

Family Paideia Seminar Plan

Text: Mending Wall by Robert Frost

*Ideas*, Values: **Boundaries, Communication, Community, Ambiguity, Friendship**

Pre-Seminar Content

Big Ideas Chat:

Work together to come up with a definition of “metaphor” using dictionaries and experience. Share examples of common metaphors.

Discuss what kinds of walls you have in your lives, literal as well as figurative.

1st Read:

Looking at the text, discuss together what you expect this reading to be like. How is it organized? How is it similar and different to other poems you know? Number every-other line of the poem (1-3-5-7…to 45). Have a volunteer read the poem aloud.

Vocabulary:

Work together to identify unfamiliar words in the poem and use the context or a dictionary to assign a definition that makes sense in the context of the poem. Be sure to include; *abreast, yelping, mending-time, loaves, mischief, notion…*

2nd Read:

Have a different volunteer read the poem aloud while two others (younger children?) act out the event described in the poem where two neighbors meet to mend the wall between their farms. Discuss as a group any segments that need clarity, so that the volunteers can act out the scene successfully.

Pre-Seminar Process:

* Share why you are having the discussion.

(Sample script from our classroom Paideia Seminars: Modify to fit your household.)

*“A Paideia seminar is a collaborative, intellectual dialogue about a text, facilitated with open ended questions.”*

*“The main purpose of seminar is to arrive at a fuller understanding of the textual ideas and values, of ourselves, and of each other.”*

* Describe what you want to accomplish.
* Set a Family Goal.
* To balance the talk time
* To refer to the text
* To ask a question
* To speak out of uncertainty
* To build on others’ comments

Seminar Questions:

* Opening (Identify main ideas from the text):
* Do you think the speaker of this poem is for walls or against walls? (vote by show of hands)
* What in the poem makes you think the speaker is for or against walls? (anyone can share)
* Core (Analyze textual details):
  + - What conflicted emotions do you find in this poem?
    - What do you think the author is thinking between lines 25-30? And why do you think “Spring is the mischief…”?
    - The author writes toward the end of the poem:

“Something there is that doesn’t love a wall,

That wants it down.”

Why might the author choose language that avoids direct ownership, opting for *something there* instead?

* What purposes does the wall in the poem serve?
* Closing (Personalize and apply the ideas):
  + What fences or walls exist in your life? How might they help you? How could they be hurting you?

Post-Seminar Process:

*“Ask each person what they liked most about the discussion.”*

* Have the family do a quick check of the discussion goal.

Post Seminar Content:

* Transition to Writing:

Refer back to the discussion you had as a family during the Big Ideas Chat. Note the kinds of walls that you each identified and discuss what you think about those walls in the context of Frost’s poem.

* Writing:

After reading and discussing “Mending Wall” by Robert Frost,write a poem in which you describe a wall that exists in your own life and whether or not you think that wall is a good thing or a bad thing—or both.

Talk together about what characterizes a wall and how any wall might be both good and bad in terms of how it impacts your life.

Have all participants write their poems and then read them aloud to the group (unless they’re too personal). Prepare a second draft and send the poem to someone else who is affected by the same wall. Talk with that person about the wall and its impact.

This Paideia Lesson Plan was created by:

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\*Text is attached if open sourced.

\*Text is cited if it needs to be procured.

Mending Wallby Robert Frost

Something there is that doesn’t love a wall,

That sends the frozen-ground-swell under it,

And spills the upper boulders in the sun;

And makes gaps even two can pass abreast.

The work of hunters is another thing:

I have come after them and made repair

Where they have left not one stone on a stone,

But they would have the rabbit out of hiding,

To please the yelping dogs. The gaps I mean,

No one has seen them made or heard them made,

But at spring mending-time we find them there.

I let my neighbor know beyond the hill;

And on a day we meet to walk the line

And set the wall between us once again.

We keep the wall between us as we go.

To each the boulders that have fallen to each.

And some are loaves and some so nearly balls

We have to use a spell to make them balance:

‘Stay where you are until our backs are turned!'

We wear our fingers rough with handling them.

Oh, just another kind of outdoor game,

One on a side. It comes to little more:

There where it is we do not need the wall:

He is all pine and I am apple orchard.

My apple trees will never get across

And eat the cones under his pines, I tell him.

He only says, ‘Good fences make good neighbors.'

Spring is the mischief in me, and I wonder

If I could put a notion in his head:

'*Why* do they make good neighbors? Isn’t it

Where there are cows? But here there are no cows.

Before I built a wall I’d ask to know

What I was walling in or walling out,

And to whom I was like to give offense.

Something there is that doesn’t love a wall,

That wants it down.' I could say ‘Elves’ to him,

But it’s not elves exactly, and I’d rather

He said it for himself. I see him there

Bringing a stone grasped firmly by the top

In each hand, like an old-stone savage armed.

He moves in darkness as it seems to me,

Not of woods only and the shade of trees.

He will not go behind his father’s saying,

And he likes having thought of it so well

He says again, ‘Good fences make good neighbors.'

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