

TITLE OF LESSON

American Literature Unit 1 Lesson 15 – Using Twain’s Tools: Dialect  
*How Can Written Language Convey Oral Language?*

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TIME ESTIMATE FOR THIS LESSON

One class period

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ALIGNMENT WITH STANDARDS

California – Eng 11-12: R1.0-3, 2.0, 3.0-5, W1.0, W/O1.0-2, L/S1.0, 1.11-14

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MATERIALS

*Black Elk Speaks* – Reading  
**Voice Writing Toolbox** – Student Page  
A video camera and film (and necessary accoutrements, such as a tripod and batteries or electrical cords)  
Guest speaker

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LESSON OBJECTIVES

- To listen to a guest speaker tell a story about a significant event
  - To transcribe the way the speaker talks
  - To use the Dialect Writing Toolbox to refine the transcription
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FOCUS AND MOTIVATE STUDENTS – WARM-UP ACTIVITY

- 1) Homework Check – Stamp/initial all homework assignments. Collect binders. Tell students to keep their homework to use during the class discussion. Collect their Unit 1 Vocabulary List 2 and their **Vocabulary Worksheets**. You will need to grade these tonight so that students may study them for the quiz in Lesson 18.
- 2) **Daily Log** – Tell students to copy the **Daily Log** below.
- 3) **Sustained Silent Reading** - Read for fifteen minutes. At the end of silent reading, ask some students to point out an example of a significant event being described by one of the characters. How does the author make the description of these events seem accurate?

Date	Journal	Lecture Discussion	Activity	Readings	Homework
			1. Guest Speaker 2. Transcription (Step 1 of <b>Dialect Project Guidelines</b> .) 3. Watch the video		1. Use <b>Voice Writing Toolbox</b> and transcription notes to finish Step 1 of the <b>Dialect Project Guidelines</b> . 2. Continue reading novels.

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ACTIVITIES – INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP

1. Group Question – Assign *Group Roles* (see below). Ask students to bring out *Black Elk Speaks*. Tell them to meet in groups to discuss the answer to this question: Why do Neihardt and Twain work so hard to capture the exact words or meanings of their storytellers? What is their purpose and why is it so important? What strategies does the poet John Neihardt use to capture Black Elk’s words? Tell each group to take five minutes to come up with an answer, and then call on presenters to state the group answer. They should have come up with this information from the Black Elk reading: “The procedures followed in these interviews were laborious; Black Elk spoke almost no English and could not read or write it at all, while Neihardt could not speak the Lakota language. The two therefore used an interpreter, Black Elk’s son Ben, who translated Neihardt’s questions into Lakota and Black Elk’s answers into English. Since Ben’s English was highly colloquial, Neihardt rephrased it

aloud until Ben felt that the sense of his father's words had been captured. Sometimes Neihardt asked additional questions of Black Elk. Finally, a sentence was agreed upon which Neihardt then dictated to his daughter, Enid, who took it down in shorthand. Later, she made a typescript of her shorthand and from this typescript – relying also on his memory of their conversations – Neihardt built the book, *Black Elk Speaks*.”

2. Introduction – Before the class hears from the guest speaker, give them some instruction on how to listen. First, remind them of the class ground rules and your expectations regarding the treatment of guests. Since this guest will be speaking colloquially, not formally, the students must be reminded to be respectful of all speech styles. Tell them that they will be hearing a guest speaker describe an important event from his or her life. Their job is to transcribe the story. A transcription is a recording of the story. It will be as if the students are the tape recorders, listening to the way the words sound and capturing them as clearly as possible. (Of course, you will also be videotaping the speaker, so that students can check their transcriptions and make changes.) Give them some suggestions for how to do this. They will not be able to write every word, so they should outline the key events the speaker is describing. If there are specific expressions used by the speaker, they should take note of those. They should listen to the sound of words and make some notes about a few – they can always add more later, as they are watching the tape. There will also be a chance to ask the speaker questions directly after the talk. Tell students to bring out their **Voice Writing Toolbox** to help them remember what to listen for as they hear the story. They need to write out examples of all the strategies listed on the toolbox as they transcribe. They do not need to fill out the toolbox yet, but they will need to refer to it. Remember that, just as with Twain and Neihardt, their goal is to convey the real voice of the storyteller, and make us believe that the dialect has been captured accurately because they will be retelling the story, using the speaker's voice. Also, as with Twain and Neihardt, the story will be about an important event. To be faithful to the storyteller (for whom it is significant), it is important to honor their telling of the story. This means working hard to listen carefully, to take notes on the way they tell the story, and to ask useful questions for clarification afterwards. The first step of this project is to capture the speaker's voice as accurately as possible. The second step will be to create a story from it. Remind them to make sure they include a description of the speaker. They could be doing this now while they wait for the speaker to begin. It would be a good idea to have lots of paper ready, and to write on every other line as they transcribe. Tell the students that these notes are just for themselves; they will write a clean copy for homework tonight.
3. Guest Speaker – Introduce the guest speaker, and tell him or her you will time the talk so that it lasts no more than five minutes. This is important. Five minutes of conversational speech can fill several pages with transcribed writing. The talk must be short because the task becomes daunting otherwise. Let the guest speaker know that the time restriction has to do with the assignment. Also remind them to speak informally, since the students are practicing writing different ways of speaking. While the speaker talks, videotape the story.
4. Question and Answer –After the story, tell the students to write down a question to ask the speaker, one that will help them understand and recreate the speaker's voice for others. Tell them that everyone must write down and ask a question of the speaker. Give them five minutes to ask any clarifying questions of the speaker now, since they will be responsible for completing their transcriptions today and for homework tonight. Thank the speaker for their time and story.
5. Video – After the speaker finishes and leaves, tell students that they will watch the video in order to fill in spaces in their transcriptions. Watch the video slowly. Stop every minute or so to allow students to catch up. Play a minute of it, and then rewind and play it again. Tell students to listen to the sound of the speech, and do whatever they can to capture it. They will have only their notes to help them write the story for homework tonight.
6. Review Homework – Tell students that they must use their transcription notes and the examples of the strategies from the **Voice Writing Toolbox** to write their version of “A True Story” based on the guest speaker's experience. Remind them to use the strategies used by Twain. For this first step of the project, they only need to worry about transcribing what the speaker said. (Later they will write a description of the speaker to begin the story. The description of the speaker should be written in standard English, not in the speaker's dialect, in order to highlight the difference between the narrator's voice and that of the character or speaker.) After they write the transcription, they should use the toolbox to check it over and see if they have applied all the strategies. This is Step 1 of the Dialect Project.

7. **Binders** – Collect binders to grade tonight.
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**HOMEWORK**

- 1) Project 1 – Use **Voice Writing Toolbox** and transcription notes to write the story, word for word, told by the speaker (Complete Step 1 of **Project 1 – A True Story**).
  - 2) Continue reading novels.
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**GROUP ROLES**

**Facilitator** – Your job is to keep the group focused on the task at hand and to help them generate as many ideas about Twain's and Neihardt's purposes/methods as possible. It is not your job to come up with the ideas. It is your job to encourage/help other group members to come up with the ideas.

**Notetaker** – Your job is to write out the words the group is giving you about Twain's and Neihardt's purposes and methods. It is not your job to generate all of the ideas. It is your job to help others to give you as many ideas as possible to write.

**Presenter** – Your job will be to help your group members to present the answer to the question about the authors' purposes and methods. It is not your job to conduct the entire presentation. It is your job to make sure that everyone in your group has a role in the presentation, that they can effectively convey their ideas, and that the presentation runs smoothly.

**Timekeeper** – Your job is to remind the group of the time so that they finish answering the question in five minutes.

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**DOCUMENTATION FOR PORTFOLIO**

**Unit 1**

None