

# Teaching *The Hudson River Valley Review*

## At Slabsides with John Burroughs

**Grade level: 8**

### **Rationale:**

The Autumn 2008 *The Hudson River Valley Journal's* focus was on the naturalist John Burroughs (1837-1921) and his impact on the history of the Hudson River Valley. Of particular interest are discussions about his private retreats where he met with the famous people of his time (Henry Ford), and wrote his most important pieces.

### **Objectives:**

Students will be able to:

- Develop a design for a special writing retreat like John Burroughs.
- Like John Burroughs, write a letter to Governor Andrew Cuomo about a particular problem and some solutions.

### **New York State Social Studies Standards:**

#### **Standard 1: History of the United States and New York**

Students will: use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of major ideas, eras, themes, developments, and turning points in the history of the United States and New York.

- **Key Idea 2:** Important ideas, social and cultural values, beliefs, and traditions from New York State and United States history illustrate the connections and interactions of people and events across time and from a variety of perspectives.
- **Key Idea 3:** Study about the major social, political, economic, cultural, and religious developments in New York State and United States history which includes learning about the important roles and contributions of key groups.

### **New York State Content Understandings:**

#### **Industrial growth and expansion**

- Geographic influences of industrialization and expansion (e.g., natural resources, location); the interactions between economic and geographic factors

### **Teacher Resources:**

#### **Articles from *The Hudson River Valley Review*:**

Mercier, Stephen M. "John Burroughs in the Hudson River Valley: An Introduction." *The Hudson River Valley Review* 25.1 (2008): 1-9. Print.

Warren, James Perrin. "John Burroughs' Writing Retreats." *The Hudson River Valley Review* 25.1 (2008): 23-38. Print.

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### **Materials:**

- Article
- Images of Burroughs' retreats (Included in the article.)
- Colored pencils/pens/markers
- Pencil/Pen
- Colored Paper
- Glue
- Shoe Box

### **Procedures:**

1. The teacher will explain the role of John Burroughs as a New York State resident with an enormous impact on the early efforts to preserve the environment.
2. Teachers will read excerpts from the Warren article about the workplaces of Burroughs. They will explain that Burroughs also wrote about the problems that were plaguing America at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. He used his cabin in the mountains to gain perspective to see the problems from a distance.
3. Next, students will be asked to pretend that they can live like Burroughs up in the mountains in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. They will need to create their own *Slabsides* cabin with paper and colored pencils.
4. Next, students will make a list of all of the things that they would change in their community, nation, and/or world.
5. Using construction paper and colored pencils/crayons/markers they will draw pictures of the problems that they wish to change and place them somewhere in the box.
6. Teachers will then ask the students to "think outside the box" and come up with some ideas that will solve these problems. What should be done?

### **Assessment/Homework:**

1. Students will write a letter to Governor Andrew Cuomo about the problems that they see in their world and some solutions. Like John Burroughs, who had a relationship with many important people who could make changes, they too will propose changes.

### **Enrichment:**

1. Teachers may send the letters to the governor. If there is any response, the students can share their letters to the class.