



Lesson 15.4 “New Hampshire Through the Writer’s Eye”

Unit 15: Forging a Modern New Hampshire Identity, 1899-2000

Lesson Objectives

- Students will listen to Tomie dePaola’s story “Mud Season” and identify how the author depicts sounds and sights of early 20th-century New Hampshire.
- Students will compare how two writers depict a changing New Hampshire, one in verse and one in prose.
- Students will read two short poems about spring in New Hampshire and analyze the language and perspectives in the poems.

Lesson Competencies

- When appropriate, I can use context to determine intended meanings of words and phrases. (ELA 1)
- I can compare and contrast literary elements or themes/central messages across two or more literary texts, by analyzing text evidence. (ELA 2)
- I can examine author’s craft in one or more literary texts (e.g., choices made to develop events or characters and their interactions; theme/message) by analyzing text evidence. (ELA 2)

Essential Questions

How has New Hampshire come to be the way it is?

Focus Questions

How did New Hampshire’s identity evolve in the 20th century?

Estimated Time

Two to three 40-minute class sessions

Materials & Equipment

Tomie dePaola, “Mud Season,” from *Front Porch Tales and North Country Whoppers* (2007)
Reading group set of Donald Hall, *Old Home Day* (1996)
Class set of “A Brook in the City by Robert Frost”
Class set of “Poetry vs. Prose: A Changing New Hampshire” worksheet
Class set of “Two Poets, One Season”
“Build Your Vocabulary!” worksheet as desired



Educator Introduction & Rationale

The 20th century brought upheaval and change to the United States, through two world wars and a world-wide depression. In the 1950s, an idealized version of New England life emerged as the state and nation sought a return to simpler times. This picture of small-town New England life was reinforced through popular culture, like literature, movies, and television shows, many of which highlighted New Hampshire specifically. The poetry of Robert Frost, for example, was closely associated with New England. He and other authors often explored themes like rural farm life, everyday dilemmas, and the natural world. The success of films, books, and poetry brought attention to the state, encouraged tourism, and cemented the image of New Hampshire as a place of pastoral beauty in the popular imagination. Please see the Educator Overview for more information.

This lesson is the fourth in Unit 15: Forging a Modern New Hampshire Identity. It can stand alone from the unit. In this lesson, students investigate visions of New Hampshire through various authors' works. They first listen to and discuss Tomie dePaola's story "Mud Season" from *Front Porch Tales and North Country Whoppers*, then compare the poetry of Robert Frost and prose of Donald Hall as those authors explore a changing New Hampshire. They finish the lesson by reading two poems about New Hampshire springtime by Amy Lowell and Claude McKay and writing their own poetry.

Teaching tip: This lesson explores specific works by authors who wrote about New Hampshire. The books are available through the public library system, but if you are unable to acquire them for the lesson, consider using the activities from the lesson with other books. Additionally, the vocabulary in some of the poetry could be challenging for some students. Encourage them to use the "Build Your Vocabulary!" worksheet to support their learning.

Two reinforcement activities invite students to use the "Moose on the Loose" timeline or to create a "front porch" storytelling event. Extension activities direct a mapping of the stories and poems in the lesson and a comparison of Donald Hall's *Old Home Day* with a primary source. Please adapt all the material in this lesson, as necessary, to meet the needs of the students in your classroom. Please note, lesson vocabulary and definitions are at the end of the document. You may wish to preview these with your students.

Learning Activity

Activation

A North Country “whopper.” Read aloud “Mud Season,” from Tomie dePaola’s *Front Porch Tales and North Country Whoppers*. Pairing the “voice” of a New Hampshire with his warmly comic illustrations, dePaola plays with the “Yankee” characteristics of no-nonsense grit and determination in the face of the state’s infamous “fifth season.” After reading, ask students:

- How does Tomie dePaola use the sound of language to set the tale in New Hampshire?
- Who is telling the story?
- Where do you think they are telling it?
- dePaola’s illustrations are as important as the text. How do they help the story?
- What “mud season” experiences of their own does this story make them think about?

Direct Instruction

Capturing a changing New Hampshire. Tell students that Tomie dePaola was not originally from New Hampshire, but he called the state home for nearly 50 years and was deeply familiar with its sounds, sights, and seasons. As a writer and illustrator, he was a keen observer and collector of voices and tales. In fact, much of the most cherished writing about New Hampshire in the 20th century is by people who were not born in the state but found their way here and spent a great deal of time watching and listening as New Hampshire changed through the seasons and decades. Explain to students that they will read and compare work by four different writers to discover how different styles and genres of writing can express a variety of perspectives about the same place.

Guided Practice

Comparing poetry and prose. The acclaimed writers Robert Frost (1874–1963) and Donald Hall (1928–2018) each wrote extensively about their experiences in the state.

- Frost lived in New Hampshire with his family for over a decade, working as a poultry farmer in Derry while also writing and publishing poetry. He later lived in Franconia for several years.
- Hall spent childhood summers on his grandparents’ farm in Wilmot and moved there as an adult.

Provide students with Frost’s “A Brook in the City” and Hall’s *Old Home Day*. Explain that both texts explore how people have changed what New Hampshire looks like but cannot truly change its spirit and beauty. One text is a poem, and the other is a piece of historical fiction.

Distribute “Poetry vs. Prose: A Changing New Hampshire” and instruct students to fill in the Venn diagram with examples they find of what the two texts have in common and how they differ in helping the reader experience the landscape and people of New Hampshire through the years. Review as appropriate for your class.



Independent Practice and Reflection

Teaching tip: Explore these texts in guided reading groups, rather than having students read them independently. For students not in the guided reading group, consider offering the Independent Practice activity. If appropriate, also give students “Build Your Vocabulary!” to support vocabulary acquisition while they read.

Two poets, one season. The “mud season” that Tomie dePaola’s tale jokes about is followed by a beautiful, if brief, spring. Provide students with “Two Poets, One Season.” Tell them they will read and compare two poems, written by two very different poets, about New Hampshire during this time of year.

Before they read, tell students more about the poets.

- Amy Lowell (1874–1925) was born to a wealthy Massachusetts family with a long history in New England. Despite the fact that as a woman she did not receive the same education as her brothers, her social standing and financial security allowed her to travel and pursue her passion for the arts. She became a major figure in the development of modern poetry and was posthumously awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry. She owned a summer home in Dublin, New Hampshire.
- Claude McKay (1889–1945) was born to prosperous farmers in Jamaica. They were able to send him to college in the United States, where he was shocked by the extreme racism he experienced. At one point after college, he worked as a waiter at a hotel in Hanover, New Hampshire. He spent two years in London before moving back to New York City where he became a leader of the Harlem Renaissance. In 1977, he was posthumously named the national poet of Jamaica and awarded the Order of Jamaica for his contributions to literature.

Teaching tip: If appropriate, also give students “Build Your Vocabulary!” to support vocabulary acquisition while they read.

Have students partner up and take turns reading the poetry out loud. They should read each piece two or three times to get a sense of the flow of the writing and experiment with different ways of expressing the poem.

After students read the two poems, they should complete the three reflection tasks on the reverse of the page or on another sheet of paper. Consider sharing student poems in a future writer’s workshop session, with reading buddies, or displaying in the classroom.



Reinforcement

1. **Timeline of writers.** Provide students with basic biographical information about the four writers and the publication dates of the texts featured in this lesson. Ask students to create a timeline that organizes the writers and their work along with other important national and state events. Consider adding any other New Hampshire writers or texts you have studied. Use the “Moose on the Loose” timeline on the student side of the website to add in other important events and dates.
2. **Tell your own New Hampshire tale.** Encourage students to write their own stories of being New Hampshire kids. What is life like today? What traditions and events do they experience? Consider having a “front porch” in the classroom where students can take turns telling their tales.

Extension

1. **Old Home Day: comparing fiction and non-fiction.** Examine Governor Rollins’s 1900 *Proclamation of Old Home Week* using a Quick Connect handout or the “Try It! Analyze this Document” activity on the Moose on the Loose Analyze It: Interpreting Documents page. Then, review the portions of Donald Hall’s *Old Home Day* that describe those special reunion celebrations in his fictional Blackwater Village. Do the visitors in Hall’s story experience what Governor Rollins hoped for “the sons and daughters” of New Hampshire?
2. **Map of writers.** Challenge students to plot the locations of the texts explored in this lesson on the map of New Hampshire. What clues in the writing help them make these mapping decisions? If they are unsure of where the text is set, have them plot it near a place it reminds them of that they know well. Have students create labels for the plotted locations describing the texts and why they plotted them in those spots.

Supporting Materials

New Hampshire Historical Society Resources

1. Old Home Week Proclamation, 1900
2. Quick Connect handout

Other Resources

- Tomie DePaola, "Mud Season," *Front Porch Tales and North Country Whoppers* (2007)
- Robert Frost, "A Brook in the City," *New Hampshire* (1923)
- Donald Hall, *Old Home Day* (1996)
- Amy Lowell, "Monadnock in Early Spring," *A Dome of Many-Coloured Glass* (1912)
- Claude McKay, "Spring in New Hampshire," *Spring in New Hampshire and Other Poems* (1920)
- "New Hampshire Town Boundaries," NH GRANIT Database, Complex Systems Research Center, University of New Hampshire.

Resources provided in the lesson plan:

- Robert Frost, "A Brook in the City" (poem)
- Amy Lowell, "Monadnock in Early Spring" (poem)
- Claude McKay, "Spring in New Hampshire" (poem)

Needed resources for the lesson plan:

- Tomie dePaola, *Front Porch Tales and North Country Whoppers* (picture book with "Mud Season" story)
- Donald Hall, *Old Home Day* (picture book)



Standards

“Moose on the Loose” Content:

- ✓ Students will understand that New Hampshire responded to conflict and change from outside the state in various ways as well as participated in national events. (3-5.T7.1)
- ✓ Students will understand that throughout the 20th century, New Hampshire’s economic and political life evolved and modernized. They will understand that communities responded to economic cycles, and new immigration began. (3-5.T7.2)

“Moose on the Loose” Skills:

- ✓ Gathering, Interpreting, and Using Evidence (3-5.S1.1, 3-5.S1.2)
- ✓ Communicating and Critiquing Conclusions (3-5.S2.1)
- ✓ Effective Historical Thinking (3-5.S3.1)

New Hampshire Social Studies Frameworks:

- ✓ US / NH History: Political Foundations and Development (SS:HI:4:1.3)
- ✓ US / NH History: World Views and Value systems and their Intellectual and Artistic Expressions (SS:HI:4:3.1, SS:HI:4:3.2, SS:HI:4:3.3)

NCSS Themes:

- ✓ Theme 1: Culture
- ✓ Theme 4: Individual Development and Identity

C3 Frameworks:

- ✓ Historical Sources and Evidence (D2.His.9.3-5, D2.His.10.3-5, D2.His.13.3-5)

Common Core ELA:

- ✓ Key Ideas and Details in Reading Literature (RL.4.1, RL.4.2)
- ✓ Craft and Structure in Reading Literature (RL.4.4, RL.4.5)
- ✓ Integration of Knowledge and Ideas in Reading Literature (RL.4.9)
- ✓ Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity in Literature (RL.4.10)
- ✓ Fluency in Foundational Skills (RF.4.4, RF.4.4a, RF.4.4b, RF.4.4c)
- ✓ Production and Distribution of Writing (W.4.4)
- ✓ Research to Build and Present Knowledge (W.4.9, W.4.9a)
- ✓ Vocabulary Acquisition and Use (L.4.4, L.4.5, L.4.6)

Lesson Vocabulary

Old Home Day (noun) A day or week that celebrates a town with a festival, especially inviting residents who have moved elsewhere to return for a reunion

whopper (noun) Something large and extraordinary, especially an extraordinary lie