

**Transcendental Experience: Take a Walk on the Wild[ness] Side**

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**“To be whole. To be complete. Wildness reminds us what it means to be human, what we are connected to rather than what we are separate from.”**  
**-Terry Tempest Williams**

**Abstract**

This unit is designed for use in an 11<sup>th</sup> grade American Literature course in which the overriding Essential Question (EQ) is “What is the American Dream”? The EQ for this unit asks students to consider the following concept(s): Can “wildness” lead to the “preservation of the world”? to the “preservation” of humanity?”. Though focused on the English classroom, the goal of this unit is to provide students with an understanding of the interconnectedness of art, history, and literature. Using the works of Thoreau and Emerson in conjunction with contemporary writings, we will explore the meaning of “living deliberately,” “wildness,” “wild,” “preservation,” “self-reliance,” and sense of place. This unit will also emphasize experiential learning through artistic and field related endeavors.

**Essential Question (EQ):**

Can “wildness” lead to the “preservation of the world”? to the “preservation” of humanity”?

**Sub EQs:**

- What is “wild”?
- How do we define “wildness”?
- What is the difference—is there a difference—between “wildness” and “wild”?
- What are the benefits of “wildness”?
- What are the disadvantages of “wildness”?
- Can “wildness” lead to “deliberate living”?
- What does it mean to be “an instrument of change”?
- What is Nature?
- What is our relationship with Nature?
- How does Nature define/create one’s sense of self?
- What are the metaphors that define our relationship with Nature?

**Grade and Subject :** American Literature, Grade 11

**Objectives:** Students will learn and be able to...

- understand how literature (both fiction and nonfiction) is a reflection of life.
- experience the natural world.
- develop journaling skills.
- differentiate between the concrete and abstract within a work of literature and in their own writing.
- explore their own relationships with nature and learn how to express those relationships.
- construct” human relations to place/land/nature/environment.
- make connections to the genre of nonfiction, fiction, and poetry by exploring personal approaches to reading and writing.
- read, comprehend, and interpret nonfiction, fiction, and poetry using literal and figurative comprehension skills.
- understand the elements of figurative language contributing to meaning (theme) within a work of nonfiction, fiction, and poetry.
- identify elements of figurative language (allusion, alliteration, simile, metaphor, apostrophe, etc.).
- apply elements of figurative language (allusion, alliteration, simile, metaphor, apostrophe, etc.).

- understand how style (diction, format, tone, etc.) contributes to meaning (theme) within a work of nonfiction, fiction, and poetry
- explore writing style through the creation of original journals, essays, and poems.
- present and explain research and original writings to an audience.
- assess critical reading approaches and needs.

**Duration:** 25 class periods

**Literature Explored:**

Billy Collins’s “Shoveling Snow with Buddha”

Jan DeBlieu’s “Mapping the Sacred Places” from *American Nature Writing, 2000*

Emily Dickinson’s “Some Keep the Sabbath”

Annie Dillard’s “Seeing” from *A Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*

Ralph Waldo Emerson’s “Self-Reliance” and excerpts from “Nature” (optional)

Stanley Kunitz’s journal selections and “The Snakes of September” from *The Wild Braid*

Mary Oliver’s “Going to Walden”

Robert D. Richardson’s Richardson’s “Transcendentalism” from *Thoreau: A Life of the Mind*

H.D. Thoreau’s “Walking,” “Where I Lived, and What I Lived For,” “Sounds,” “Solitude” “Conclusion” and excerpts from “Spring” from *Walden; Or, Life in the Woods*

Independent Reading selections

**Materials Needed:**

SMART Board

Clay

Digital cameras

Pennies

Chalk

**Curriculum Outline**

Lesson	Purpose	Days	Readings
1	Transcendental Experience: Introducing “Wildness”	7	Emerson’s “Self-Reliance” Thoreau’s “Spring,” Richardson’s “Transcendentalism” (pp. 71-76) from <i>Thoreau: A Life of the Mind</i>
2	Concrete and Abstract: Sensing “Wildness”	3	Thoreau’s “Sounds,” “Solitude, journals Dillard’s “Seeing” Kunitz’s journals from <i>The Wild Braid</i>
3	“Wildness” as Sanctuary: Exploring the Sacred	5	Thoreau’s “Where I Lived, and What I Lived For” Emerson’s “Self-Reliance” DeBlieu’s “Mapping the Sacred Places Dickinson’s “Some keep the Sabbath” Collins’s “Shoveling Snow with Buddha”
4	Taking a Walk on the Wild[ness] Side: Experiencing the Wild	3	Thoreau’s “Walking,” “Conclusion” Oliver’s “Going to Walden” Kunitz’s “The Snakes of September”
5	“Wildness” as the “Preservation of the World”: Exhibiting the Wild	7	Thoreau’s “Conclusion” Independent Reading Final Exhibition Connections

## Lesson Overviews

### Day 1: Introduction to Wildness

Based lessons by Jamie Pietruska, Dover-Sherborn High School and Jonathan Hartt, Maimonides School

1. Chalk Talk: On the white board write the word “wildness.” Ask students to consider the connotation of the word “wildness” or ask students what thoughts/images come to mind when they see/hear the word “wildness”? Students then use white board markers to record their ideas on the board. The “talk” takes place through responding to the ideas/insights of one another. Discuss the ideas conveyed, asking one student to act as the recorder. Upon debriefing the chalk talk, ask students whether “wildness” and “wild” are similar or different in connotation.
2. The remainder of the period will be spent outside working in pairs to search for elements that they consider “wild.” Each group must choose one area or object or image to be photographed with a digital camera.

Homework: Read and annotate excerpt from Thoreau’s essay “Spring” (pp. 197-200)  
3-2-1 exercise: 3 notable quotables/insights, 2 questions, 1 prediction

### Day 2

Inspired by Robert Gross’s presentation “Transcendentalism: Thoreau on Nature and Wildness” at the 2007 Approaching Walden Seminar

1. Using the SMART Board, groups will explain their digital images of “wild.” Ask students to consider how these images create a concrete form of “wildness” and “wild.”
2. Review and discuss excerpt from “Spring” through the 3-2-1 approach. Explore Thoreau’s evolution as writer/thinker in this section of the writing by discussing the movement from the concrete (scientific) to the abstract (metaphorical) approach to nature. Note: Be sure to discuss the passage “What is man but a mass of thawing clay?” Ask students to consider how this reading connects with our discussion of “wildness” and “wild.” Food for thought: Is there a difference between Thoreau’s sense of “wildness” and our sense of “wildness”? Can one create “wildness”?
3. Provide each student with a piece of clay. Based on the reading and discussion, each student creates an abstract (metaphorical) sculpture of “wildness.” If students do not finish creating, they may finish for homework. They must, however, be ready to share their creations during our next class.

Homework: Finish “wildness” creations if necessary.  
Complete Agree/Disagree Survey (Appendix A)  
Read and annotate Richardson’s “Transcendentalism” from *Thoreau: A Life of the Mind* (pp. 71-76)

### Day 3

Based on collaborative work with Jennifer Jordan, The Oxbow School

1. Students will share sculptures, explaining how their artistic endeavor reflects their concept of “wildness.” Questions to consider in formulating their responses: Has our discussion of “wildness” and “wild” influenced your creative process? Has your perception of “wildness” and “wild” evolved? Do you consider yourself, as Thoreau suggests, a “mass of thawing clay”? Explain.
2. Review and discuss the Agree/Disagree Survey.
3. Provide students with the Transcendentalism Overview and Oval Organizer (Appendix B) and project the image on the SMART Board. Using the survey and Richardson’s “Transcendentalism,” record what students think they know about transcendentalism.
4. Introduce small group assignment and rubric entitled Research & Presentation: An Exploration of the Roots of Transcendentalism (Appendix C)

Homework: Begin preliminary research on subject area.

**Day 4 and 5**

1. Research & Presentation: An Exploration of the Roots of Transcendentalism. The class will meet in the Library Media Center for research and presentation creation.
2. Review Independent Reading assignment and rubric (Appendix D)

Homework: Research and presentation creation  
Review Independent Reading Assignment Guidelines and select independent reading text.

**Day 6 and 7**

1. Clarify any questions regarding Independent Reading Assignment.
2. Research & Presentation: An Exploration of the Roots of Transcendentalism presentations. Students should take notes while various groups are presenting. Rubric (Appendix C)

Homework: Five cotton balls with various “scents” (appropriate) in separate Ziploc bags.  
Read and annotate Thoreau’s “Sounds” and “Solitude”  
Obtain Independent Reading text and begin reading

**Day 8: Sensing the Wild**

1. In small groups, review and discuss “Sounds” and “Solitude.” Use the 3-2-1 exercise to guide this work (see previous explanation on Day 1). Share insights, ideas and questions in a guided discussion.
2. Explain to students that the purpose of today’s exercises are to help them “see” through the use of their other senses—to see without using their eyes. In doing so, students will have a better understanding of the metaphorical aspect of the writers explored in this unit.

Cotton Ball Exercise: Students will divide into groups of three to exchange cotton balls. In order to work from the concrete to the abstract, encourage students to record the descriptions of the scents they encounter in metaphorical terms. For example, if a student has the scent of molasses, rather than simply writing, “It’s molasses” on his/her paper, the student might write, “This scent reminds me of the oozing, dark liquid that my Grandmother Bliss used to make the best Krinkles cookies in the world. It is a scent that is comforting, safe, and scared. It is my Grandmother’s kitchen.” Once the students have exchanged cotton balls and recorded responses, each student will share one description with the entire class.

Black Box Exercise: Materials needed- cardboard box, 4-5 unique items of assorted shapes and sizes (little statues, dolls, erasers, sticks, shells, etc.), drawing paper, and pencils. Place one of the unique objects in the box. One student will be asked to place his/her hands in the box, without looking at the item, and describe the item to the other students in the class. The student should be encouraged to describe the item in abstract rather than concrete terms. In other words, if the item in the box is a shell, they should describe its form, size, and texture instead of simply saying, “It’s a shell.” The rest of the class will draw what the describing student “sees.” Students will then share drawings.

Homework: Read and annotate Dillard’s “Seeing” as well as completing accompanying assigned questions (Appendix E)  
Independent Reading

**Day 9**

1. Discuss Dillard’s essay “Seeing.” Connect the ideas from the reading with the previous exercise by further exploring Dillard’s movement from the concrete to the abstract in regards to her experiences with nature.
2. Outside for journaling introduction: Hand out a packet containing excerpts from Thoreau’s and Kunitz’s journals. Remind students that journaling is an individual experience—no two journals will be alike. Students should have a basic understanding of the concept of journaling from previous units, but it’s important to give them a few reminders about the purpose of the journal. A journal differs from a diary in that it is not merely a summary of one’s daily activities, rather is a place to record one’s thoughts, insights, and observations. In this unit, students may want to include reflections on readings, class discussions, and various drawings of the “wild.” (Appendix F)

3. Penny Exercise: Upon finishing the journal activity, provide each student with a penny, piece of paper, and a piece of chalk. Using Dilliard's "penny experience" as a model, "hide" pennies on the school grounds (outside). With the chalk, create a "map" to guide the finders towards the various pennies. Students may want to "hide" their pennies near some element of nature that they consider wild. Along with the penny, students should leave a note asking the finder to write what s/he believed the hidden treasure might be, whether or not s/he was disappointed/surprised, etc., and what elements they might consider representative of "wildness" or "wild" near the treasure.

Homework: Read, annotate, 3 notable quotables from Thoreau's "Where I Lived, What I Lived For"  
Independent Reading

### Day 10: "Wildness" as Sanctuary: Exploring the Sacred

1. Outside to find responses to yesterday's Penny Exercise. Share responses (keep in mind that some finders may have chosen not to respond).
2. Share excerpts from yesterday's journaling activity. These journals will serve as a segue towards a guided discussion of Thoreau's "Where I Lived, What I Lived For." Share notable quotables from close readings, make connections to student presentations on transcendentalism and previous readings. Ask students to discuss whether or not this essay connects with any of our previous conversations on "wildness." Further questions: How does this piece reflect Thoreau's sense of self? Sense of place? What is your view of Thoreau at this point in our readings? How does Thoreau move from the concrete to the abstract in this essay? Are Thoreau's ideas relevant to our times? Are there any concepts within the piece that pique your curiosity? Likewise, are there any concepts within the piece with which you blatantly disagree or find disturbing? Does this piece reflect the concept of "wildness" being the "preservation of humanity"?

Homework: Read, annotate, vocabulary and 3 assigned questions for Emerson's "Self-Reliance"  
(Appendix G)  
Independent Reading

### Day 11

1. Small group discussions on questions and creation of a visual for Emerson's "Self-Reliance." Groups should be divided so that each question from the previous night's homework is covered. Each group needs to appoint a scribe (for reporting discussion at step "e" back to the class) and a timekeeper before discussing questions. Upon finishing, regroup to discuss and debrief small group discussions and visual creations.
  - a. Emerson says that "God will not have his own work made manifest by cowards." What are the proper characteristics of a self-reliant (hu)man, according to this essay?
  - b. On what does the self-reliant person base her or his "greatness," in Emerson's view? In other words, what are the proper sources of self-reliance?
  - c. Emerson equates "manhood" (which Emerson may have meant to refer specifically to males, but which in the year 2007 we can perhaps think of as "mature, effective personhood") with a certain relationship to society.
    - 1) How does he depict society?
    - 2) What does he say is the praiseworthy relationship between the individual and society, that is, how should a person act in relation to various groups, including society at large and family?
  - d. How do the concepts in Emerson's "Self-Reliance" compare/contrast with those of Thoreau in "Where I Lived, What I Lived For"? Which writer "best" epitomizes the concepts conveyed through our EQ?
  - e. Create a visual in which you convey the concept deemed the most relevant within Emerson's essay. Consider carefully our previous discussions, activities, readings, and journals. Be prepared to explain the rationale behind your creation.
2. Whole class discussion—share discussion responses and visuals.

Homework: Read, annotate, and find 3 connections within DeBlieu's "Mapping the Sacred Places" to the works of Thoreau, Emerson, and Dillard (Appendix H)  
Outside Independent Journaling  
Independent Reading

**Day 12**

1. Guided discussion on DeBlieu's "Mapping the Sacred Places." Using the SMART Board, show image of Thoreau's map of Walden Pond and Concord area. Ask students to identify points on the map they believe denote that which was sacred to Thoreau. Food for Thought: How does "mapping the sacred" relate to our concept of "wildness"? Is there a connection between those places you identify as sacred and Emerson's concept of "Self-Reliance"? What aphorism from the works we've read relate to the concept of the "sacred" in our lives?
2. Mapping Exercise: Create personal maps of sacred places using the materials from home. Note: Provide plenty of other materials for students to use in addition to those they bring from home (paper, colored pencils, photos, elements of nature, etc.). Upon completion, share and display maps.

Homework: Reading and writing on Dickinson's "Some keep the Sabbath" and Collins's "Shoveling Snow with Buddha" (Appendix I)  
Independent Reading

**Day 13**

Inspired by collaborative work with Jennifer Jordan, The Oxbow School and Lyn Niemi, North Central Charter School.

1. Guided discussion on Dickinson's "Some keep the Sabbath" and Collins's "Shoveling Snow with Buddha". Students will share key insights from their written responses. Ask students whether they consider these poets exemplary of the concept of "wildness." Explore the imagery in the two works. Food for thought: How do these works connect with the other readings we've explored in this unit? Though written in different time periods, what concepts do these works share? How does the diction of these works convey a sense of the sacred? A sense of the wild? These questions will prompt students to reflect upon our work throughout the unit, while also leading them towards a realization of what they now understand and know about transcendentalism.
2. Introduce ekphrastic poetry (Appendix J). Review and discuss the two model poems, "The Rind" and "Black Hearts." Remind students of the importance of diction in poetry, guiding them towards using figurative language within their works. On the SMART Board, revisit the artistic works of Thomas Cole, Albert Bierstadt, and Frederick Church to provide students with the opportunity to "revisualize" transcendentalism. Ask student experts to review the key aspects of these artists to help inspire their original pieces. Review the rubric and answer any questions students have on the assignment.
3. Outside for journaling and brainstorming original ekphrastic poems.

Homework: Rough (very rough) draft of ekphrastic poem.  
Independent Reading

**Day 14**

Inspired by collaborative efforts with Susie Carlisle, Cushing Academy, Richard Wallace, Souhegan High School, and lessons by Brodie Miles, Winchesters High School, and Jonathan Hartt, Maimonides School

1. With a partner, students will share drafts of ekphrastic poems. Students should peer evaluate using the rubric and peer assessment sheet. (Appendix K)
2. Distribute clean copies of the Transcendentalism Oval and ask students to write down what they understand and know about this literary movement. Compare and contrast these ovals with those from early work in this unit. (Appendix L).
3. Preliminary information on Walden and DeCordova excursion. Review guidelines for the trip and assignment overview (Appendix M). Read and discuss Mary Oliver's "Going to Walden." (Appendix N) Food for thought: How does Oliver use the physical place of Walden as a metaphor for her life? How does going to Walden and the DeCordova reflect the concept of "wildness"? How will this journey bring us full circle in our exploration of transcendentalism—from the abstract of ideas to the concrete of the land?

Homework: Read, annotate, and three notable quotable in Thoreau's essay "Walking."  
Write a one-half to full page response to "Walking" in which you consider the following:  
How does Thoreau's concept of "wildness" and of "wild" convey the interconnectedness of all things? The "unity of spirit"? Why does he believe this unity is essential to the preservation of humanity? Both Thoreau's essay and Oliver's poem suggest movement (going and walking), towards what are they moving? Why do they believe this movement is essential towards finding one's own "Walden"? How does Thoreau's work convey the concept that "in wildness is the preservation of the world"?  
Independent Reading

### **Day 15: Taking a Walk on the Wild[ness] Side: Experiencing the Wild**

Inspired by Carla Beard, 2007 *Approaching Walden*

1. Use Carla Beard's visual representation of the transcendental "unity of spirit" to begin discussion on Thoreau's "Walking." Students need to consider how the dual visuals reflect the key points of this essay.
2. Share insights and ideas on Thoreau's "Walking" from last night's reading and writing. In addition to the questions posed in the homework, students need to consider whether the ideas in Thoreau's essay are revolutionary. How is Thoreau asking us to reassess our view of "wildness" and "wild"? Does Thoreau provoke the reader to further consider how to "live deliberately" in his/her life?
3. Final preparation for Walden and DeCordova excursion.

Homework: Develop three questions for Richard Smith, Thoreau impersonator  
Select favorite notable quotable from any of the readings throughout this unit  
Bring journals, drawing utensils, camera, and lunch  
Revise ekphrastic poems  
Independent Reading

### **Day 16**

Inspired by collaborative work with Susie Carlisle, Cushing Academy and Lyn Niemi, North Central Charter School

1. Excursion to Walden and DeCordova. Bring digital camera to document the day for students.
2. Walden Pond: Meet with Richard Smith, Thoreau impersonator and expert, on shores of Walden Pond. "Saunter" around Walden, stopping along the way for journaling and observation of the area and elements of "wildness." Students will complete the guided assignment on their own as we complete our sojourn (Appendix N). Meet back at the bathhouse to discuss, share journals, and debrief while eating lunch.
3. DeCordova: Remind students of beginning activity with clay—the idea of creating our own unique sense of what constitutes "wildness" and "wild." Review the concept of evolution in regards to the excerpt from "Spring" by Thoreau. Ask students to share and explain their favorite notable quotable from unit readings. Students will explore the sculptures on the DeCordova grounds while consider how these works "evolved" into the creations we see today. Students will journal along the way, garnering ideas for their ekphrastic poems inspired by a work or works on display in the sculpture garden. (Appendix N) Meet in the previous location to discuss, share journals, poem ideas, and debrief while snacking.

Homework: Finish excursion assignment  
Independent Reading

### **Day 17**

1. Using the SMART Board, share images from previous day's excursion, while preparing the images, students will respond to three of the following questions in their journals. Food for thought: Does "wildness" exist at Walden Pond? Does "wildness" exist at the DeCordova? Do these places suggest a sense of "unity" with all elements? Do these places speak to the idea of "living deliberately"? Do we have an understanding of what Thoreau meant when he wrote, "In wildness is the preservation of the world"? How do our lives reflect Thoreau's concept of "wildness"? Do our

lives reflect Thoreau's concept of "wildness"? Can we work towards "preserving the world" and "preserving" humanity in our own lives?

2. Discuss responses to above questions while exploring ideas from yesterday's assignment. Use these ideas to revisit the EQ and Sub EQs for the unit.
3. Share ekphrastic poems from the previous day.

Homework: Read, annotate and prepare to teach assigned sections of Thoreau's "Conclusion"  
Independent Reading

### Day 18: "Wildness" as the "Preservation of the World": Exhibiting the Wild

1. In small groups, students will teach assigned section of "Conclusion." Students, as always, will use the EQ and Sub EQs to guide their lesson.
2. Revisit opening unit activity using clay. Now that students have explored the concept of "wildness" in-depth, ask them to create a metaphorical (abstract) sculpture that reflects their understanding of the role "wildness" plays in the "preservation of the world." This assignment may be quite difficult for some students at this point, for they may believe there is a right or wrong image to be created. Give the students some time to explore their ideas. They may want to revisit their early sculpture, journals, and poetic creations.

Homework: Work on sculptures  
Independent Reading

### Day 19

Inspired by collaborative work with Susie Carlisle, Cushing Academy

1. Share preliminary work, ideas and frustrations on "wildness" sculptures.
2. Introduce and review "Transcendental Experience: Take a Walk on the Wild[ness] Side Exhibition" assignment sheet and rubric. (Appendix O) Answer any questions students have on the exhibition.
3. Class time to finalize Independent Reading writings, work on sculptures, or brainstorm exhibition ideas.

Homework: Independent Reading due in two days  
Finalize sculptures

### Day 20

1. Brief explanation of sculptures to tie together concepts in the unit.
2. Class time to finalize Independent Reading writings, work on sculptures, or brainstorm exhibition ideas. Conference with students about their work.

Homework: Independent Reading Due

### Day 21

1. Independent Reading: Share and debrief in small groups.
2. Class time to work on "Take a Walk on the Wild[ness] Side Exhibition." Conference with students about their work.

Homework: "Take a Walk on the Wild[ness] Side Exhibition"

### Days 22-24

Class time to work on "Take a Walk on the Wild[ness] Side Exhibition." Conference with students about their work.

### Day 25

Exhibition and presentation for "Transcendental Experience: Take a Walk on the Wild[ness] Side Exhibition."

**Appendix A**

**Transcendentalism Introduction: Agree/Disagree**

Grasshopper \_\_\_\_\_

1. \_\_\_\_\_ Intuition is more important than logic.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ We know how to “behave,” for all knowledge comes from the self.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ We should follow our instincts wherever they may lead us—no matter what rules society puts in place.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ Hard work is what makes us happiest.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ Society is dangerous to the individual.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ Consistency is dangerous.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ Greatness is often misunderstood.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ Even as we mature we should think like a child.
9. \_\_\_\_\_ To be truly human is to express oneself completely, without embarrassment or thought to how it will look to others.
10. \_\_\_\_\_ It is okay to be contradictory.
11. \_\_\_\_\_ Everything in Nature helps us realize our inner potential.
12. \_\_\_\_\_ To truly be alive one must be self-reliant.
13. \_\_\_\_\_ Simplicity is the only way to achieve happiness.

**Thoughts on Transcendentalism:**

## Appendix B

### Overview: Transcendentalism Introduction

Grasshopper\_\_\_\_\_

#### Essential Question:

Can “wildness” lead to the “preservation of the world”? to the “preservation” of humanity”?



[www.memetics-story.com](http://www.memetics-story.com)

[www.morning-earth.org](http://www.morning-earth.org)



[www.walden.org/About/WWP\\_map.JPG](http://www.walden.org/About/WWP_map.JPG)



"I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived."

-Henry David Thoreau, "Where I Lived, and What I Lived For"

"Whoso be a man, must be a nonconformist. [...] Nothing is a last sacred but the integrity of your own mind."

-Ralph Waldo Emerson

"Henry David Thoreau is a singular character—a young man with much of wild original nature still remaining in him; and so far as he is sophisticated, it is in a way and method of his own. He is ugly as sin, long-nosed, queer-mouthed, and with uncouth and somewhat rustic, although courteous manners, corresponding very well with such an exterior. But his ugliness is of an honest and agreeable fashion, and becomes him much better than beauty."

-Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The American Notebooks*

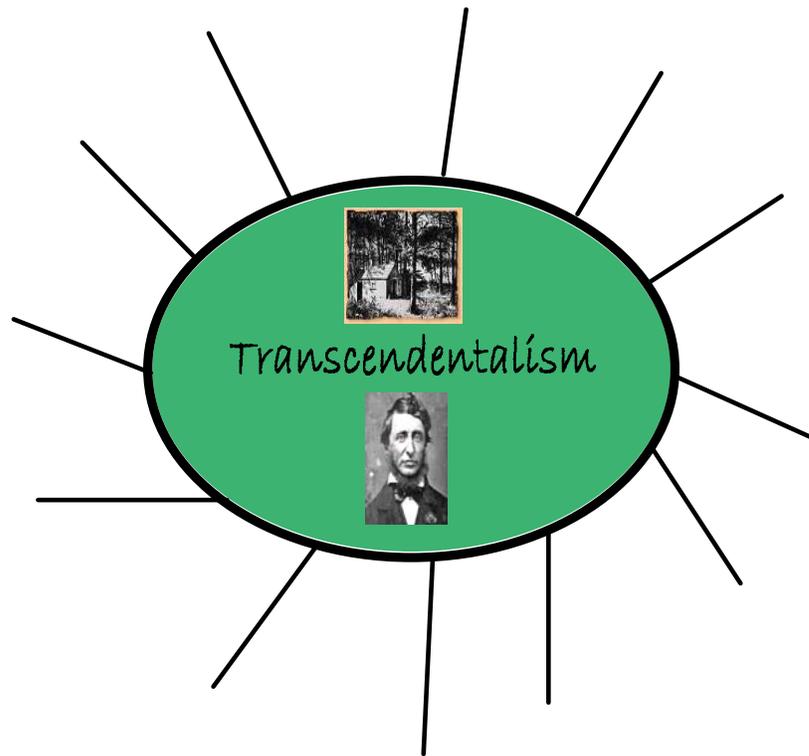
"We don't have a lot of time on this earth! We weren't meant to spend it this way. Human beings were not meant to sit in little cubicles staring at computer screens all day...filling out useless forms...and listening to eight different bosses drone on about mission statements."

-Peter Gibbons, *Office Space*

#### Sub EQs:

- What is the difference—is there a difference—between “wildness” and “wild”?
- What are the benefits of “wildness”?
- What are the disadvantages of “wildness”?
- Can “wildness” lead to “deliberate living”?
- What does it mean to be “an instrument of change”?
- What is Nature?
- What is our relationship with Nature?
- How does Nature define/create one’s sense of self?
- What are the metaphors that define our relationship with Nature?

Transcendentalism: What do we think we know about this philosophy/literary movement?



[www.pbs.org/wnet/ihas/poet/thoreau.html](http://www.pbs.org/wnet/ihas/poet/thoreau.html) <<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/ihas/poet/thoreau.html>>

[www.ecotopia.org/ehof/thoreau/index.html](http://www.ecotopia.org/ehof/thoreau/index.html) <<http://www.ecotopia.org/ehof/thoreau/index.html>>

## Appendix C

### Research & Presentation: An Exploration of the Roots of Transcendentalism

In light of our exploration of transcendentalism— through the lenses of Emerson, Thoreau and several contemporary writers— we will explore the historical events and cultural influences on the development of the philosophical writings of Emerson and Thoreau.

Please read through the list of topics below. Research your selected topic and prepare to present this information with your peers. **You will have a brief period of time on \_\_\_\_\_ to share your findings with other members of your groups—prior to presenting this information on \_\_\_\_\_.** This exhibition will be assessed on: thoroughness of content, delivery of information (preparedness, enthusiasm, ability to answer questions) and overall polish of the presentation (consider visuals, PowerPoint, exploring nature, etc.).

Please use a minimum of three reliable sources (book, Internet, and database) and don't forget to cite your sources appropriately.

Topic	Group Members
1. Pivotal historical influences of the time period- 1840-1860 (political, social, economic- consider key inventions that changed the lives of people during this time, scientific-consider Darwin's work with <i>The Origin of Species</i> , thought)  2. Philosophy/roots of transcendentalism (The Bhagavad-Gita, Immanuel Kant's views, religion) and anti-transcendentalism  3. Ralph Waldo Emerson & Henry David Thoreau biographical information; their contemporaries, <i>The Dial</i> , and the Brook Farm experiment  4. Key artists and their work (American Romanticism, Hudson River School (artists, focus of works, characteristics of works) * visuals are key in presenting these concepts	

### Multimedia Presentation Rubric

Student(s) \_\_\_\_\_

CATEGORY	A- Exceptional	B – Advanced	C- Basic	D- Novice
<b>Presentation</b>	Well-rehearsed with smooth delivery that holds audience attention.	Rehearsed with fairly smooth delivery that holds audience attention most of the time.	Delivery not smooth, but able to maintain interest of the audience most of the time.	Delivery not smooth and audience attention often lost.
<b>Product</b>	Makes excellent use of font, color, graphics, effects, etc. to enhance the presentation. No misspellings or grammatical errors.	Makes good use of font, color, graphics, effects, etc. to enhance to presentation. Three or fewer misspellings and/or mechanical errors.	Makes use of font, color, graphics, effects, etc. but occasionally these detract from the presentation content. Four misspellings and/or grammatical errors.	Use of font, color, graphics, effects, etc. but these often distract from the presentation content. More than four errors in spelling or grammar.
<b>Content</b>	<p>Covers topic in-depth with details and examples. Subject knowledge shows notable insight or understanding of the topic; compels the audience's attention.</p> <p>Researched sources are acknowledged. Students clearly define any specialized terminology or vocabulary.</p> <p>Conclusion effectively ties together presentation. Students answer audience questions thoroughly and confidently</p>	<p>Included essential knowledge about the topic. Subject knowledge shows insight or understanding of the topic; compels the audience's attention.</p> <p>Researched sources are acknowledged. Students clearly define most specialized terminology or vocabulary.</p> <p>Conclusion ties together presentation. Students answer audience questions with confidence.</p>	<p>Includes essential information about the topic but there are 1-2 errors. Subject knowledge basic insight or understanding of the topic; audience's attention varies due to content presented.</p> <p>Most researched sources are acknowledged. Students adequately define most specialized terminology or vocabulary.</p> <p>Conclusion attempts to tie together presentation. Students answer audience questions.</p>	<p>Content is minimal OR there are several factual errors. Subject knowledge shows little insight or understanding of the topic; does little to compel the audience's attention.</p> <p>Not all researched sources are acknowledged. Students fail to define most specialized terminology or vocabulary.</p> <p>Conclusion lacking. Students struggle to answer audience questions.</p>
<b>Collaboration</b>	Students worked very effectively as a team. Division of responsibilities capitalized on the strengths of each team member. Final product shaped by all members and represents something that would not have been possible to accomplish working alone.	Students worked together as a team on all aspects of the project. There was an effort to assign roles based on the skills/talents of individual members. All members strove to fulfill their responsibilities.	Students worked together on the project as a team with defined roles to play. Most members fulfilled their responsibilities. Disagreements were resolved or managed productively.	Presentation is the result of a group effort, but only some members of the group contributed. There is evidence of poor communication, unresolved conflict, or failure to collaborate on important aspects of the work.

## Appendix D

### Transcendentalism: Independent Reading

Grasshopper \_\_\_\_\_

Due Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Requirements:** Read one of the following books and do a written exhibition on it. The goals of this project are—

- to understand the connection between the transcendentalist philosophy and real life.
- to demonstrate your understanding and comprehension of transcendentalism in the modern world.
- to identify and connect the influence/teachings of such writers as Emerson and Thoreau in contemporary writers.
- to enhance critical writing skills (essay, book review, journal, etc.).

### Book Choices

#### Edward Abbey's *Monkey Wrench Gang*

Ed Abbey called *The Monkey Wrench Gang*, his 1975 novel, a "comic extravaganza." Some readers have remarked that the book is more a comic book than a real novel, and it's true that reading this incendiary call to protect the American wilderness requires more than a little of the old willing suspension of disbelief. The story centers on Vietnam veteran George Washington Hayduke III, who returns to the desert to find his beloved canyons and rivers threatened by industrial development. On a rafting trip down the Colorado River, Hayduke joins forces with feminist saboteur Bonnie Abbzug, wilderness guide Seldom Seen Smith, and billboard torcher Doc Sarvis, M.D., and together they wander off to wage war on the big yellow machines, on dam builders and road builders and strip miners. As they do, his characters voice Abbey's concerns about wilderness preservation ("Hell of a place to lose a cow," Smith thinks to himself while roaming through the canyonlands of southern Utah. "Hell of a place to lose your heart. Hell of a place... to lose. Period"). Moving from one improbable situation to the next, packing more adventure into the space of a few weeks than most real people do in a lifetime, the motley gang puts fear into the hearts of their enemies, laughing all the while.

#### Bill Bryson's *A Walk in the Woods: Rediscovering America on the Appalachian Trail*

Returning to the U.S. after 20 years in England, Iowa native Bryson decided to reconnect with his mother country by hiking the length of the 2100-mile Appalachian Trail. Awed by merely the camping section of his local sporting goods store, he nevertheless plunges into the wilderness and emerges with a consistently comical account of a neophyte woodsman learning hard lessons about self-reliance. Bryson (*The Lost Continent*) carries himself in an irresistibly bewildered manner, accepting each new calamity with wonder and hilarity. He reviews the characters of the AT (as the trail is called), from a pack of incompetent Boy Scouts to a perpetually lost geezer named Chicken John. Most amusing is his cranky, crude and inestimable companion, Katz, a reformed substance abuser who once had single-handedly "become, in effect, Iowa's drug culture." The uneasy but always entertaining relationship between Bryson and Katz keeps their walk interesting, even during the flat stretches. Bryson completes the trail as planned, and he records the misadventure with insight and elegance. He is a popular author in Britain and his impeccably graceful and witty style deserves a large American audience as well.

#### Gretel Ehrlich's *The Solace of Open Spaces*

"Everything in nature invites us constantly to be what we are. We are often like rivers: careless and forceful, timid and dangerous, lucid and muddied, eddying, gleaming, still." Whether she's reflecting on nature's teachings, divulging her experiences as a cowpuncher, or painting vivid word portraits of the people she lives and works with, Gretel Ehrlich's observations are lyrical and funny, wise and authentic. After moving from the city to a vast new state, she writes of adjusting to cowboy life, boundless open spaces, and the almost incomprehensible harshness of a Wyoming winter. Like many before her, poet Gretel Ehrlich discovered the therapeutic qualities of the West. In 1976, a time of personal crisis, she moved from the East to a small farm in Wyoming where she ultimately found peace of mind and inspiration. Originally, she had gone west to make a film for PBS; she returned to work with neighbors at cattle- and sheep-ranching, taking pleasure in open spaces. Ehrlich writes with sensitivity and affection about people, the seasons and the landscape. Whether she is enjoying solitude or companionship, her writing evokes the romance and timelessness of the West.

#### Eddy Harris's *Mississippi Solo*

At 30 years old, Eddy Harris leaves his home in St. Louis and sets off into the chilly autumn for Lake Itasca. "I decided to canoe down the Mississippi River and to find out what I was made of," he writes. And *Mississippi Solo* is his stunning

testament. Harris, who has authored *Native Stranger*, *South of Haunted Dreams*, and *Still Life in Harlem*, has been widely acclaimed since the first release of *Mississippi Solo* in 1988. It is greatly pleasing to see this important and stimulating first work revived. As the Mississippi grows from its tiny source to a wide and powerful flow, Harris gains confidence as a canoeist, faith in his endeavor, and an understanding of his varying identity as an African American traveling alone from north to south in the United States. His exact and brilliantly revealing prose shows us how each bend in this mighty river turns itself within the paddler, how person and river are entwined--and who is in charge.

### **Jon Krakauer's *Into the Wild***

After graduating from Emory University in Atlanta in 1992, top student and athlete Christopher McCandless abandoned his possessions, gave his entire \$24,000 savings account to charity and hitchhiked to Alaska, where he went to live in the wilderness. Four months later, he turned up dead. His diary, letters and two notes found at a remote campsite tell of his desperate effort to survive, apparently stranded by an injury and slowly starving. They also reflect the posturing of a confused young man, raised in affluent Annandale, Va., who self-consciously adopted a Tolstoyan renunciation of wealth and return to nature. Krakauer, a contributing editor to *Outside* and *Men's Journal*, retraces McCandless's ill-fated antagonism toward his father, Walt, an eminent aerospace engineer. Krakauer also draws parallels to his own reckless youthful exploit in 1977 when he climbed Devils Thumb, a mountain on the Alaska-British Columbia border, partly as a symbolic act of rebellion against his autocratic father. In a moving narrative, Krakauer probes the mystery of McCandless's death.

### **Jon Krakauer's *Into Thin Air***

*Into Thin Air* is a riveting first-hand account of a catastrophic expedition up Mount Everest. In March 1996, *Outside* magazine sent veteran journalist and seasoned climber Jon Krakauer on an expedition led by celebrated Everest guide Rob Hall. Despite the expertise of Hall and the other leaders, by the end of summit day eight people were dead. Krakauer's book is at once the story of the ill-fated adventure and an analysis of the factors leading up to its tragic end. Written within months of the events it chronicles, *Into Thin Air* clearly evokes the majestic Everest landscape. As the journey up the mountain progresses, Krakauer puts it in context by recalling the triumphs and perils of other Everest trips throughout history. The author's own anguish over what happened on the mountain is palpable as he leads readers to ponder timeless questions.

### **Aldo Leopold's *Sand Count Almanac***

Published in 1949, shortly after the author's death, *A Sand County Almanac* is a classic of nature writing, widely cited as one of the most influential nature books ever published. Writing from the vantage of his summer shack along the banks of the Wisconsin River, Leopold mixes essay, polemic, and memoir in his book's pages. In one famous episode, he writes of killing a female wolf early in his career as a forest ranger, coming upon his victim just as she was dying, "in time to watch a fierce green fire dying in her eyes.... I was young then, and full of trigger-itch; I thought that because fewer wolves meant more deer, no wolves would mean hunters' paradise. But after seeing the green fire die, I sensed that neither the wolf nor the mountain agreed with such a view." Leopold's road-to-Damascus change of view would find its fruit some years later in his so-called land ethic, in which he held that nothing that disturbs the balance of nature is right. Much of *Almanac* elaborates on this basic premise, as well as on Leopold's view that it is something of a human duty to preserve as much wild land as possible, as a kind of bank for the biological future of all species. Beautifully written, quiet, and elegant, Leopold's book deserves continued study and discussion today.

### **John Hanson Mitchell's *Walking Towards Walden***

Mitchell, naturalist and author of, decided to hike to the grave of Thoreau from Concord, Massachusetts, burial site of a member of the party of Sir Henry Sinclair, a 16th-century Scottish explorer, in an attempt to learn more about that famous landscape. Avoiding most roads and accompanied by two eccentric friends on the 15-mile walk, the author investigates a wide variety of related topics, including natural history of the area, mythology, and related literature. One of the most interesting aspects of this pilgrimage is the variety of personal histories related by local residents encountered on the trek.

### **Daniel Quinn's *Ishmael***

The narrator of this extraordinary tale is a man in search for truth. He answers an ad in a local newspaper from a teacher looking for serious pupils, only to find himself alone in an abandoned office with a full-grown gorilla who is nibbling delicately on a slender branch. "You are the teacher?" he asks incredulously. "I am the teacher," the gorilla replies. Ishmael is a creature of immense wisdom and he has a story to tell, one that no other human being has ever heard. It is a story that extends backward and forward over the lifespan of the earth from the birth of time to a future there is still time save. Like all great teachers, Ishmael refuses to make the lesson easy; he demands the final

illumination to come from within ourselves. Is it man's destiny to rule the world? Or is it a higher destiny possible for him-- one more wonderful than he has ever imagined?

**Kira Salak's *Four Corners: A Journey into the Heart of Papu, New Guinea***

Following the route taken by British explorer Ivan Champion in 1927, and amid breathtaking landscapes and wildlife, Salak traveled across this remote Pacific island--often called the last frontier of adventure travel--by dugout canoe and on foot. Along the way, she stayed in a village where cannibalism was still practiced behind the backs of the missionaries, met the leader of the OPM--the separatist guerrilla movement opposing the Indonesian occupation of Western New Guinea--and undertook an epic trek through the jungle. *The New York Times* said, "Kira Salak is tough, a real-life Lara Croft." And Edward Marriot, proclaimed *Four Corners* to be "A travel book that transcends the genre. It is, like all the best travel narratives, a resonant interior journey, and offers wisdom for our times."

**Kira Salak's *The Cruellest Journey: 600 Miles to Timbuktu***

Kira Salak is a young woman with a history of seeking impossible challenges. She grew up relishing the exploits of the great Scottish explorer Mungo Park and set herself the daunting goal of retracing his fatal journey down West Africa's Niger river for 600 miles to Timbuktu. In so doing she became the first person to travel alone from Mali's Old Segou to "the golden city of the Middle Ages," and, legend has it, the doorway to the end of the world. In the face of the hardships she knew were to come, it is amazing that she could have been so sanguine about her journey's beginning: "I have the peace and silence of the wide river, the sun on me, a breeze licking my toes, the current as negligible as a faint breath. Timbuktu seems distant and unimaginable." Enduring tropical storms, hippos, rapids, the unrelenting heat of the Sahara desert and the mercurial moods of this notorious river, she traveled solo through one of the most desolate regions in Africa where little had changed since Mungo Park was taken captive by Moors in 1797. Dependent on locals for food and shelter, each night she came ashore to stay in remote mud-hut villages on the banks of the Niger, meeting Dogon sorceresses and tribes who alternately revered and reviled her-- so remarkable was the sight of an unaccompanied white woman paddling all the way to Timbuktu. Indeed, on one harrowing stretch she barely escaped harm from men who chased her in wooden canoes, but she finally arrived, weak with dysentery, but triumphant, at her destination. There, she fulfilled her ultimate goal by buying the freedom of two Bella slaves with gold. This unputdownable story is also a meditation on self-mastery by a young adventuress without equal, whose writing is as thrilling as her life.

**Baron Wormser's *The Road Washes Out in Spring: A Poet's Memoir of Living Off the Grid***

Former Maine poet laureate Wormser reveals the life he and his family enjoyed living "off the grid" for 20 years in this charming memoir. They decided to forego electricity and running water both for economic reasons and due to the determination to live deeply connected to the land. Wormser spares his readers any well-worn rants about "back to nature" lifestyles and instead recounts their early failures and successes ("I didn't know there was such a thing as a chainsaw until I moved to rural Maine"). With a day job as a librarian, Wormser found himself returning to poetry and achieving literary success. His ruminations on crafting poems and thoughtful considerations of the value of literature will be of great interest to readers and fellow writers. Wormser counters any comparisons to Thoreau and, in fact, has a far greater sense of humor than the iconic backwoodsman, but his endearing memoir about living simply yet richly in woods he clearly loves certainly does extend the tradition Thoreau exemplifies.

Book Descriptions: [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)

## General Guidelines

**Writing Exhibition Suggestions:** Reader Response Journal or Book Review

**Length Requirement:** 3-5 pages (word processed)

### READER RESPONSE JOURNAL

Your entries should act as a dialectical conversation in which you actively engage in and ask questions of the reading. Do not simply summarize the reading, but respond in an intellectual, insightful way to specific passages in the text. Your journal should act as both a personal response and a critical analysis of the book by addressing recurring themes.

#### *Some questions to consider:*

- Can “wildness” lead to “the preservation of the world? To the preservation of humanity?
- What does literature reveal to us about place, self and our connection with nature?
- How can literature further guide us towards an understanding and implementation of Thoreau’s concept of “living deliberately”?
- How does the time period and place in which literature was written affect its themes?
- How do we, as human beings, fit into nature?

#### *Some other prompts for inspiration include:*

- Record a passage that speaks to you in some way and discuss what is going on.
- Recall personal experiences and connect theme to the plot/adventure events or character/author development.
- Recall connections to the works of transcendentalist writers or transcendentalist influenced writers (Thoreau, Emerson, Dillard, etc).
- Predict outcomes
- Recognize symbols or discover patterns in themes and images.
- “I don’t understand why...”
- “This passage reminds me of...”

#### *Additional Areas of Exploration:*

- A color map (with captions) reflecting the setting(s) of the literature.
- Author/event timeline with written discussion (1-2 paragraphs)
- Creative connections to other pieces of art (poem, painting, short story, film, play). Make sure to include a copy in your packet. Write a brief explanation (no more than one page typed) in which you discuss how the book connects with the work of art)

### BOOK REVIEW

Useful book reviews do at least two things. They offer readers a basic orientation to the book under discussion and an original way to think about that book and what it does. ***A critical book review is not a book report.*** It is an evaluation, a critique of the book, not just a report of its contents. Even very short reviews can be interesting as well as concise. You can achieve these goals by keeping the following guidelines in mind.

- Sketch briefly the territory covered by the book. Lots of people read book reviews instead of reading books, or to figure out whether or not they wish to read the book. Tell readers what the book is about.
- Identify for your reader the key question or questions the author asks (and by implication, what questions are not addressed).
- Assess the author's success or failure in covering the topic and answering the questions. (Don't forget to offer concrete evidence to support your view, whatever it is.)

- *Explain why the book matters (or doesn't). In other words, make an original contribution to answering the question: So what?*
- Remember that formulating bold questions about the book can be just as informative as making sweeping judgments and claims.

**Some questions to consider:**

- What does literature reveal to us about place, self and our connection with nature?
- How can literature further guide us towards an understanding and implementation of Thoreau's concept of "living deliberately"?
- How does the time period and place in which literature was written affect its themes?
- How do we, as human beings, fit into nature?

**Some other prompts for inspiration include:**

- Record a passage that speaks to you in some way and discuss what is going on.
- Recall connections to the works of transcendentalist writers or transcendentalist influenced writers (Thoreau, Emerson, Dillard, etc).
- Recognize symbols or discover patterns in themes and images.

One of the best strategies for writing good reviews is reading a lot of good reviews. In preparing your review, consider how professional writers approach the same assignment. Check out the following sample review:

**Billy Collins's *Picnic Lightening* (<http://www.cprw.com/Hilbert/collins2.htm>)**

Most poetry published in America since the height of modernism has come to willfully renounce appeal to the *polloi* while half-heartedly beckoning the semi-professional literary *oligoi* (*the few*). This is so much the case that we often assume popularity to be at odds with the sibylline, undomesticated craft of poetry, yet America has produced a raft of popular poets in the past two centuries. Most have fallen entirely out of favor—Edgar Lee Masters, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, to list two former giants. Others who enjoyed great fame and success in their lifetimes have recently benefited from gradually restored reputations, such as Robert Frost and Edna St. Vincent Millay. Other pop poets of note include Joyce Kilmer (who has a namesake rest-stop on the New Jersey turnpike) and Robert W. Service, whose Yukon poems brought readers the same bracing adventures as were found in the stories of Jack London and Bret Harte. Pop poet and musician Rod McKuen sold millions of rainbow-festooned volumes in the 1960s and 70s.

Popularity in American poetry is generally as fleeting as it has been anywhere else. The Faustian ambition and distancing erudition of modernist poetry in English—as propounded by T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound, and ensconced in the halls of higher learning—dealt a near-fatal blow to the popular verse formerly memorized and recited by all good students and upstanding citizens. This blow, coupled with the advancing entertainment technology of radio, film, television, and computer games left poetry-as-entertainment diminished to the point of near invisibility. In recent years, however, something odd has occurred in the echoing corridors of American poetry. Billy Collins, former poet laureate of the United States, has overcome the commercial razor wire that has kept poets from large audiences for the past half century.

Collins seemed to rise from thin air for some in the poetry world. After placing several books with university presses and winning the National Poetry Series, his books started to sell so well that earlier editions were reprinted numerous times, and rights were sold from press to press, an unusual situation in poetry, where exceedingly few books ever sell out their initial printings. Championed on the radio and during his extensive tours of the country, Collins cultivated a broad and devoted audience outside major metropolitan areas. It was front-page news when he was offered an alleged one-million-dollar advance from Random House for his selected poems in 2001 (the estimate is highly unlikely, although his editor confirmed Collins's advance was in the six-digit range). Unlike the bitter feuding that kicked up around Martin Amis's acceptance of a large—which is to say "unliterary"—advance for his novel *The Information* in the UK, Collins's good fortune was met in the United States with a mingling of admiration by amateur poets and surprise by outsiders, who continued to view poetry publishing as a strictly secluded academic affair.

In the 1980s, when most of the wildness and roar had seeped from the poetry boom of the late 1960s, this was partly true. But in the new millennium, it was fast becoming clear to people in and out of the poetry world that something had changed. In 1999 *The New York Times* dubbed an otherwise unremarkable man—a formerly unknown English professor at Lehman College in New York—"the most popular poet in America." Actually, the watershed moment for Collins was several years earlier:

The crucial moment for Mr. Collins came in early 1997. Pittsburgh [University Press] brought out *Picnic, Lightening* in January, and within a few weeks, Garrison Keillor, who had read several of Mr. Collins's poems during the "Writer's Almanac" feature on National Public Radio, invited him to appear on his show, "A Prairie Home Companion." Shortly after that, Mr. Collins was interviewed by Terry Gross, the host of the NPR show "Fresh Air." His books sales spiked sharply; since then, requests from schools and colleges for his readings have multiplied (*New York Times*).

Collins's most endearing trait, the one that is most frequently trumpeted by his legions of supporters, is that his poems are, above all, accessible. This is true. They waft over the reader as easily as poems can, and this produces a pleasant sensation, particularly for an initiate of modern poetry who, more likely than not, is actively repelled from the art by its practitioners and their protective devotees. When Collins reads his poems, they become a kind of first-rate entertainment. Collins has traded on his reputation as an available, easily comprehended poet for most of his career, and earns credit for reaching such a formidably large audience. However,

unlike other popular poets, such as Maya Angelou, Collins (along with fellow bestseller Mary Oliver) is marketed as if he were among the most critically revered poets of the age.

As one finds with all popular poets, Collins relies on a very clear and open, basically prosaic style. His poems are supremely accessible. His readers are most appreciative of this clarity and fundamental sense of unity and purpose in his poems. He does not jumble a poem with multiple meanings or voices, nor does he torture grammar and syntax into varied contortions. He makes no obscure references. His poems are never overly indulgent, long, or difficult to understand. Meaning is never private. He never shows off. He avoids most of the maneuvers common to poetry after modernism, and this has stood him in good stead. Many readers, perhaps justifiably, construe those maneuvers as an attempt to raise a fence, to divide the poet, as mysterious, privileged artist, from a general reading audience. The scenarios Collins constructs are either delightfully fantastic—a cross between an Edmund Dulac illustration and a less-druggy “Strawberry Fields”—or reliably domestic and cozy. Poems about pets, dinnertime, morning commutes, and similar fare allow readers immediately into his world, which he is pleased to share. He is accommodating and friendly. His immense popularity (by poetry standards) may be all the evidence one needs that many people *want* to enjoy poetry. They want to read it, and they probably have, at some point, written it themselves. They do not want to be shut out, any more than they want to be spurned from a recital hall or art gallery.

This brings us to another question, however. All sales and prizes to one side, is Billy Collins an accomplished poet? The answer depends to a large degree on how one measures accomplishment in poetry. A strong case can be made for variety, formal as well as thematic. In this regard, he has accomplished little. Collins is a poet of several merits. The most commonly applauded are his sense of humor, his light ironic touch, and his accessibility. Those are accomplishments, certainly, but, to date, they remain the only ones he has realized. Should readers expect more than a small range of achievements in a poet’s work? That is up to them, of course, and they have voted with their wallets for Collins over any other poet writing today.

As a live reader he is charming, and his modesty is downright disarming. He is very concerned with the comfort of the reader, as one finds him remarking in his latest collection. He says he likes to “lasso” his readers. He is congenial, and it must be a great relief for casual readers of poetry and novices who have come to feel that poets, like many artists, are ungratefully self-involved. Collins wants to be sure everyone feels good. His friendly, easily understood deadpan irony is perfect for listening audiences. His mid-poem banter is concise and explanatory, peppered with humorous sayings and anecdotes. However, if one were told to listen and not told that what was being recited was a poem, one could be forgiven for thinking that Collins was reading from a book like *Lake Wobegon Days* or *The Ferrari in the Bedroom*. There is very little to indicate that what he recites is, in fact, poetry, aside from the occasional announcement of itself as a poem. They are lovely, domestic musings, delivered in unprepossessing language by a retiring, avuncular man. But one also feels that he is a bit of a smart ass, and this endears him further to his audience. One might guess that his readers and listeners have grown to like Billy Collins the man, the poet, the persona, whomever you choose, but in the end the poems must stand on their own and be judged on their own merits. If one is to grant them their light touch of pokerfaced humor, their openness and accessibility, and their plainspoken grace, it remains to be asked what else recommends them.

Collins’s poems are easy to read, but they do not vary in appearance or approach. A deficiency one encounters when reading through several of Collins’s books at once is one of scale. Taken a poem at a time, Collins can be diverting and fun. But when the reader pulls back—as it is not unreasonable to do with a poet at this stage of a career—the longer view is disappointing. Collins has, in essence, written the same poem with slight variations for a quarter-century. The results are mixed, but his career, taken *in toto*, leaves one with a sense of sameness. Charting a narrow stylistic course is not always a prescription for failure. Ogden Nash, who appeared principally in small doses in periodicals like *The New Yorker*, repeated the same basic style for decades. One Nash poem is sweet and fizzy, like a cocktail, and like a cocktail one may be refreshing, but several in a row, without solids, may cause dizziness. There is no notable difference between a poem from an early Collins book and one from his most recent. Here is a stanza from the 1980s:

In the morning when I found History  
snoring heavily on the couch,  
I took down his overcoat from the rack  
and placed its weight over my shoulder blades.

Never mind that an overcoat weighs on your shoulders and not your shoulder blades, and compare it in tone to a poem published two decades later, ‘The Drive’, from his most recent book *The Trouble With Poetry* (2005):

I was in the back seat  
directly behind the driver who was talking  
about one thing and another  
while his wife smiled quietly at the windshield.

His poems remain in this register. If this were not already a common style of American free verse poem, one would recognize it immediately as a Collins poem, if only because all his poem approach this form. Linear laxity may be one of the reasons Collins is so popular as a reader of his own poems. He is a “spoken word” artist for the older mortgage-holding listener. This impression is buoyed by the way his audio publisher (Random House owns Knopf, which issues his books; Random House Audio issues his CDs), has chosen to market him. One-third page advertisements in *The New Yorker* and elsewhere promote his readings and recordings. Such lavish outlay of advertising budgets has not yet been devoted to support his books.

Collins writes one style of free verse, observational, slightly surreal poem. He never ventures far from this successful formula. He has a Ph.D. in English, and has taught literature for years, so clearly he is familiar with poetic traditions even if he chooses not to make use of them. One is reminded of Sir Thomas Beecham’s comment: “a musicologist is someone who can read music but can’t hear it.” Still, some of his poems—the best of the rather broad lot—have power in them. Consider “Hunger,” from *The Apple that Astonished Paris*:

The fox you lug over your shoulder

in a dark sack  
has cut a hole with a knife  
and escaped.

The sudden lightness makes you think  
you are stronger  
as you walk back to your small cottage  
through a forest that covers the world.

It has the symbolic power of fable, but it stands out from the rest of his oeuvre in such a way that leaves the reader looking for parallels elsewhere. ‘Hunger’ is reminiscent of Charles Simic’s folk surreal style. Often Collins’s better poems are pastiches of other poets. For instance, ‘The Best Cigarette’ (*The Art of Drowning*) and ‘Bar Time’ (*The Apple That Astonished Paris*) owe a debt to Charles Bukowski:

In keeping with universal saloon practice,  
the clock here is set fifteen minutes ahead  
of all the clocks in the outside world.

This makes us a rather advanced group,  
doing our drinking in the unknown future,  
immune from the cares of the present,  
safely harbored a quarter of an hour  
beyond the woes of the contemporary scene.

No wonder such thoughtless pleasure derives  
from tending the small fire of a cigarette,  
from observing this glass of whiskey and ice,  
the cold rust that I am sipping,

or from having an eye on the street outside  
when Ordinary Time slouches past in a topcoat,  
rain running off the brim of his hat,  
the late edition like a flag in his pocket.

Collins constructs his brand of poem to perfection here. He combines a larger observation—“the fifteen minutes” that bar clocks have over the outside world—with more detailed ones, the “small fire” of a cigarette and the “cold rust” of the whiskey. He also creates a setting that the reader can imagine visiting. He avoids pretentious literary references and sloppy metaphors. This is an example of the poems that have justly drawn so many readers to Collins. His deliberate pastiches, or parodies, of serious poets are other matters altogether. ‘Monday Morning’ (*The Art of Drowning*) is a dreary send-up of the Wallace Stevens poem ‘Sunday Morning’. Surprisingly, it seems more like a slight against Stevens than anything else. Adam Kirsch wrote in *The New Republic* that “To deal only in punning wit even indicates an essential falsehood in the poet’s view of his art, as though language were only interesting when it is defective, never when it is a tool of discovery. It is a way of discouraging linguistic curiosity and verbal ambition, without which there is no greatness in poetry.” Likewise, ‘Dancing Toward Bethlehem’ (*The Art of Drowning*), a lame joke on W. B. Yeats’s ‘The Second Coming’—one of the most powerful and frightening poems of the twentieth century—is faintly nauseating to anyone who values Yeats: If there is only enough time in the final minutes of the twentieth century for one last dance I would like to be dancing it slowly with you.

Cute, but also belittling. Why should a poet tackle grand historical matters when all he wants to do is have a night out with his girl? All the ‘Dover Beach’ reassurance this poem might provide leaks out and we are left with nothing of consequence. Collins can no more give us a line as powerful as “ignorant armies clash by night” than he would “that twenty centuries of stony sleep / Were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle.” His chosen company does not flatter him. What does it say that he will not even adjust his style for a moment when paying homage or thumbing his nose at a great poetic ancestor? He does not take up the styles of Stevens or Yeats even in a parody. His style remains precisely the same as it does everywhere else in his writing. Why Collins would choose to borrow and bend two of the most famous poems in the language—without any clear commitment or effort—is probably a matter for his therapist rather than a literary critic. It is fine to poke fun in literature, to have fun, and to punch some holes in the “great” poems from time to time, even quite healthy to do so, but when it is all you do by way of remarking upon earlier traditions, we have a problem.

Still, Collins fields a recognizable, if generic, style, which reaches its finest expression in *Picnic, Lightning*. Of all his books, it contains the most worthwhile moments. “What I Learned Today” is a lovely paean to the sometimes-lonely act of reading:

It is time to float on the waters of the night.  
Time to wrap my arms around this book  
And press it to my chest, life preserver  
In a sea of unremarkable men and women,  
Anonymous faces on the street,  
A hundred thousand unalphabetized things,  
A million forgotten hours.

'The Night House' (*Picnic, Lightning*) is another attractive poem on the subject of work and rest, ever so faintly reminiscent of Samuel Taylor Coleridge's 'Work without Hope':

Which is why the body—that house of voices—  
 sometimes puts down its metal tongs, its needle, or its pen  
 to stare into the distance,  
  
 to listen to all its names being called  
 before bending again to its labor.

Yet even at his best there is no trace of the ambiguity so beloved of the modernists when they read seventeenth-century poets or of us today when we read the modernists. Collins chooses not to exploit the elasticity of the English language, nor does he pursue any of its inherent alliterative qualities. His quaintness, which explains much of his appeal, also explains his unwillingness to take significant risks. Some of his poems are unendurably cute, as in his poem 'Lost' (*The Apple That Astonished Paris*):

Those with thinking caps put them on their heads.  
 A man waves a map but it is only a painting of a map.  
 A child produces a compass but the needle  
 points only to a distant toy store.

Collins is lauded by his fans for his use of simple, everyday language, but clunkers do appear. The proem to his book *Nine Horses* (2002, a *Today Show* book club selection), 'Night Letter to the Reader', has the distinction of ending on a badly conceived simile comparing the moon to Shakespeare's receding hairline, but it also distinguishes itself through the use of the stale old poeticism for "wind": "zephyr," after the minor Greek god:

sensing only the pale humidity  
 of the night and the slight zephyrs  
 that stir the tops of the trees.

The most astounding aspect of Collins's willingness to use archaic poetic diction is that his poems do not employ rhyme, so he does not have the excuse available to the amateur songwriter that the deity of sound got the better of his cousin sense. One hopes that "zephyrs" would be struck from a young poet's line by a benevolent mentor and replaced with "breeze" or "wind" or even "gusts."

Such dalliances with outdated language aside, Collins provides the simplest of surfaces. Even when his language is straightforward, it is utterly plain. One is dazzled by no exciting or original turns of phrase or imaginative use of language. One needn't descend into mere word games and scrabblishness to appreciate the wonderful playfulness of the English language. Hominess is not exactness, often quite the reverse. The reader would not be blamed for feeling that Collins is simply not trying very hard. By his own admission, according to *Magma* online magazine, he "usually finishes a poem in one sitting." Poetry is not about competition (or at least it ought not to be), but it should be about excellence and originality, innovation balanced against a concern for tradition. Collins's poems bear no more scrutiny than a hastily assembled junior high science experiment. The pieces are there, but it does not function to very high specifications.

## INDEPENDENT READING RUBRIC

Name \_\_\_\_\_

**A (Distinguished)**

The assignment demonstrates a sense of sincerity and passion. The writer examines the text in an imaginative manner by recording his or her views/perceptions through detailed impressions about what s/he is reading and thinking. In addition, the writer takes a risk with his or her writing by avowing complex ideas that are not easily resolved. The writer goes beyond predictable and plastic (safe) assertions. The writer's voice is pronounced and charged. Moreover, the narration emphasizes a unique story experience, leaving the reader with an overwhelming sense of appreciation for the journal's content. The overall journal evolves by incorporating questions, debates, or other materials into the discussion. The dialogue in the journal/letter is particularly stimulating and exploratory, making the piece quite notable. The journal/letter leaves a lasting impression.

**B (Proficient)**

The assignment shows a genuine awareness of the writer's enthusiasm. In addition, the writer's connection to the text is quite evident. The writer employs some significant ideas and integrates a smattering of additional noteworthy material. The voice is often visible and confident. The narration reveals a notable story experience, and the journal's content is poignant and commendable. This well-developed journal maintains a steady pace, while offering the reader a worthy exploration of thoughts and ideas. This journal/letter, though proficient, does not quite reach the level of distinguished.

**C (Basic)**

While the writer reveals an imaginative perspective toward the text, the writing remains a bit clouded and derivative. The writer's examination of the text has limited detail, and the writer's impressions are vague. The writer's voice is casual or lost, and the narration is prescribed and scripted. The ideas discussed are somewhat risky, though they tend to rely on more obvious and commonplace aspects of the work. Overall, the journal supplies adequate material but lacks the substantial content found in upper level journals.

**D/NC (Revise for Credit)**

The assignment shows glimpses of authenticity, but the content of the assignment is rather mundane and uninspired. Moreover, the reader's approach to the writing appears somewhat distant and limited. The writer's voice is flat and remote, and the narration lacks an identifiable topic or story. In essence, the journal resides in the arena of plastic (safe) ideas, depends on harmless insights, and offers little attempt to truly explore the issues in the text or the thoughts of the writer.

Dear Grasshopper \_\_\_\_\_,

Yours in Literature, Mrs. Wright

## Appendix E

## Transcendentalism: Dillard's "Seeing"

## Grasshopper\_\_\_\_\_

**Directions:** Read Annie Dillard's essay "Seeing" and answer the corresponding questions. Read each section of this handout (carefully) prior to answering the questions for each Roman numerated section.

**Section I.** In her essay "Seeing," Annie Dillard relays in one of her chapters an anecdote about a game she used to play in her childhood. She tells the story of how she used to hide her own "precious penn[ies]" in nooks or crannies in trees or sidewalks, drawing chalk arrows to them so a stranger would find the surprise penny and pick it up, almost in an inversion of the colloquialism "like pennies from heaven" (14).

After telling us this story, she uses it as an analogy to describe her zeal for the hidden natural universe and the various beauties that one might discover if one can truly "see." The passage follows:

It is still the first week in January and I've got great plans. I've been thinking about seeing. There are lots of things to see, unwrapped gifts and free surprises. The world is fairly studded and strewn with pennies cast broadside from a generous hand. But -- and this is the point -- who gets excited by a mere penny? If you follow one arrow, if you crouch motionless on a bank to watch a tremulous ripple thrill on the water and are rewarded with the site of a muskrat kit paddling from its den, will you count that sight a chip of copper only, and go your rueful way? It is dire poverty indeed when a man is so malnourished and fatigued he won't stoop to pick up a penny. But if you cultivate a healthy poverty and simplicity, so that finding a penny will literally make your day, then, since the world is in fact planted in pennies, you have with your poverty bought a lifetime of days. It is that simple. What you see is what you get. (15)

This passage is significant. However, it is also somewhat paradoxical. The "malnourishment" that Dillard refers to could easily be spiritual malnourishment, caused by an overbearing focus on the artificial, material world. If this is the case, it is curious that she chooses the penny, a monetary unit, as her analogy to show the value of the world.

**Questions:** Answer each of the following- on another sheet of paper- and explain your ideas with evidence from the text.

1. How can her use of money as a symbol be resolved?
2. What is the penny's worth?
3. Is this effective or confusing for the reader?

**Section II.** In "Seeing," Dillard uses numerous images of beauty and magic. She presents a nature that is sublime (moving/ magnificent) in its display of the beautiful. In the following passage, Dillard describes the more beautiful elements of nature:

It is the first week in January, and I've got great plans. I've been thinking about seeing. There are lots of things to see, unwrapped gifts and free surprises. The world is fairly studded and strewn with pennies cast broadside from a generous hand. (15)

This image of hidden pennies lying about in the world to be discovered by inquisitive minds, rewarded for their searching is significant.

**Questions:**

1. What is the last “penny” you discovered in nature?
2. How might this discovery help form an overall picture of life and personal understanding of one’s place in this universe?

**Section III.** Dillard brings us to sit beside a grassy creek under the warmth of a blue mountain as she shows us how to explore the surroundings. With anecdotes of her own life as a nature lover, vivid descriptions of the rivers and bogs of Virginia and insight into the workings and meanings of the universe, Dillard both questions and attempts to explain the intricate relationship between beauty and horror in this world. She speaks with wisdom -- and often in similes. Each of her paragraphs is like a small essay in itself as they team with description and run over with stories and histories taken from a myriad of places.

**Questions:**

1. List two similes that prove particularly effective.
2. What wisdom do these similes convey? \*Think about Emerson’s and Thoreau’s words of wisdom.

**Section IV.** A quality in Dillard which sets her apart from most of the sages, satirists and travel writers whom we have read so far is her attitude of wide-eyed innocence and utter curiosity towards the world. While she sometimes pauses to pass on little pieces of ‘wisdom’, she generally maintains a humble, diminutive stance and holds the reader on an equal plane with herself. Unlike other writers, she doesn’t lead the reader along on a leash, saying, “I’m the authority, now listen to what I have to say.”

**Questions**

1. How does Dillard’s method compare to other styles that we have encountered during this unit? (be they preaching, wisdom speaking, satirizing, or what-have-you)
2. Is it more effective to set oneself up as an authority imparting lessons upon the reader or as a humble companion, walking with the reader through a complicated world, pointing out interesting things along the way and letting the reader draw his or her own conclusions?
3. Does Dillard actually fit into this second description, or is she simply using the ‘curious-child’ routine as a ruse while actually maintaining an air of superiority and pushing her propaganda upon us like any other sage (Emerson)?
4. Select one section from Dillard’s essay that you found particularly interesting. What is appealing about this section?
5. Explain the appropriateness of Dillard’s allusion to Thoreau.
6. Cite 4 examples from the reading that demonstrate the influence of transcendentalist thought on Dillard’s thinking & writing.

Source: Victorianweb.com

## Appendix F

### Journaling: Thoreau & Kunitz

**“Let us spend one day as deliberately as Nature,** and not be thrown off the track by every nutshell and mosquito’s wing that falls on the fails....Let us settle ourselves, and work and wedge our feet downward though the mud and slush of opinion, and prejudice, and tradition, and delusion, and appearance, that illusion which covers the globe...till we come to a hard bottom and rocks in place **we can call reality.”**

**-Thoreau, “Where I Lived and What I Lived For”**

#### Thoreau’s Journals

**24 August 1852.** Like cuttlefish we conceal ourselves, we darken the atmosphere in which we move; we are not transparent. I pine for one to whom I can speak my first thoughts; thoughts which represent me truly, which are no better and no worse than I; thoughts which have the bloom on them, which alone can be sacred and divine. Our sin and shame prevent our expressing even the innocent thoughts we have. I know of no one to whom I can be transparent instinctively. I live the life of the cuttlefish; another appears, and the element in which I move is tinged and I am concealed. My first thoughts are azure; there is a bloom and a dew on them; they are papillaceous feelers which I put out, tender, innocent. Only to a friend can I expose them. To all parties, though they be youth and maiden, if they are transparent to each other, and their thoughts can be expressed, there can be no further nakedness. I cannot be surprised by an intimacy which reveals the outside, when it has shown me the inside. The result of a full communication of our thoughts would be the immediate neglect of those coverings which a false modesty wears.

**30 May 1853.** The morning wind forever blows; the poem of the world is uninterrupted, but few are the ears that hear it. Forever that strain of the harp which soothed the Cerberus and called me back to life is sounding. Olympus is the outside of the earth everywhere.

#### 26 August 1856

I rest and take my lunch on Lee’s Cliff, looking toward Baker Farm. What is a New England landscape this sunny August day? A weather-painted house and barn, with an orchard by its side, in midst of a sandy field surrounded by green woods, with a small blue lake on one side. A sympathy between the color of the weather-painted house and that of the lake and sky. I speak not of a country road between its fences, for this house lies off one, nor do I commonly approach them from this side. The weather-painted house. This is the New England color, homely but fit as that of a toadstool. What matter though this one has not been inhabited for thirty years? Methinks I hear the crow of a cock come up from its barn-yard.

#### Kunitz’s Journals

Stanley Kunitz, born in Worcester, Massachusetts in 1905, is a noted American poet who served two years (1974-1976) as the Poet Laureate Consultant in Poetry and served as United States Poet Laureate in 2000. Kunitz, who lived until the age of 100, was, considered one of the most distinguished and accomplished poets in the country.

Journal entries from Kunitz’s *The Wild Braid*

#### *Worcester, Massachusetts*

When I was a child I haunted the woods. The two essential components of my imagination were my fascination with the natural world and with language.

I loved especially the *sounds* of words. We were fortunate in our house to have an unabridged dictionary. I explored it every day for new words and then I would go out into the woods behind our house and shout my latest discovery and listen to it reverberate. I considered it my duty to give my new words to the elements, to scatter them. The woods were the perfect audience.

I yearned to be lost in another atmosphere, and in history itself, as these woods had the virtue of being one of the encampments of Massasoit’s tribe so I looked out for traces of them. Otherwise, I had no human

company, but there were wild animals who soon learned that I was not there to harm them and so I felt I was in a world of friends.

*“unburdened by a body”*

During my adolescence, out in the open fields, I would sometimes pretend I was one of the insects. I became captivated by dragonflies and imagined I could see the world as they did. Everything had a different scale.

I reveled in the sensation of being so light and being able to go anywhere, unburdened by a body.

Discovering the body was part of the joy, the sense of infinite possibility of being out in the woods. I recognized that it had weight and had certain limitations—there was no denying that. Obviously one’s sensitivity was less acute than that of any other living creature in the woods. At the same time, the body was the very instrument of exploration.

I would find a leaf or a stone in the underbrush and have the sensation that nobody else had seen quite the same thing. And if I came across an arrowhead, that was a real triumph.

Sometimes, especially when one gets older, one gets very clumsy in the handling of delicate objects. The hands, the fingers, are less nimble than they were. But then, there’s the compensation that one knows a bit more. There’s a *quid pro quo*.\*

In the woods, one loses the sense of time. It’s quite a different experience from walking in the streets. The streets are human creations. In the woods what one finds are cosmic creations.

\*this for that

### **Your turn...**

Take your notebook/journal and a writing utensil---find a spot--- relax---take in all that Nature has to offer. Try not to write anything for at least 10 minutes .Essentially--- find a sense of yourself in nature--- become one with Nature!!

Then, write at least one page on your experience. At the top your “journal” record the date, time, and weather conditions. Now, consider the following....What did you observe? What did you smell? see? hear? feel? taste? What did you think about? What is your sense of your own connection with Nature? Did the experience allow you to relax? Did the experience make you nervous? Did the experience allow you to recall past experiences? Also, feel free to sketch what you observe—various plants, animals, rocks, etc. If you struggle, use the preceding journals to guide your ideas. Remember to allow yourself to move from the concrete to the abstract throughout this process.

## Appendix G

### Emerson: "Self-Reliance" Guide

#### Grasshopper \_\_\_\_\_

#### **Part I- Vocabulary: Define your assigned words.**

admonition  
latent  
cumbers  
capitulate  
expiate  
asinine  
decorous  
magnanimity  
venerable  
mendicant  
Sycophantic  
antinomianism

#### **Part Two- Read and annotate the essay carefully. You may want to read it more than once. Once you've done so, please respond to your 3 assigned questions.**

1. Interpret the first sentence. What does every person realize at some moment of his or her education?
2. "The eye was placed where one ray should fall, that it might testify of that particular ray." Interpret.
3. What does Emerson mean by the "divine idea which each of us represents"?
4. "The virtue in most requests is conformity. Self-reliance is its aversion." Explain.
5. In "Self-Reliance," how is Emerson trying to "draw individuals out of" the masses?
6. In Emerson's view, what is the source of political power? What is its purpose?
7. "To believe your own thought, to believe that what is true for you in your private hart is true for all men,-- that is genius." Is there such a thing as "universal thought"?
8. Why do we dismiss our own thoughts and rely on others' thoughts? Find evidence from Emerson.
9. "Trust thyself..." do we? Why or why not? What keeps us from self-trust?
10. What can we learn from infants?

OVER

11. Why are our voices loud in solitude and “inaudible as we enter into the world”? Is society really in conspiracy against us? Explain your response.
12. What is Emerson saying to us about conformity? (178)
13. Why do we “capitalize to badges and names”?
14. What I must do is all that concerns me, not what the people think” (180). Is it possible to ignore what others think?
15. What can nature teach us? (183)
16. “If we live truly, we shall see truly.” (189) Interpret.

**Part III- Create 2 original questions in reference to Emerson’s “Self-Reliance.”**

## Appendix H

### DeBlieu's "Mapping the Sacred Places"

"Making an actual, physical map of something you feel in your heart can be quite a powerful experience."

-Randolph Hester

The essays we've read explore the concept of the "sacred" or that which one considers holy or blessed. For Dillard the sacred is found through a connection with the environment. For Kunitz the sacred is found in his love affair with plants. *Clearly each of us, through our connection with a place, has experience with the sacred.*

In exploring that which is sacred in each of our lives, we're going to do a bit of mapping. When we think of maps, we consider our external landscape—geographical features and the like. Now, let's physically create a map of that which is sacred to you?

*Our creation of these maps will lead us towards exploring the meaning of being having a "sense of place" in our world, while continuing to guide us towards the concept of "wildness."*

#### Steps in the Process:

- ◆ Read and annotate Jan DeBlieu's essay "Mapping the Sacred Places" in preparation for discussion.  
List at least 10 of your sacred places.
- ◆ Map of Sacred Places: Bring materials to tomorrow's class to make, like DeBlieu, a glorious and amazing physical map of that which you hold sacred—that which you "feel in your heart."

## Appendix I

## Transcendentalism: Poetry

## Grasshopper \_\_\_\_\_

Carefully read and annotate the following poems. For each, be sure to look up any words with which you are not familiar. Then, write a thoughtful short essay in which you explain how each poem conveys the concepts of transcendentalism. In addition, reflect upon how the pieces connect to our EQ and Sub EQs (look back at the overview sheet from our first days in this unit. You should have **at least two WORD PROCESSED paragraphs—one for each poem.**

**“Some keep the Sabbath going to Church”**

LVII

Some keep the Sabbath going to Church-  
 I keep it, staying at Home-  
 With a Bobolink for a Chorister-  
 And an Orchard, for a Dome-

Some keep the Sabbath in Surplice-  
 I just wear my Wings-  
 And instead of tolling the Bell, for Church,  
 Our little Sexton-Sings.

God preaches, a noted Clergyman-  
 And the sermon is never long,  
 So instead of getting to Heaven, at last-  
 I'm going, all along.

- Emily Dickinson

**“Shoveling Snow with Buddha”**

In the usual iconography of the temple or the local  
Wok

you would never see him doing such a thing,  
tossing the dry snow over a mountain  
of his bare, round shoulder,  
his hair tied in a knot,  
a model of concentration.

Sitting is more his speed, if that is the word  
for what he does, or does not do.

Even the season is wrong for him.  
In all his manifestations, is it not warm or slightly  
humid?  
Is this not implied by his serene expression,  
that smile so wide it wraps itself around the waist of  
the universe?

But here we are, working our way down the driveway,  
one shovelful at a time.  
We toss the light powder into the clear air.  
We feel the cold mist on our faces.  
And with every heave we disappear  
and become lost to each other  
in these sudden clouds of our own making,  
these fountain-bursts of snow.

This is so much better than a sermon in church,  
I say out loud, but Buddha keeps on shoveling.

This is the true religion, the religion of snow,  
and sunlight and winter geese barking in the sky,  
I say, but he is too busy to hear me.  
He has thrown himself into shoveling snow  
as if it were the purpose of existence,  
as if the sign of a perfect life were a clear driveway  
you could back the car down easily  
and drive off into the vanities of the world  
with a broken heater fan and a song on the radio.

All morning long we work side by side,  
me with my commentary  
and he inside his generous pocket of silence,  
until the hour is nearly noon  
and the snow is piled high all around us;  
then, I hear him speak.

After this, he asks,  
can we go inside and play cards?

Certainly, I reply, and I will heat some milk  
and bring cups of hot chocolate to the table  
while you shuffle the deck.  
and our boots stand dripping by the door.

Aaah, says the Buddha, lifting his eyes  
and leaning for a moment on his shovel  
before he drives the thin blade again  
deep into the glittering white snow.

-Billy Collins

## Appendix J

### Ekphrastic Poetry

Poet \_\_\_\_\_

**Assignment:** Create an original ekphrastic poem. Your poem may be inspired by any of the following:

- the works of the various writers we've explored throughout this unit
- one of the journals you've written throughout this unit
- one of the works of art explored while researching transcendentalism

#### What is Ekphrastic poetry?

Ekphrastic poetry is a collaboration of artistic forms and poetry. The art is an external way to view the artist's/poet's rendition of a particular subject, and the poetry is an internal view of the emotions stirred by the artist's piece. The poetic forms include traditional as well as free verse, and the artwork also includes traditional and yet mixed media materials.

#### What is Ekphrastic ?

Ekphrastic derives its meaning from the Greek words *ek* (out) and *phrazein* (tell). Ekphrasis denotes, "telling in full." It is most often associated with poetry concerning itself with visual art.

In the Second Century A.D., Ekphrasis was used as a rhetorical term for a vivid description. In the Third Century it began to designate the description of a specific visual art piece or painting. During the Fourth and Fifth Centuries, it also followed the idea of poetry describing visual art. It first appeared in English in 1715.

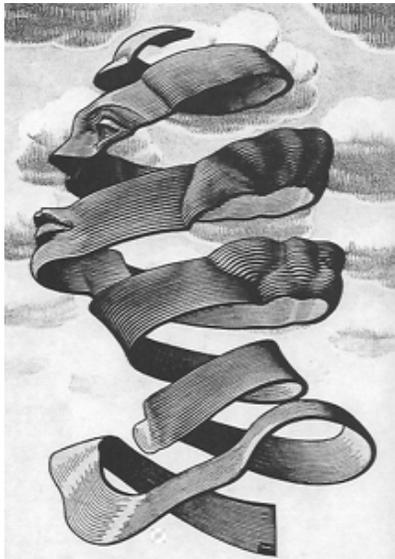
William Blake's poetry of Dante's "Divine Comedy," or John Keat's well known "Ode on a Grecian Urn," are prime examples of Ekphrastic work.

Besides the literal definition as demonstrated with many works, Ekphrasis can also be used as a term to describe what we see in our imagination. Images that our minds create through dreams and fantasies can be stirred through observation of the art and expressed in various word forms.

#### Food for Thought

- What's the perspective of the poem? Does the poet "enter" the painting and join its world? Does he/she become a figure in that depiction? Is the poet a spectator? Participant? Art critic?
- What part of the art work has inspired the sentiment? Is the poet sympathetic? Compassionate?
- To what is the poet responding: the subject? the technique? the history? the artist?
- Does the poet make mention of the time difference between when he/she writes and when the work was created?
- What special language does the poet employ to deal with the art work?
- Is the "point" of the poem the same as that of the art work?

#### Examples of Ekphrastic Poems



Art by M.C. Escher, Copyright 1999 Cordon Art, B.V.-Baarn-Holland

#### Rind

The critic  
resolves her sonnets  
into empty feet.

The boss  
rejects proposals  
he has barely skimmed.

The husband  
compares her pilaf  
to swill for hogs.

The gas  
she hopes will kill her  
leaks away.

The analyst  
unpeels her  
till she  
disappears.

Poem by Catherine A. Callaghan, Copyright 1999  
Catherine A. Callaghan



“Black Hearts: An Ode to Tuscany”\*

Black hearts—  
tempestuous beings entrusted,  
like the La Brea Tar Pits,  
with the fossils of our lives.

The Italian coffee maker  
simmering in the muck,  
reflects sacred images—  
Chianti hills—  
“wine trees”—  
snorting cinghiale on the terrace—  
where we, the scantily clad hunters,  
emerge to observe the ritual.

Wild beast meets modern world—  
ingesting the nightly nourishment  
of freshly chlorinated aqua.  
A cacophony of slurps, snorts and scraping hooves  
conquers the Tuscan night—

Now, the percolating silver chalice atop the Kenmore  
offers our only communion with the wilds of Italy.

-Julie Wright

\*Ekphrastic poem inspired by Jim Dine’s sculpture “Two Big Black Hearts” at the  
DeCordova Sculpture Garden in Lincoln, Massachusetts on May 30, 2003.

Source: <http://www.ekphrasticexpressions.com/Ekphrastic%20Expressions%20pg2.htm#What%20is>  
[http://www.decordova.org/decordova/images/imagess\\_p/dine\\_lg.jpg](http://www.decordova.org/decordova/images/imagess_p/dine_lg.jpg)

## Appendix K

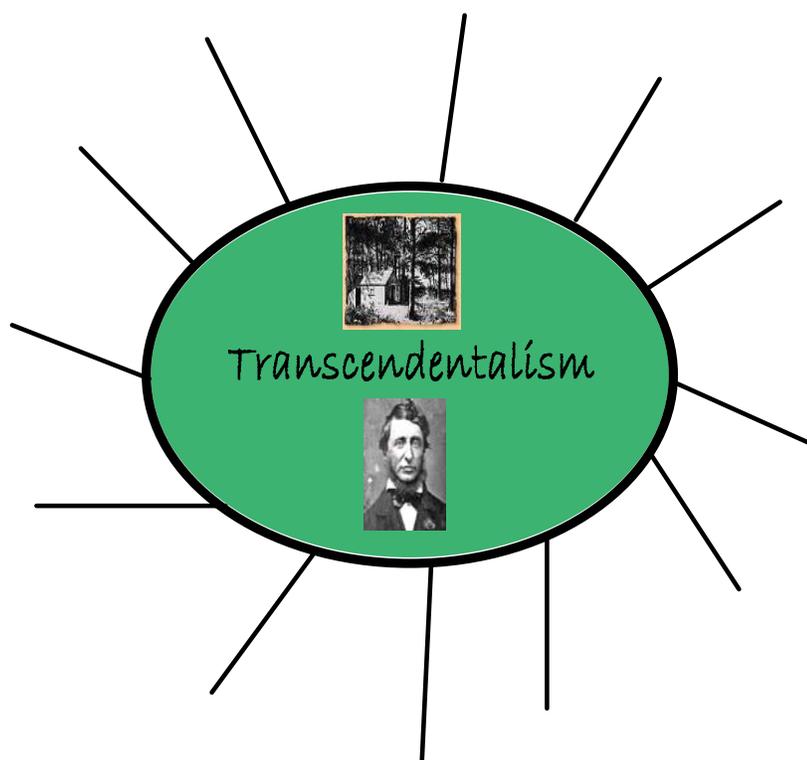
## Rubric: Ekphrastic Poems

Poet \_\_\_\_\_

CATEGORY	Exemplary 4	Proficient 3	Novice 2	No Credit 1
<b>Focus on work of art/literature</b>	Reflects a clear and vibrant connection with the work (art/literature) from which the poem is inspired. Demonstrates a strong understanding of the concepts of transcendentalism while connecting with the EQ and sub-EQs of the unit.	Most of the poem reflects a clear connection with the work (art/literature) from which it is inspired. Demonstrates a good understanding of the concepts of transcendentalism while connecting with the EQ and sub-EQs of the unit. The poem wanders off topic at one point or is too general.	Some of the poem is connected with the work (art/literature) from which it is inspired. Demonstrates a general understanding of the concepts of transcendentalism while rarely connecting with the EQ and sub-EQs of the unit. The poem is general or on another topic.	No attempt has been made to relate the poem work (art/literature) from which it is inspired. Demonstrates little to no understanding of the concepts of transcendentalism while failing to connect with the EQ and sub-EQs of the unit. Revision needed to meet the minimum requirements of the assignment.
<b>Use of Diction, Style, Literary Elements (fig. lang, allusions, alliteration, etc.)</b>	The poem uses effective diction, style, & literary elements to enhance the meaning within the poem. The poem is original, going beyond the obvious or predictable.	The poem uses adequate diction, style, & literary elements to enhance the meaning within the poem. The poem is fairly original, going beyond the obvious or predictable.	The poem uses diction, style, & literary elements within the poem. The poem is obvious or predictable.	The poem does not use strong diction, style, or literary elements within the poem. The poem is obvious or predictable.
<b>Logical Progression or Sequence</b>	The poem is presented in a logical sequence. Demonstrates a clear understanding of the concepts addressed throughout this unit.	The poem is presented in a logical sequence, but includes 1–2 items out of order. Demonstrates an adequate understanding of the concepts addressed throughout this unit.	The poem is presented in a logical sequence, but includes 3–4 items out of order. Demonstrates a minimal understanding of the concepts addressed throughout this unit.	The poem is presented out of sequence or with an unclear order. Demonstrates little to no understanding of the concepts addressed throughout this unit.
<b>Clear, Consistent Tone</b>	The poem maintains a consistent tone that clearly and effectively communicates the writer's attitude toward the subject.	The poem maintains a consistent tone that usually communicates the writer's attitude toward the subject.	The poem maintains a consistent tone but does not effectively communicate the writer's attitude toward the subject.	The poem does not maintain a consistent or clear tone.
<b>Effective Communicator</b>	Verbalizes connections between literature and original poem clearly and concisely. Demonstrates insights in a convincing manner through use of specific examples from the poem. Demonstrates tremendous pride, enthusiasm and confidence in work and self through verbal cues and intonation. Actively engages audience. Able to accurately answer and expand upon questions posed by classmates.	Verbalizes connections between literature and poem clearly and concisely. Demonstrates insights in a fairly convincing manner through use of examples from the poem. Demonstrates pride, enthusiasm and confidence in work through verbal cues and intonation. Engages audience. Able to answer questions posed by classmates.	Verbalizes connections between literature and exhibition, though in a less clear and concise manner. Demonstrates insights, though with few examples from the text or group discussions. Verbal cues and intonation of a less positive nature overshadow pride, enthusiasm and confidence in work. Audience's level of engagement varies due to presenter's uncertainty or demeanor. Able to accurately answer a few questions posed by classmates about the topic.	Difficulty verbalizing connections between literature and exhibition. Few insights demonstrated due to lack of textual examples and references to discussions. Presenters clearly want the presentation to end, making it difficult for the audience to become engaged. Unable to answer questions posed about the topic.



Appendix L



[www.pbs.org/wnet/ihas/poet/thoreau.html](http://www.pbs.org/wnet/ihas/poet/thoreau.html) <<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/ihas/poet/thoreau.html>>

[www.ecotopia.org/ehof/thoreau/index.html](http://www.ecotopia.org/ehof/thoreau/index.html) <<http://www.ecotopia.org/ehof/thoreau/index.html>>

## Appendix M

### Experiencing “Wildness”: Walden and The DeCordova

#### Walden Pond: Thoreauvian Experience

When on my way this afternoon, shall I go down this afternoon, shall I go down this long hill in the rain to fish in the pond? I ask myself. And I say to myself: Yes, roam far, grasp life and conquer it, learn much and live.

Your fetters are knocked off; you are really free.

*Journal*, 1845

As you transcend from the Lynnfield environment into the “wildness” to Thoreau’s habitat, I would like to offer some suggestions for thoughtful reflection of your individual and collective Thoreauvian experiences.

Your map serves as a loose guide for helping with your responses. Keep in mind conversations we’ve had about Walden, “wildness,” sense of place, sense of self, the sacred, and “living deliberately.” We will begin at the replica of Thoreau’s cabin, move across Rte. 126 where we’ll “meet” Thoreau in the guise of Richard Smith. From there we’ll begin our perambulation of the pond from west to south to east, ending at the Main Beach.

“Go confidently in the direction of your dreams. Live the lives you’ve imagined.” -Thoreau

1. Spend some time looking in and around the replica of the cabin. Consider spending two years in a cabin like Thoreau’s. How did his sparse and simple lifestyle (no big screen TV for this guy!) reinforce his experience at Walden? What would you do with two years, two months, and two days in such a place?
2. Read the landscape surrounding the “real” cabin site—how has it changed since Thoreau lived here? Why has it changed? Walk to the edge of the pond from what was Thoreau’s front door. What do you see, hear, smell, feel as you traverse this well-worn path?
3. As he began his sojourn with “solitude,” Thoreau wrote, “My friends ask what I will do when I get there [Walden]. Will it not be employment enough to watch the progress of the seasons?” As you gaze across the pond at Thoreau’s Cove, ask yourself the same question—is it “employment enough” to “live deliberately,” to learn what life (and the seasons) have to teach?
4. Take some time to sketch out what you see and experience here at Walden. Use our previous journaling experiences as inspiration in creating your “sensory” experience of Walden.
5. Reread Mary Oliver’s “Going to Walden.” Think about it. Think about your morning here. Now, tell your story—tell about your experience going to Walden. Consider what you believe to be your “Walden.”
6. Read Stanley Kunitz’s “The Snakes of September.” Write a journal entry or poem in which you speak to the connection between Kunitz’s poem and your experience at Walden Pond.

Consider the following in approaching this piece:

- How does this poem reflect the ideas he expresses in his journal?
- How does he use his personal experiences to convey his connection with nature?
- What images are particularly powerful in this piece?
- How does this poem connect with our journey to the forest?

If you’re a poem and struggling with a starting point, consider using one of Kunitz’s first lines to guide you.

- “The universe is a continuous web”
- “What I remember most was not”
- “Nothing had been done at all”
- “A man with a leaf in his head”
- “There’s a conversation that keeps going on beyond the human level”
- “There were no paths; I had to create the paths.”
- “Light splashed this morning”

“The Snakes of September”

All summer I heard them  
 rustling in the shrubbery,  
 outracing me from tier  
 to tier in my garden,  
 a whisper among the viburnums,\*      \*small shrub, honeysuckle family  
 a signal flashed from the hedgerow,\*      \*row of shrubs forming boundary  
 a shadow pulsing  
 in the barberry\* thicket.\*      \*spiny shrubs, w/red berries      \*thick growth of shrubs  
 Now that the nights are chill  
 and the annuals spent,  
 I should have thought them gone,  
 in a torpor\* of blood      \*state of being dormant or inactive  
 slipped to the nether\* world      \*lying beneath the earth's surface  
 before the sickle\* frost.      \*crescent shaped cutting tool  
 Not so. In the deceptive balm\*      \*healing, soothing  
 of noon, as if defiant of the curse  
 that spoiled another garden,  
 these two appear on show  
 through a narrow slit  
 in the dense green brocade\*      \* rich cloth, raised design woven in  
 of a north-country spruce,  
 dangling head-down, entwined  
 in a brazen love-knot.  
 I put out my hand and stroke  
 the fine, dry grit of their skins.  
 After all,  
 we are partners in this land,  
 co-signers of a covenant.\*      \*binding/solemn agreement  
 At my touch the wild  
 braid of creation  
 trembles.

“Going to Walden”

-Mary Oliver

It isn't very far as highways lie.  
 I might be back by nightfall, having seen  
 The rough pines, and the stones, and the clear water.  
 Friends argue that I might be wiser for it.  
 They do not hear that far-off Yankee whisper:  
 How dull we grow from hurrying here and there!

Many have gone, and think me half a fool  
 To miss a day away in the cool country.  
 Maybe. But in a book I read and cherish,  
 Going to Walden is not so easy a thing  
 As a green visit. It is the slow and difficult  
 Trick of living and finding it where you are.

### The DeCordova: Ekphrastic Wildness

As we explore the concept of “wildness” in our sojourn throughout the grounds of the DeCordova, experiencing the creative forces of humankind through artistic endeavors, you will be creating an ekphrastic poem in response. As you walk through the gardens, look at the various sculptures and other pieces of artwork on display. Select one of these pieces to be the focus of your writing. You will need a journal or sketchbook and a pencil.

1. Jot down as detailed a description of the pieces of artwork as possible. Name the object and describe the colors, shapes, and sizes. Look for irregularities in the portrayed objects: Do the people have messy hair? Is the object shape unusual? Are the materials used unique? Try to spend 10-15 minutes jotting down as many details about the images as you can.
2. Make a visual “map” of the artwork. Graph out as best you can where the objects are in the sculpture, painting, etc. This “map” will help jog your memory later when you’re writing your poem.
3. Paraphrase and record any information supplied by the gallery about the piece. This information includes facts about the artist or the people and/or objects portrayed in the piece. You might also consider adding information about the era in which the piece was created, the medium used, or the genre (still life, portrait, etc.)
4. In crafting your original piece, the only criteria—that it be at least ten lines long, appropriate, thoughtful, “wild,” and creative.

## Appendix N

### Oliver's "Going to Walden"

"Going to Walden"

-Mary Oliver

It isn't very far as highways lie.  
I might be back by nightfall, having seen  
The rough pines, and the stones, and the clear water.  
Friends argue that I might be wiser for it.  
They do not hear that far-off Yankee whisper:  
How dull we grow from hurrying here and there!

Many have gone, and think me half a fool  
To miss a day away in the cool country.  
Maybe. But in a book I read and cherish,  
Going to Walden is not so easy a thing  
As a green visit. It is the slow and difficult  
Trick of living and finding it where you are.

## Appendix O

### Transcendental Experience: Take a Walk on the Wild[ness] Side Exhibition

#### Essential Question (EQ):

Can “wildness” lead to the “preservation of the world”? to the “preservation” of humanity?

#### Sub EQs:

- What is “wild”?
- How do we define “wildness”?
- What is the difference—is there a difference—between “wildness” and “wild”?
- What are the benefits of “wildness”?
- What are the disadvantages of “wildness”?
- Can “wildness” lead to “deliberate living”?
- What does it mean to be “an instrument of change”?
- What is Nature?
- What is our relationship with Nature?
- How does Nature define/create one’s sense of self?
- What are the metaphors that define our relationship with Nature?

With our EQ in mind, you will be creating an exhibition that you believe captures the concepts of your understanding of and our exploration of transcendentalism. In order to successfully complete this exhibition, you will need to select notable quotable from the readings of Thoreau. This quote may be one on which you’ve expounded or one on which you believe there’s still much for you to say. Your task includes the following:

1. Explain what this quote means for Thoreau: his way of experiencing nature, his choice to live at Walden, his concept of “wildness,” and his audience in the mid-1800s. Use the text as a reference point.
2. Connect your quote to a piece/work of literature- poem, short story, children’s book, novel, play, film- that expresses Thoreau’s message in a meaningful way for us in the 21st century.
  - Be sure to include appropriate textual references from your choice of literature.
3. Connect your quote to a piece/work of music that expresses Thoreau’s message in a meaningful way for us in the 21st century.
  - Be sure to include lyrics with appropriate line references from your choice of literature. If you happen to have the actual song, please bring this in as well.
4. Connect your quote to a news article that expresses Thoreau’s message in a meaningful way for us in the 21st century.
  - Be sure to include the article with appropriate line references from the article.
5. Present your quote in artistic form. You may use any of the works we’ve created along the way (sculptures, poems, journals) or create a new piece that you believe encapsulates your transcendental experience. The actual quotation should be included in your artistic representation. In other words, make your piece representative of your understanding and knowledge of transcendentalism as it applies to your world. As with all our work throughout this unit, it’s essential to connect your ideas with our EQ

and Sub EQs. Your exhibition should be visually attractive as it will be displayed in our “Walk on the Wild[ness] Side” Exhibition.

6. You will present your final exhibition in a public setting—yes, public. Your oral presentation (or artist’s defense) will be approximately 10 minutes in length. You will also be assessed on your presentation skills.

**Be creative, clear, thoughtful, “wild,” and “deliberate”!**

## Transcendental Experience: Take a Walk[ness] on the Wild Side Exhibition Rubric

### 1. WRITTEN COMPONENT (20 POINTS)

- a. The first section reflects a thorough understanding of Thoreau's message and audience as directly connected to *Walden*. Specific references are made to the text, both the section directly surrounding the quote and the broader expanse of the text.
- b. The second section presents a connection to a contemporary piece of literature/film, music, and news article that is clear and carefully articulated. Thoughtful details are given so that the viewer understands the appropriateness of the choice while conveying the creators understanding of transcendentalism and connecting the insights to the unit's EQs and Sub EQs.

Both segments are well written and word-processed; one to two single-spaced page(s) is sufficient.

### 2. COMMITMENT TO PROCESS (20 POINTS)

*Engagement	*Risk Taking	*Independence	*Motivation	* Cooperation
*Growth	*Attitude	*Attendance	*"Self-Reliance"	

### 3. PRESENTATION (20 POINTS)

Connection to contemporary work, music, and new article: your oral presentation of the connections are clearly articulated. The same—and perhaps more—thoughtful details offered in the written piece are presented and elaborated upon so the audience has a complete understanding of the reasoning behind your choice of connections.

### 4. VISUAL REPRESENTATION OF QUOTE (20 POINTS)

- Quote itself is included in the artistic representation.
- Artwork demonstrates care and creative insight.

### 5. PRESENTATION SKILLS (20 POINTS)

- Oral presentation is carefully orchestrated.
- Oral presentation is organized, engaging, and all group members have participated.
- Oral presentation skills are well demonstrated: projection, eye contact, and articulation.
- Material is maturely handed.

## Link to MA Standards

### ***Lynnfield High School English Department Goals:***

Students study literary works from a variety of genres including novels, plays, short stories, poetry, biography and essays. Emphasis is placed on students' sharpening their analytical skills as they develop an understanding of the texts. In addition, students learn the definitions and use of literary terms, techniques and structures.

### ***Massachusetts E/LA Frameworks:***

- LS 1: Discussion-* Students will use agreed-upon rules for informal and formal discussions in small and large groups.
- LS 2: Questioning, Listening, and Contributing -* Students will pose questions, listen to the ideas of others, and contribute their own information or ideas in group discussions or interviews in order to acquire new knowledge.
- LS 3: Oral Presentation-* Students will make oral presentations that demonstrate consideration of audience, purpose, and the information to be conveyed.
- LS 6: Formal and Informal English:* Students will describe, analyze, and use appropriately formal and informal English.
- LS 7: Beginning Reading:* Students will understand the nature of written English and the relationships of letters and spelling patterns to the sounds of speech.
- LS 8: Understanding a Text -* Students will identify the basic facts and main idea in a text and use them as the basis for interpretation.
- LS 9: Making Connections -* Students will deepen their understanding of a literary or non-literary work by relating it to its context.
- LS 10: Genre-* Students will identify, analyze, and apply knowledge of the characteristics of different genres.
- LS 11: Theme-* Students will identify, analyze, and apply knowledge of theme in literature and provide evidence from the text to support their reasoning.
- LS 14: Poetry-* Students will identify, analyze, and apply knowledge themes, structure, and element of poetry and provide evidence from the text to support their understanding.
- LS 15: Style and Language-* Students will identify and analyze how an author's words appeal to the senses, create imagery, suggest mood, and set tone, and provide evidence from the text to support their understanding.
- LS 19: Writing-* Students will write with a clear focus, coherent organization, and sufficient detail.
- LS 20: Consideration of Audience and Purpose-* Students will write for different audiences and purposes.
- LS 21: Revising-* Students will demonstrate improvement in organization, content, paragraph development, level of detail, style, tone, and word choice (diction) in their compositions after revising them.
- LS 22: Standard English Conventions-* Students will use knowledge of standard English conventions in their writing, revising, and editing.
- LS 23: Organizing Ideas in Writing-* Students will organize ideas in writing in a way that makes sense for their purpose.
- LS 24: Research-* Students will gather information from a variety of sources, analyze and evaluate the quality of the information they obtain, and use it to answer their own questions.
- LS 25: Evaluating Writing and Presentations-* Students will develop and use appropriate, logical, and stylistic criteria for assessing final versions of their compositions or research projects before presenting them to varied audiences.
- LS 27: Media Production-* Students will design and create coherent media productions (audio, video, television, multimedia, Internet, emerging technologies) with a clear controlling idea, adequate details, and appropriate consideration of audience, purpose, and medium.

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