

English Lesson Plan

The Appalachian Trail



State Standard(s):	Determine a theme or central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through particular details; provide a summary of a text distinct from personal opinions or judgments. Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; explain how word choice affects meaning and tone. Analyze how a particular sentence, paragraph, chapter, section, or text feature (e.g., heading) fits into the overall structure of a text and contributes to the development of the ideas.				
Objective:	Students practice using a text to make an argument. This consists of three parts: Reading, Response, and Vocabulary. They are then asked to respond to the theme of the story, using the text to draw conclusions about that theme.				
Key Vocabulary:	Plot Lofty Adept	Theme Ecology Meager	Attributes Assiduous Eloquence	Perilous Inception Persistent	Vision Communal Reconcile
Lesson Outline: Students are asked to 1) answer multiple choice questions designed to confirm their understanding of the story's theme, and 2) record definitions for vocabulary words encountered within the piece in order to build their English language skills.				Student groupings:	
Accommodations and Modifications:					



Think back on some of the fables you remember from when you were younger, such as “The Tortoise and the Hare.” If someone asked you what that story was about, what would you say? Some might answer that the story was about a race between woodland animals, which would be correct. However, it would be just as correct to say that this was a story about laziness, overconfidence, and determination. The first person is describing the **plot** of the story, which details the events that happen to the characters, as well as what those characters do. The second person is describing the **theme** of the story, which is the lesson, idea, or thought that the writer is trying to teach, talk about, or explore. While not every written work has a plot, nearly everything that people write is centered on a theme. Identifying a theme is thus usually much more critical to truly understanding a work than understanding the plot. To put it another way, when people ask what happens in a story, they are asking about the plot. When they are asking what the story was about, they are asking for the theme.

Tips for Identifying Theme

- Look for questions that the text specifically asks.
- Ask yourself why the author seems interested in writing about this topic.
- Reread the passage a few times. Once your brain is familiar with the plot, theme will often be easier to identify.
- Take either written or mental notes when you find something that interests you—these often add up to theme.
- Ask yourself how you feel about the people the text is writing about, and why you feel that way. You may have unconsciously picked up cues from the text about how the author feels.



As you read the following excerpt, think about the theme as well as the information the text gives. After, answer the questions. Whenever you see a BOLD WORD, write the definition on the last page of this packet.

Achieving the Appalachian Trail

What qualities are needed to accomplish a goal? Every hiker knows that determination and pacing are important **attributes** to possess, especially for extended hikes that can take up to a half a year! But what else can people use to pursue their dreams successfully? Through bad weather, difficult terrain, **perilous** trails, and potentially dangerous animal encounters, hikers seek that answer on trails such as the Appalachian Trail.

The Appalachian Trail is a massive hiking trail that extends from Georgia to Maine. On average, it takes hikers 5-7 months to hike the entire trail depending on their endurance and experience. It is one of three major hiking trails that extend from North to South in the United States. Since its **inception** in the 1930s, nearly 18,000 individuals have made the journey.

People who have walked the entire trail are known as “2,000 Milers” in reference to the 2,200 miles that it takes to finish the trail from end to end. Though the trail has thus become a famous destination for hikers looking for a big challenge, it was not always a widely known feature of the American landscape.

The idea for the trail was conceived by Benton MacKaye in 1921. His original vision included a communal education aspect, featuring buildings for hikers that would serve as learning centers of the local environment and **ecology**. Unfortunately, these buildings were never completed. His constant expansion of the project meant that he was not able to keep up with his **lofty** goals. Still, he proved **adept** at inspiring others towards his **vision** of a great trail, expanding interest in the project among scientists, journalists, and hikers alike. However, his practical work only amounted to the connecting of existing trails and the creation of a new footpath in New York – hardly work that could accomplish his grand vision.

Eventually, a hiking enthusiast and lawyer name Myron Avery became the head of the Appalachian Trail Committee. Myron was dedicated and **assiduous** in his devotion to making the trail a reality. He made choices that conflicted with the trail’s original conception, choosing to primarily make it a hiking trail and dispensing with the **communal** research portions of



MacKaye's idea. Due to his very **persistent** and practical nature, Avery often found himself in conflict with the dreamer in Benton MacKaye. However, those same qualities were what lead MacKaye's vision of a 2,000 mile trail to be realized. The trail was completed in 1937, but the two men could not **reconcile** their differences. MacKaye left the project before its completion, though he is still credited as the founder of the trail.

MacKaye brought vision and **eloquence** to the creation of the Appalachian Trail, but he was never able to complete the trail beyond some **meager** efforts. Avery was able to complete the trail that we enjoy today, but it lacks many of the features that MacKaye had wanted. Both men are thus linked in a strange partnership, though neither was willing to speak to the other by the end of the trail's construction. And yet, it is a combination of their best qualities that created the beloved trail enjoyed by many hikers today.

Next: Answer the following questions, choosing the best answer from the options.



Achieving the Appalachian Trail

Directions: Choose the best answer from the options below.

1. Which of the following best describes the author's chosen theme while writing this piece?
 - a. Encouraging people to walk the Appalachian Trail
 - b. Educating about the history of the Appalachian Trail
 - c. Talking about how what qualities are needed to accomplish goals
 - d. Acknowledging Benton MacKaye's achievements

2. Which of the following best describes the theme of this piece?
 - a. Friendship
 - b. How to accomplish Goals
 - c. Hiking
 - d. Sustainability

3. Who does the author credit with being most important in the creation of the trail?
 - a. Benton MacKaye
 - b. Myron Avery
 - c. The Appalachian Trail Hikers
 - d. It is left for the reader to decide

Provide a short answer for the following:

Try writing about theme. What qualities are most important for someone attempting a difficult goal? Reference the text in your argument.



Achieving the Appalachian Trail Vocabulary

All words in bold are collected on this page. Write out their definitions to use as reference while you read and answer questions.

Adept:

Assiduous:

Attributes:

Communal:

Ecology:

Eloquence:

Inception:

Lofty:

Meager:



Perilous:

Persistent:

Plot:

Reconcile:

Theme:

Vision:



Achieving the Appalachian Trail Teacher's Answer Key and Reference

Choose the best answer for each question:

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Achieving the Appalachian Trail Vocabulary

Adept	Naturally skillful
Assiduous	Constant, dedicated, diligent
Attributes	Qualities belonging to a person, place, or thing
Communal	Shared by all members of a community, for common use
Ecology	The study of ecosystems, the interconnectedness of nature
Eloquence	The ability to speak smoothly and poetically
Inception	Beginning, start, commencement
Lofty	High minded, difficult and possibly out of reach
Meager	Weak, without substance, insufficient
Perilous	Extremely dangerous, requiring finesse and caution
Persistent	Unrelenting, to continue without stopping
Plot	The things which happen in a story
Reconcile	Restore friendly relations between, cause to coexist in harmony
Theme	The underlying message or purpose behind a work of art
Vision	The effect of sight, a clear idea of what one is working towards or would like to achieve

