

**Terms/concepts/people in *John Burroughs: A Naturalist in the Industrial Age***

naturalist  
industrial age  
industrialist/industrialism  
Battle of the Alamo  
Charles Darwin  
Martin Van Buren  
Andrew Jackson  
economy  
preservationist  
conservationist  
watershed  
Civil War  
John Muir  
Theodore Roosevelt  
Henry Ford  
Harvey Firestone  
Thomas Edison  
James Audubon  
Walt Whitman

**Study questions to consider while watching:**

Burroughs lived from 1837 to 1921. What was life like then? How was it changing?

What was it like to be a farmer then? A teacher?

What kinds of essays did Burroughs write? Who and what influenced his work?

What is meant by “Audubon of prose”?

How would you describe and interpret Burroughs’s writing?

What happened to the passenger pigeon in Burroughs’s lifetime?

Where and with whom did Burroughs travel?

Who were some of the significant figures in Burroughs’s life and what role did they play in shaping U.S. history and culture?

What is a watershed and what is its importance? What is the role of forests in having clean drinking water?

**Key areas for further research and activities:**

English Language Arts

Read out loud and discuss Burroughs’s writings.

Write one’s own observations of nature and read it to the class. Focus on nature around your home or in your community.

Write a critical analysis/reaction to Burroughs’s writing(s).

Read the works of other nature writers and compare. Who are the “nature fakers” and what did Burroughs write about them?

What were the historical, environmental, and cultural circumstances under which Burroughs wrote his nature essays? Compare this to the circumstances under which you write.

## History

What was life like for most people during Burroughs's lifetime (1837-1921)?

How was it changing?

What were the significant events and people during that time?

What roles did the following people play in our history and in Burroughs's life: Theodore Roosevelt, E. H. Harriman, John Audubon, Walt Whitman, Henry Ford, Thomas Edison, John Muir? Find out who else influenced him, such as Ralph Waldo Emerson.

What role did New York State play during this time, including in the Civil War and the spread of industrialization?

What was the Harriman expedition? What was its purpose?

## Geography

Locate the places where John Burroughs lived in New York State.

Locate the places Burroughs visited and explored, including Alaska, Arizona, and California. Compare the terrain, animal life, and vegetation found in these areas. What did he write about them?

What was the population distribution in New York State during Burroughs's lifetime? How did industrialization change this distribution and use of land?

What is a watershed? What must be done to protect them? How do they affect farming and industry in their area?

## Science

In what ways did Burroughs use scientific method in his nature observations?

What did Burroughs think about industrialization and its effect on the environment? (e.g., "The Grist of the Gods" in *Leaf and Tendril*. Excerpt available in *The Art of Seeing Things*, ed. by Charlotte Zoe Walker). Had he reason for concern?

In relation to the treatment of our environment, compare a preservationist to a conservationist, naturalist, and environmentalist. How have these concepts changed since Burroughs's time?

What species are now endangered and why? What can be done to save them?

## Resources:

### Books

Burroughs, John. *Signs and Seasons*. Ed. Jeff Walker with Critical Commentary. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2006.

Kanze, Edward. *The World of John Burroughs*. San Francisco, CA: Sierra Club Books, 1996.

Renehan, Edward J., Jr. *John Burroughs: An American Naturalist*. Hensonville, NY: Black Dome Press, 1998 (first published in 1992 by Chelsea Green Publishing Company).

Walker, Charlotte Zoe, ed. *The Art of Seeing Things: Essays by John Burroughs*.  
Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2001.

Walker, Charlotte Zoe, ed. *Sharp Eyes: John Burroughs and American Nature Writing*.  
Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2000.

#### Selected Websites

John Burroughs Association

<http://research.amnh.org/burroughs/>

Ecology Hall of Fame—John Burroughs

<http://www.ecotopia.org/ehof/burroughs/>

Catskill-New York City Watershed Educators Network

[www.watershededucators.org](http://www.watershededucators.org)

Catskill Center for Conservation and Development—Education

<http://www.catskillcenter.org/programs/enviredu.html>

Department of Environmental Protection education page

<http://www.ci.nyc.ny.us/html/dep/html/educatio.html>

New York State Dept. of Environmental Conservation, Public Affairs & Education  
division

<http://www.dec.state.ny.us/website/dpae/index.html>

Environmental Protection Agency--water

[www.epa.gov/water/](http://www.epa.gov/water/)

Catskill Watershed Corp. education page

[http://cwconline.org/programs/pub\\_edu/pe.html](http://cwconline.org/programs/pub_edu/pe.html)

Grist—Environmental News & Commentary

<http://grist.org/about/>

New-York Historical Society

<https://www.nyhistory.org/web/>

New York History Net

<http://www.nyhistory.com/>

U.S. History—Post-Civil War Industrialism

<http://www.u-s-history.com/h860.html>

U.S. History—Robber Barons and Captains of Industry

[http://edsitement.neh.gov/view\\_lesson\\_plan.asp?id=429](http://edsitement.neh.gov/view_lesson_plan.asp?id=429)