative, expository, persuasive and poetic modes.**

Students will use the appropriate features of persuasive, narrative, expository or poetic writing.

**Students prepare, publish and/or present work appropriate to audience, purpose and task.**

Students will apply the most effective processes to create and present a written, oral or visual piece.

Students will revise texts for organization, elaboration, fluency and clarity.

*English Language Conventions - Students apply the conventions of Standard English in oral and written communication.*

**Students use Standard English for composing and revising written text.**

Students will demonstrate proficient use of proper mechanics, usage and spelling skills.

Students will use resources for proofreading and editing.

### Essential Questions

- How do we understand what we read?
- How do we write, speak and present effectively?
- How do we use the English language appropriately to speak and write?

### Focus Questions

- What means can be employed to recognize and reestablish connections to and respect for the basic influences and cycles of nature?
- How can knowledge of local history, legends, stories, and landscapes enhance our appreciation of and respect for place?

### Core Topic

- The Country Walk

### **Unit Objectives**

Students will be able to:

- develop and demonstrate an appreciation for ways that natural history and human history have shaped local landscapes.
- demonstrate sense of curiosity, imagination and wonder by closely observing seemingly commonplace features of the land (growth patterns, stone walls and other relics of human history, markers of geologic time).
- reflect on the country walk experience through classroom activities.

### **Skill Objective**

Students will:

- demonstrate appropriate diction by avoiding clichés, jargon, slang, and colloquialisms: using vivid language.

### **Assessment**

- Reflective essay demonstrating narrative thinking

### **Pacing**

1 Week

## Unit 6: Wilderness Experience

### English Standards

*Reading and Responding - Students read, comprehend and respond in individual, literal, critical and evaluative ways to literary, informational and persuasive texts in both print and multimedia formats.*

**Students use appropriate strategies before, during and after reading in order to construct meaning.**

Students will identify, use and analyze text structures.

**Students interpret, analyze and evaluate text in order to extend understanding and appreciation.**

Students will discuss and respond to texts by making text-to-self, text-to-text and text-to-world connections.

*Communicating with Others - Students produce written, oral and visual texts to express, develop and substantiate ideas and experiences.*

**Students use descriptive, narrative, expository, persuasive and poetic modes.**

Students will use the appropriate features of persuasive, narrative, expository or poetic writing.

**Students prepare, publish and/or present work appropriate to audience, purpose and task.**

Students will apply the most effective processes to create and present a written, oral or visual piece.

Students will revise texts for organization, elaboration, fluency and clarity.

*English Language Conventions - Students apply the conventions of Standard English in oral and written communication.*

**Students use Standard English for composing and revising written text.**

Students will demonstrate proficient use of proper mechanics, usage and spelling skills.

Students will use resources for proofreading and editing.

### Essential Questions

- How do we understand what we read?
- How do we write, speak and present effectively?
- How do we use the English language appropriately to speak and write?

### Focus Questions

- What are the essential elements of a "wilderness" experience, and what part do these elements play in the quest for a satisfying and meaningful life?

- In what ways do physical challenge and adventure in the natural world promote personal growth?

### **Core Topic**

- Wilderness Experience

### **Unit Objectives**

Students will be able to:

- acquire and practice the essential skills and ethics of safe and responsible travel through the backcountry (Leave No Trace, Honor Code, Gear and Food Preparation).
- develop a heightened awareness of their role within the dynamics of a group endeavor.
- develop an understanding of nature writing.
- reflect upon their experiences in nature.

### **Assessment**

- Personal narrative essay (option to use as a college essay)

### **Pacing**

3 Weeks



## **Unit 7: Individual Inquiry**

### **English Standards**

*Communicating with Others - Students produce written, oral and visual texts to express, develop and substantiate ideas and experiences.*

**Students use descriptive, narrative, expository, persuasive and poetic modes.**

Students will use oral language with clarity, voice and fluency to communicate a message.

**Students prepare, publish and/or present work appropriate to audience, purpose and task.**

Students will determine purpose, point of view and audience, and choose an appropriate written, oral or visual format.

Students will apply the most effective processes to create and present a written, oral or visual piece.

Students will revise texts for organization, elaboration, fluency and clarity.

Students will research information from multiple sources for a specific purpose.

Students will evaluate the validity of primary and secondary sources of information to authenticate research.

Students will publish and/or present final products in a myriad of ways, including the use of the arts and technology.

*English Language Conventions - Students apply the conventions of Standard English in oral and written communication.*

**Students use Standard English for composing and revising written text.**

Students will demonstrate proficient use of proper mechanics, usage and spelling skills.

Students will use resources for proofreading and editing.

### **Essential Questions**

- How do we write, speak and present effectively?
- How do we use the English language appropriately to speak and write?

### **Focus Question**

- Each student selects an essential question as the basis for their own, self-directed inquiry.

### **Core Topic**

- Individual Inquiry

### **Unit Objectives**

Students will be able to:

- plan and explore their own line of inquiry that addresses one of the focus questions of the course.
- pursue some experiential enrichment beyond library or computer-based research such as: personal interviews with experts, a visit to a museum, self-designed field experience, participation in a community group or activity, reading a teacher-approved supplemental book, designing and conducting a survey.
- present a polished multi-media presentation of their findings.
- connect a full-length text, which has been read and journaled extensively, to the larger themes of the course.
- analyze themes of the course by participating in discussion of supplemental readings.

### **Assessments**

- Construct an Action Log documenting time and energies spent on the experimental enrichment component of their learning
- Independent Study project
- Multimedia Presentation
- Final Reflection in response to the focus question which demonstrates their independent learning

### **Pacing**

4 Weeks

### **Texts such as:**

- Excerpts from “Where I Lived and What I Lived For”
- Segment from *Koyaanisqatsi*
- Selection of several more from implementation guide
- Video segment from “The Hero’s Journey,” Joseph Campbell interview in *The Power of Myth*
- “Mountain of Ice” video
- *Into The Wild*
- “Listening Point,”
- “The Secret Place,” from *The Education of Little Tree*
- “The Impoverishment of Sightseeing,”
- “To Look at Any Thing,”
- *I Heard the Owl Call My Name*
- “Chief Seattle’s Address”
- “The Work of Local Culture”
- Video segment from “The First Storytellers,” Joseph Campbell interview in *The Power of Myth*
- Video segment from “The Spirit of the Mask”
- Illustrations from *Diary of an Early American Boy*
- ”Heart of Stone”
- “Leave No Trace” Power-Point on G-Drive
- “Water Purification” Power-Point on G-Drive
- *Never Cry Wolf*
- “Spirit Walk”

### **Video Resources**

#### **Unit 1**

*Koyaansquatsi*

#### **Unit 2**

*The Wilderness World of Sigurd Olsen*

*Mountain of Ice*

*The Power of Myth: Joseph Campbell and Bill Moyers*

#### **Unit 3**

*Rivers and Tides: Andrew Goldsworthy*

#### **Unit 4**

*Spirit of the Mask*

*Wisdom of the Dreams: Carl Jung*

#### **Unit 6**

*A River Runs Through It*