

An Introduction to Loren Eiseley: The Author's Perspective

GRADE LEVEL

Grades 11-12

SUBJECTS

English, Language Arts

ESTIMATED TIME

Three 50-minute sessions

*"Man must be his last
magician. He must seek
his own way home."*

OVERVIEW

These lessons are meant to serve as an introduction to the life and writings of Loren Eiseley through Internet and video resources.

MATERIALS REQUIRED

- Copies of Eiseley's biography from *The Loren Eiseley Reader*, pp. xv-xvii, for each student.
- "Reflections of a Bonehunter" – 1994 NETV documentary on Eiseley's life and writing. A 60-minute DVD is available for loan from the Loren Eiseley Society. A shorter 24-minute version of the DVD can be viewed and downloaded from the LES web site (www.eiseley.org).
- Loren Eiseley Biography, <http://www.eiseley.org/biography.php>
- Loren Eiseley Wikipedia site, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Loren_Eiseley
- Computers with Internet capabilities (will be needed for homework assignment)
- DVD player
- Flip chart and easel or white board
- Timeline template: can be downloaded free from <http://www.office.microsoft.com/en-us/templates/TC010162661033.aspx>

PREPARATION

1. Prepare for this unit by reading Eiseley's biography in *The Loren Eiseley Reader*, pp. xv-xvii, and previewing the 24-minute version of "Reflections of a Bonehunter" found on the Loren Eiseley Society website (<http://www.eiseley.org>).
2. Look through *The Loren Eiseley Reader* and the Eiseley Society website (<http://www.eiseley.org>) to identify some of the key places in Eiseley's life and writing--where he lived and worked, and where Eiseley went on expeditions with the Nebraska State Museum's South Party.
3. Arrange for students to have access to computers with Internet capability.
4. Make copies of all handouts and have all materials available for use.
5. Arrange for all students to have access to copies of *The Loren Eiseley Reader*.

INSTRUCTIONAL PLAN

STUDENT OBJECTIVES

In this series of lessons, students will

- learn about the life and work of Nebraska-born literary naturalist Loren Eiseley.
- respond to multimedia presentations through class discussions and through writing.
- gain knowledge of historical events relating to places in Nebraska about which Loren Eiseley wrote; and
- gain an understanding of the cultural and social influences on Eiseley's writing.

SESSION ONE

1. Have students watch the 24- or 60-minute NETV production of "Reflections of a Bonehunter" and take notes on the events, people and places that influenced Eiseley's life and writing.
2. Distribute copies of Eiseley's biography from *The Loren Eiseley Reader* (pp. xv-xvii) to each student. Have them read this information. Students will use this information, along with their notes from the film, in the subsequent small group activity.
3. Get the students together in small groups (3-4 students each). Ask each group to appoint someone to take notes from the brainstorming session and another person to report out the information to the class. The groups will then discuss the following:
 - What family and personal (life) events influenced Eiseley's personal development in his childhood years? How do you think these events may have influenced his development as a writer?

- Who were some of the major influences in Eiseley's life, and how did they shape his development as a writer?
- What are some of the places that influenced Eiseley's life? How might these places have influenced Eiseley's development as a writer and what he wrote about?

4. Homework:

- Have groups expand their lists developed in class by accessing additional biographical material on Eiseley available at <http://www.eiseley.org/biography.php> and http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Loren_Eiseley and photos in *The Loren Eiseley Reader* on pages 205-215. Ask students to note at least one additional finding on family/personal influences, as well as people and places that influenced Eiseley's life.
- Ask the students to access the Internet to research significant historical and political events that took place during Eiseley's life--locally, nationally, and/or internationally. Students should be able to list at least 12 events and the time period (months/years) during which they took place.
- Students will bring their lists to class to share with their groups and the teacher in Session Two.

SESSION TWO

1. Get small groups back together to discuss additional information found through the homework assignment.
2. Each group will report out findings to the entire class, with the teacher recording the information on a flip chart, white board, or computer with projector.
3. Collect each student's homework assignments for grading.
4. Make sure that the flip chart/white board information is accessible to students for the Session Three activities.

SESSION THREE

1. Seat the students at individual computers. Using the timeline template, found at <http://www.office.microsoft.com/en-us/templates/TC010162661033.aspx>, each student will construct two timeline templates: one timeline of critical events in Loren Eiseley's life and another timeline of critical events in history during Eiseley's life.
2. Optional: print the two timelines on overhead transparency and overlay them on an overhead projector in order to illustrate the intersection of personal and historical events in Eiseley's life.

3. Homework: Ask students to write a two-page essay on at least three critical personal and historical events in their own lives and how these events have influenced their own development as a person and as a writer. Ask them to turn in their essays for grading, if desired.

ENRICHMENT

1. Students may wish to browse the following print and Internet resources on Loren Eiseley:
 - *Fox at the Wood's Edge: A Biography of Loren Eiseley* by Dr. Gale Christianson. Published in 1990 by Henry Holt & Company. Very detailed and well-researched biography of Loren Eiseley.
 - Bonehunter transcript from NETV:
http://www.netnebraska.org/extras/nextexit/ghosts/bone_03.html
 - Loren Eiseley's reflections on the Depression (from "Reflections of a Bonehunter" DVD):
<http://www.netnebraska.org/extras/nebraskastories>
- YouTube videos**
- [Next Exit – Bone Hunter](#) (length: 3:46 minutes). Edited excerpt from the 1994 NETV production of "Reflections of a Bonehunter."
2. Students and the general public are welcome to visit the Heritage Room of Nebraska Authors at the Bennett Martin Public Library, 136 South 14th Street, Lincoln. The Heritage Room has Eiseley artifacts, photos and other memorabilia. Phone: (402) 441-8516.
<http://www.lincolnlibraries.org/depts/hr/ArchiveGuides/EiseleyFront.html>