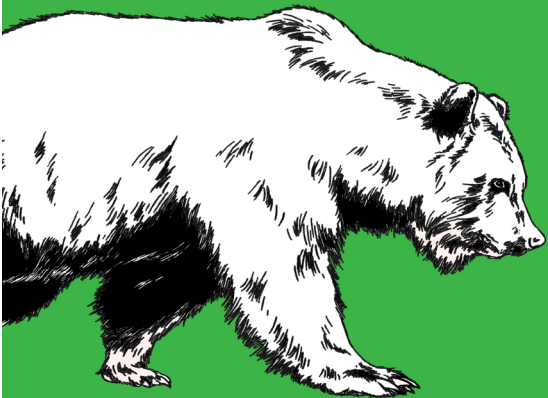


# MONARCH

Heather Bourbeau



## TEACHING GUIDE

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Compiled by

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## Overview and Essential Questions

The purpose of this teaching guide is to accompany instructors and educators in teaching and guiding classroom discussion on *Monarch* by Heather Bourbeau. Exploring histories forgotten or often overlooked, *Monarch* is a poetic memoir of the American West. Focused on the people and events that shaped California, Nevada, Oregon, and Washington, Bourbeau crafts a regional history that counteracts the simple narratives we are told and taught.

This guide is offered as a way to further explore these questions and dive into other stories and personal histories that might further enrich our understanding of the past, this land, and the multitudes who have called it home.

The materials are centered around the following questions:

- What do you know about the natural and political history of California, Nevada, Oregon, and/or Washington?
- Why have some people been celebrated and others forgotten in what we are taught?
- Who is served in the forgetting of certain histories?
- Who is served in the celebration of certain narratives?
- How do we tell the history of where we live or where we come from?
- How do we ensure more stories and more diverse voices are represented in that history?
- Where can you find more information on these and other stories?

This guide includes more historical background to inform teacher or student reading and guided questions to start conversations about the poems. The questions included can be used to guide group discussions or can be answered independently. Also included are creative prompts and a list of resources that provide opportunities to further explore the themes and topics covered.

Please bear in mind that this guide is not exhaustive, but rather an illustrative example of possible questions and exercises that can be used in classrooms or study groups. Please make any and all of it your own, and share your adaptations and additions.

Thank you for making *Monarch* a part of your classroom.

## Common Core and State Standards

### Reading

◇ CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.2 Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.

◇ CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.4 Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.

### Writing

◇ CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.1 Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

◇ CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.7 Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

### Speaking and Listening

◇ CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.1 Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

### History/Social Studies

◇ CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.

◇ CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.

◇ CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.6 Identify aspects of a text that reveal an author's point of view or purpose (e.g., loaded language, inclusion or avoidance of particular facts).

◇ CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.6 Evaluate authors' differing points of view on the same historical event or issue by assessing the authors' claims, reasoning, and evidence.

### Content and Trigger Warning

Some poems and some lessons contain disturbing material which may be triggering, including discussions of violent, racist acts. These lessons have been designed to support students in their understanding of these issues and to help them develop critical thinking and their own exploration of personal, local, and national histories.

## Lesson Options

### Literary Perspective

Each state section begins with a timeline and ends with a list poem. What is accomplished by these two techniques?

What are other narrative techniques used in *Monarch*?

How does the personal interact with the historical in these poems? How is literature impacted by historical events or current events?

### Historical Perspective

Pick a poem from any section and examine the following elements:

**Setting:** Where does this poem take place? Are you familiar with this place? What senses are evoked here: smell, taste, touch, hearing, sight?

**People:** Who is depicted and who is *not* depicted—race, gender, sexuality, class, age, abilities? What do we know about them in terms of this state’s history? How are they portrayed in this poem—positively or negatively? Whose point of view is represented and whose is *not* represented? How might the story be told differently from a different voice?

**Actions:** What is being done in this poem—actively or passively?

**Objects:** What are the relevant buildings, possessions, nature, animals, or text?

**Message:** What is the central argument of the poem? Why does it matter? What does it reveal about the history we are taught? Has your understanding of this person/place/event changed?

**Limitations:** What is the possible bias in this poem? What information is missing? Whose point of view is missing? Can you write it? If not, do you know whom to ask to learn more?

## Creative Assignments

**Construct your own list poem of things found in your neighborhood or even your house that help show the history of your neighborhood, family, or people.**

1. Take one of the poems as a starting point. Who is depicted? Who is not depicted? Whose voice or viewpoint is represented? Whose voice or viewpoint is not represented? How might the story be told differently from a different voice?

*Additional exercise: Retell the poem/story from a different voice.*

2. Start with a timeline from *Monarch* of one of the states. Analyze: Whose stories are included? Whose stories are omitted? Whose voice is heard? Whose voice is missing? Create a parallel timeline that includes the history of one of the groups that is not included.

*Suggestion: this could be done once as a group activity guided by the teacher. Then, it could be done again (and again) by pairs or small groups of students. In the guided practice, take time to generate suggestions for resources and interview questions.*

3. What is a timeline that you wish your classmates were taught? How would you go about creating that timeline? What resources would you use? Whom would you interview?
4. Take a news article from at least 50 years ago (perhaps an article from the bibliography), research or discuss the context surrounding the event reported on, and write a short draft of a poem about that event. Imagine the people involved and perhaps write from their point of view.

Analyze the news article using the questions:

- Whose story is told?
- Whose story is missing?
- Whose voice is heard?
- Whose voice is missing?
- What questions do I have?
- Where/how can I research the questions?

*Suggestion: Each individual student could do this for one source, then present findings to the group. Then small groups could form for the most popular or intriguing topics to research in more depth.*

5. Read a page from your history textbook or a historical nonfiction book. Do you see yourself or your people reflected in the text? Whose experiences are being recorded? Whose experiences are being overlooked? What more do you know about this event/time period/historical figure? Where will you look for the answers to your questions?

6. Interview an older neighbor or relative. Ask them about their relationship to the land they live on, where they came from (if it is not where they currently live), and what they remember of the local and/or family history they experienced or were taught.  
*Additionally, this exercise could be used as a launch pad for or supplement to any of the above activities.*

## Research Assignment

### A Greater Dive Into One Event and a Research Opportunity

The following is related to the poem “The Tacoma Method” from the Washington section in *Monarch*. Similar research assignments can be done with other source material provided in the bibliography (at the end of this guide and on the website).

The following section is from “[The Tacoma Method](#),” George Dudley Lawson\*, pp. 234-239, *Overland Monthly and Out West Magazine*. Volume 7, Issue 39, March 1886, San Francisco, CA.

#### THE TACOMA METHOD.

THERE is no element of novelty about “The Tacoma method” except its application to the Chinese, for it has been the practice of communities, as far back as history extends, to expel intruders or exile obnoxious members.

The particular appellation which here denotes the crystallizing of the anti-Mongolian theories, and stands for the object and means of the removal of the little yellow man, will go far to immortalize the pleasant city at the head of Puget Sound. Although Tacoma was not the first locality on the Pacific Coast to bring agitation to the point of banishing them, it decidedly answered the question regarding the Chinese, as did the people of New York in regard to the Tweed ring. “What,” asked the great expounder of public plunder, “are you going to do about it?” when brought face to face with the public reprobation of his iniquities; and, “What are you going to do about it,” was asked of Tacoma’s Committee of Fifteen, “in case these men do not leave on November 1st, 1885, as you have directed?”

“We shall see.”

When the edict went forth, in October, that an exodus should be made in thirty days, there were about eight hundred Chinese in the city. They were engaged in trading, gar-

dening, manufacturing shoes and garments, mill and household work, and the various branches of menial labor. There were probably about six hundred white men and women unemployed and suffering; but it must be remembered that the average white man is equal to at least fifty per cent. more accomplishment than a coolie. It is only in the occupations which we consider the peculiar province of women, that the Chinaman can hold his own; but his manner of washing, cooking, and doing general housework will hardly bear comparison, in the matters of taste and neatness, with our own. So thoroughly had John acquired a foothold in Tacoma, that efforts were being put forth to discourage white acquisitions to the population, and the commercial and industrial conditions were becoming antagonistic to white occupation. The story of Singapore was about to be told of Tacoma, and the fate of the unfortunate Phillippine Isles awaited it. These facts were more noticeable in a city of 8,000 inhabitants, one-tenth Chinese, than they would have been among 300,000 people, one-fifth Chinese; and at least nine-tenths of the white residents sympathized entirely with the movement to make it a white man’s town of peace and plenty.

It is below the mark to calculate the ship-

\*George Dudley Lawson, editor of the *Tacoma Daily News* in 1885, was [one of the 27](#) who were arrested and stood trial for the expulsion of the Chinese.

## Questions

- What do you know about this writer?
- What do you notice about his language?
- What is the author's bias?
- What do you think the author's purpose was?
- Who was his audience?
- What is recounted in this article?
- What rhetorical devices does the author use—ethos, logos, pathos?
- What details are left out?
- How would you have reported this event?
- If you were to do a research paper on this event, what additional resources would you seek?
- Whom would you interview?
- What questions do you have?

## Context

This article was published in *Overland Monthly and Out West Magazine*, a California-based magazine published from July 1868 to July 1935. The founder, Anton Roman, had hoped this magazine would “help the material development of this Coast.” The magazine would go on to publish Mark Twain, Jack London, John Muir, Ina Coolbrith, and Willa Cather.

Bret Harte, the famed short story writer and poet, was the first editor and continued in that role until 1875. He published his most well-known work, the narrative poem “Plain Language from Truthful James”, later known as “The Heathen Chinees”, in the September 1870 issue. The poem was a satire of anti-Chinese sentiment in California at the time. However, rather than start a meaningful conversation, it reinforced many readers' racist beliefs.

By 1886, when the above article was published in *Overland Monthly and Out West Magazine* anti-Chinese sentiment was enshrined in a number of US, California, and other Western state's laws. In the spring of 1882, the Chinese Exclusion Act was passed by Congress and signed by President Chester A. Arthur. It was the first significant act of federal legislation restricting immigration into the US. This act provided an absolute 10-year ban on Chinese laborers immigrating to the United States and limited immigration only to people who had relatives living in the country. It also prevented Chinese immigrants from becoming naturalized citizens. However, in *US v. Wong Kim Ark (1896)*, the US Supreme Court ruled that, under the Fourteenth Amendment, persons of Chinese ancestry born in the US were entitled to citizenship.

Local and state officials tried to impose additional restrictions, such as the 1891 California law that prevented “the coming of Chinese persons into the State, whether subjects of the Chinese Empire or otherwise”. This law was eventually declared unconstitutional in *Ex Parte: Ah Cue*,



1894. The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and subsequent immigration laws were repealed with the passage of the Magnuson Act in 1943.

Throughout this time, Chinese laborers, their families, and their communities were targets of assault, murder, and forced evacuation. As a result, more than 20,000 Chinese people were displaced throughout the US West. In California alone, there were more than 200 purges of Chinese residents between 1849 and 1906.

As told in the poem, Tacoma city leaders said that all Chinese must leave the town by a November 1 deadline. On November 3, 1885, a group of white Tacoma men, including prominent businessmen, political leaders, and even police, rounded up about 200 Chinese people living in the city and marched them to a railroad station, forcing those who could afford a ticket to board a train to Portland, Oregon. Those who could not afford a ticket, walked the tracks that Chinese laborers had helped lay down. Two Chinese men died from exposure.

The following day, white residents burned Chinese homes and Chinese-owned businesses. Within four days, Tacoma's Chinatowns had been burned to the ground. The lead perpetrators, known as the "Tacoma 27" were known, but none were convicted.

### **Research Paper: Anti-Asian Sentiment, Actions, and Laws in the US West 1850-1910 and today**

- Ask students to explore historical anti-Asian sentiment, laws, and events in the four states of *Monarch* (California, Nevada, Oregon, and Washington). Choose one aspect or event from the history of CA, OR, WA, or NV and explain how it is an example of anti-Asian discrimination, using citations. Compare this historical event with anti-Asian sentiment, protocols, and attacks that are occurring today in the US, again using cited sources.
- Be sure to describe both the modern and historical event clearly, with documented evidence, and how they are similar and/or different.
- Students should rely on peer-reviewed academic research, primary documents, interviews, and investigative journalism to develop their research paper.

#### ***Further Resources***

- The UC Hastings College of the Law has an [excellent database of anti-Chinese statutes and cases](#).
- The Washington State Historical Society has US and state-specific resources: [the Chinese Exclusion Act Background Reading](#), including a [three-page information sheet on Exclusion in Washington State](#).

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