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***Seeing with Henry David Thoreau:
Experience, Writing and Reflection as a Way to Wisdom***

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Grade 11
Honors American Literature
July 29, 2016

Unit Overview

Will you be a reader, a student merely, or a seer? (Thoreau 288)

Context

This unit is the very first of the school year as the English (American literature for Grade 11) and American history courses run concordantly and move from the mid-nineteenth century to the late twentieth. The English course centers around this unifying question the students respond to for their final project in the spring: What is American about American literature? Thoreau and the Transcendentalists therefore serve as introductions to the American voice and provide a philosophical lens through which students can examine the proceeding texts, i.e. *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain, *The Awakening* by Kate Chopin, *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Crucible* by Arthur Miller, *The Things they Carried* by Tim O'Brien. This unit will last 4-5 weeks, or one half quarter of the school year.

Objectives

Reading Henry David Thoreau's writing, unlike the novels, short fiction, plays, and poetry the students most often read, affords a teenager a rare model for how to examine one's life – not just live it. Thoreau's essays are not fiction, but artistically composed texts we don't just read but "live with," as Bob McCloy described during this summer's Approaching Walden course. My unit on Thoreau instructs students in ways to create, reflect on, and write about real experience, particularly the sorts involving nature, self-reform, and social responsibility. When Thoreau asks us if we "will" be a "seer" or merely a student, he suggests that we will be something inevitably, but that we also have a choice as to what we will be. I want students to *choose* to be seers – introspective thinkers who question reality to find their own truths – and I believe studying Thoreau can convince them to do so. Like Janet Burne has done in her classes, I want the students to live with this literature and apply it to their lives through my assignments. I want them to appreciate the beauty of finding their "unutterables" "uttered" in Thoreau's work (285). This unit also serves to teach students the tenets of Transcendentalist thought in the context of their parallel study of American history. Thoreau demands rigorous reading from honors-level students who will be challenged to imitate his rhetorical strategies in their own persuasive essay to be delivered during a class "lyceum". Finally, students will evaluate the Thoreauvian qualities of other authors.

Summary

Reading and Listening – Thoreau's *Walden* says so much so well that after reading it in its entirety for the first time for the Approaching Walden course, I became dissatisfied with the abbreviated versions found in the textbooks available to me. Therefore, I edited my own collection of readings, thematically-grouped and organized according to my lesson calendar, for my students to use. I excerpted my favorite portions of chapters and paragraphs which related to one another under the topics I plan to cover. Students will begin by reading these selections from

Walden, then read all of "Civil Disobedience" and "A Plea for Captain John Brown", along with the poem, "When I Heard the Learn'd Astronomer" by Walt Whitman and Ralph Waldo Emerson's "Self-Reliance" to further their understanding of Transcendentalist principles. They will extend their knowledge by studying the echoes of Transcendentalism in excerpts from John Muir's essays on Yosemite and Lars Eighner's essay "On Dumpster Diving". Finally, they will apply knowledge to critically examine the choices of Chris McCandless as shown in the film *Into the Wild* and a non-fiction article from *The New Yorker* magazine. If time permits, I may infuse some protest-like, twentieth-century songs for further context. Students will also listen to their school environment - inside and outside - as a text to learn from. They will read the visual world through outdoor meditation (similar to Janet Burne's "string journal").

Writing & Speaking - Students will perform various types of writing; they will annotate readings and respond to quotations they select in a daily notebook, reflect on personal experiences and experiments in a journal, write a persuasive speech on a topic of their choice to present in our class-wide, modern-day "lyceum", and finally, write a critical essay comparing and contrasting Thoreau and Chris McCandless as an in-class test. I plan to incorporate sketching during the journaling process and outdoor meditations to encourage visual learners.

Field Trip - Another component to this unit is on-site exploration of Walden Woods and the Emerson House in Concord, MA with the guidance of educators from the Walden Woods Project.

Lessons

I have included detailed plans, assignments, reading materials, assessments, and rubrics for the first six lessons in a unit comprised of nineteen class periods.

Outline

Introductory	1	2	3	4
Introduction to Thoreau, Transcendentalism, and "seeing" Reading assigned: "Where I Lived and What I Lived For", "Conclusion"	Simplicity; determining the "necessities of the soul" Reading assigned: "Economy" and "Baker Farm"	Clothing and purpose Reading assigned: "Spring", "The Village", "Solitude"	Solitude and the Wild Reading assigned: "The Ponds", "Sounds" and "Brute Neighbors"	Nature as Divine, Listening, and Analogies Reading assigned: "Economy", "Visitors", "Bean Field", "Higher Laws"
5	6	7	8	9
Knowing well Reading assigned: Whitman's "To the Learn'd Astronomer"	Outdoor "sketching"	Experiment presentations	Thoreau's contemporaries Reading assigned: Emerson's "Self Reliance"	Thoreau's contemporaries continued Reading assigned: "Conclusion"; "Where I Lived and What I Lived For"
10	11	12	13	14
Living Deliberately Reading assigned: "Civil Disobedience"	Social Responsibility Reading assigned: "Plea for Capt. John Brown"	Persuasive strategy Lyceum speech assigned	Criticism of Thoreau Reading assigned: Brown's "I Now Go Into the Wild"	Socratic Circle: Evaluating Chris McCandless Reading assigned: Eighner's "On Dumpster Diving"
15	16	17	18	19
Echoes of Thoreau	Transcendentalism Test	Editing	Editing	Lyceum speeches

Introductory Lesson – Introduction to Thoreau & Our Unit Format

Duration: 55 minutes

Materials:

- Conversation Starter assignment handout
- Selected Readings handout

Students will be able to answer:

- Who is Henry David Thoreau and why are we studying him?
- What is Thoreau's call to us?
- What is a "conversation starter"?

1. Model a "conversation starter" (20 minutes)
 - a. Begin by modeling the activity I expect the class to imitate daily starting tonight for homework. Write on the board: "Will you be a reader, a student merely, or a seer?" (Henry David Thoreau). Invite the students to interpret the quote's meaning quietly in their notebooks for a few minutes. They should write at least four-five sentences, exploring multiple interpretations or developing one at length. Encourage them to keep writing until I say to stop. Rambling is okay as long as it aims at making sense of the quote.
 - b. Model note-taking. Invite class-wide discussion about the quote. Record key words and phrases from students on the board around the quote. Encourage them to do the same in their notebooks.
 - c. Pass out the Conversation Starter assignment and explain that we have just practiced writing one. Read this together aloud to prepare for tonight's assignment.
2. Lecture briefly about Thoreau, putting key facts on the board. Ask: How does one "see"? Direct students to Socrates' philosophy: "The unexamined life is not worth living." What are the ways one can examine one's life? Describe Thoreau's practice of experience, questioning/reflection, and writing and segue to the PowerPoint for a brief lecture. (10 minutes)
3. Partner reading with the first selection from tonight's assignment: Students take turns reading aloud and listening; they should pause after every two-three sentences to interpret what they are reading and converse about it. They annotate for potential conversation starters as they go. Inform the students that tonight's readings deal with the topic of simplicity.

Homework: Read selections for Day 1 (excerpts from "Where I Lived and What I Lived For", "Conclusion" and "Baker Farm"); Prepare two conversation starters

Day 1 Lesson – Necessaries of the Soul

Duration: 55 minutes

Materials:

- Selected Readings handout
- 100 pennies or fake gold coins as props

Students will:

- Interpret Thoreau's language and take ownership of it
- Apply Thoreau's ideas about superfluities through reflective writing

1. Write on the board:

“...if you are restricted in your range by poverty, if you cannot buy books and newspapers, for instance, you are but confined to the most significant and vital experiences; you are compelled to deal with the material which yields the most sugar and the most starch. It is life near the bone where it is sweetest. You are defended from being a trifler....Superfluous wealth can buy superfluities only. Money is not required to buy one necessary of the soul.”

What is a necessary of your soul?

2. Teach the definition for the word *superfluous* as we will apply this today. Describe the Transcendentalist attitude toward material culture.
3. Discussion of last night's readings and student conversation starters. (20 min)
4. Demonstration: conduct Janet Burne's exercise. Put my coins in my pocket or in a small bag. Tell the students...
 - a. Record the monetary value of everything you are wearing and total it.
 - b. Assume minimum wage is \$10/hour so divide your total by 10. This is the number of hours it takes you to get dressed today.Take my coins out and drop a few on each desk. Tell the students...
 - a. *Imagine every one of us is born with a bag of coins. We each get different amounts. Each coin represents an hour. We can spend our coins, or hours, however we choose. When we spend them, we never get them back. But do most people spend their coins wisely? Thoreau is not just writing about money, he is writing about time. His point is he wants us to spend our time well.* (Paraphrased from Ms. Burne's)
5. Reflective Writing: What is a necessary of your soul?
 - a. Direct a student to read the quote on the board aloud. Discuss briefly what Thoreau means by the final sentence.
 - b. Students should use the remainder of the class time to quietly reflect on the demonstration and write about what they deem "necessaries of their souls".
6. Explain tonight's homework – in addition to the usual, I want you to dress in your favorite outfit and wear it to class tomorrow.

Homework: Read selections for Day 2 (excerpts from "Economy"); prepare two conversation starters for tomorrow's class; Wear your favorite outfit to class tomorrow.

Day 2 Lesson – “As for Clothing...”

Duration: 55 minutes

Materials:

- Selected Readings handout
- Experiments of Living handout
- A suitcase filled with 11+ articles of out-of-style clothing
- 30 sheets of brightly-colored construction paper
- 30 lengths of string
- 2 staplers
- Sharpie markers

Students will be able to:

- Further their understanding of Thoreau’s definition of simplicity as it relates to clothing
- Interpret Thoreau’s language to real-life experience

1. Write “As for Clothing...” on the board. Adhere the two posters (for the sandwich board) to the board also.
2. Show & Tell: Students turn to a partner and tell them about why their outfit today is their favorite. (1 minute)
3. Fashion show: Create a runway and play some upbeat music.
4. Present the suitcase and open it. Request ten volunteers and call one up at a time to receive a new article of clothing to incorporate in his/her wardrobe. Answer no questions. Let them wonder what is going on. They will giggle and be perplexed. Announce the volunteers as fashion models. They strut on the runway, presenting a show of their new outfits, then return to their seats. Finally, I step into a very odd dress and let them laugh at me. Turn off the music. Create a dramatic silence.
5. Stand before the class and read from last night’s assigned pages:
A man who has at length found something to do will not need to get a new suit to do it in; for him the old will do, that has lain dusty in the garret for an indeterminate period. Old shoes will serve a hero longer than they have served his valet- if a hero ever has a valet- bare feet are older than shoes, and he can make them do. Only they who go to soirees and legislative balls must have new coats, coats to change as often as the man changes in them. But if my jacket and trousers, my hat and shoes, are fit to worship God in, they will do; will they not?... I say, beware of all enterprises that require new clothes, and not rather a new wearer of clothes. If there is not a new man, how can the new clothes be made to fit? If you have any enterprise before you, try it in your old clothes. All men want, not something to do with, but something to do, or rather something to be. Perhaps we should never procure a new suit, however ragged or dirty the old, until we have so conducted, so enterprised or sailed in some way, that we feel like new men in the old.... (215)
6. Discussion: Invite the students to react to this passage, and to last night’s reading. Advance them towards defining “simplicity” by Thoreau’s standard. Help them by asking, *Why is clothing an effective example for Thoreau to use to make his point about simplicity? When he tells us to simplify, what is he*

- really telling us we should do? What are we to prioritize in our lives? After discussion, take a quiet moment for students to record their definitions of simplicity in their notebook. Walk around to check these. Meanwhile, recollect the garments from the volunteers.*
7. Sandwich board activity: Say: *Thoreau calls us not only to think, but to take action. In the Thoreauvian spirit, I call you to share his philosophy with your school community today. After all, Thoreau said that if "you have a new enterprise before you, try it in your old clothes." What we wear should not determine what we are or do, or what we can be.*
 - a. Make a sign to wear. Give one piece of paper, one length of string, and one Sharpie to each student. Put the staplers out.
 - b. Instruct them to select one quote from Thoreau related to clothing (with a citation) and write it on the paper in large letters.
 - c. They staple each end of the string to the top of the sign and wear over the front of their shirts.
 - d. Tell them to stand up wearing their signs. Say: *Stay standing if you will accept Thoreau's challenge to defy the norm and wear this sign today! Students who are standing, raise your right hand and repeat after me: I pledge to wear this quotation until the bell rings at 2:14PM today! I pledge to continue our dialogue about simplicity with other students! I pledge to experiment with Thoreau's principle to simplify!* Have them sit and then say: *Any student who brings a sign back to me with the signatures of every teacher seen between now and last block will earn bonus points on the next homework assignment!*
 8. Finally, hand out the "Experiments of Living" assignment. Read the directions and tell them that by tomorrow's class, they should tell me which experiment they wish to do.

Homework: Read selections for Day 3 (excerpts from "Spring", "The Village", and "Solitude"); write two conversation starters; Select your experiment and be prepared to tell me why you want to do it tomorrow

Day 3 Lesson – Why We Need Nature, Solitude and Figurative Language

Duration: 55 minutes

Materials:

- Selected Readings handout
- Letters to Thoreau reflection exercise handout

Students will be able to:

- Identify and describe their relationship to nature and society
 - Explain Thoreau’s argument about nature and society
 - Identify examples of figurative language (imagery and metaphor/simile) in Thoreau’s argument and evaluate their persuasive impact
1. Write the definitions for imagery, metaphor, simile, refrain and anaphora (a kind of refrain), and analogy on the board along with the questions under #5 a-c. Describe the Transcendentalist attitude toward the divine in nature and in self.
 2. Pass around the Experiments sign-up sheet. Have students indicate why they are choosing their experiment on the sheet. Review expectations.
 3. Hand out the Letters to Thoreau reflection exercise. Allow 10 minutes for students to write. Students form groups of 2-3 with peers who responded to the same prompt. They read their letters aloud.
 4. Invite students to identify the figurative language they underlined. Review the definitions of these. Anaphora will be new to them. Explain that lists of imagery can also be a stylistic device. Compare this to MLK Jr.'s “I have a dream” speech. They should note: the anaphora of the word “We”, the imagery of the sea and wilderness, the metaphor of the “musty cheese” and simile of “the willow’s roots”.
 5. Discuss:
 - a. Why does Thoreau not feel alone in nature? (Read page 305 in *Walden* about finding a “beneficent society” in nature.)
 - b. Why does Thoreau feel alone among other people?
 - c. How does Thoreau use figurative language and style to help make his point clearer or more persuasive? (Remind them that Thoreau is somewhat of a poet prose-writer, and that essays can be creatively written, too. This will prepare them for strategies when writing their own speeches later in the unit.)Students should write answers to these questions in their notebook.
 6. Appoint each student to be an “expert” on the pond, train, or ant. They should be able to describe what Thoreau compares this thing to, and identify what thoughtful conclusions his comparisons afford him.

Homework: Read selections for Day 4 (excerpts from “The Ponds”, “Sounds” and “Brute Neighbors”); annotate for figurative language, specifically metaphors and analogies for the pond, the train, and the ants; write two conversation starters about your appointed subject; begin your experiment

Day 4 Lesson – The Sound of Listening

Duration: 55 minutes

Materials:

- Selected Readings handout

Students will be able to:

- Identify descriptive language and figurative devices in Thoreau’s writing
- Practice Thoreau’s methodology for observation by writing analogies

1. Write on the board:
 - a. “All perception of truth is the detection of an analogy; we reason from our hands to our head.” (Thoreau)
 - b. “It [is] through analogy that we begin to comprehend the correspondence between the physical and the spiritual, and to truly understand that nature is not something outside of us but that we and nature are the same.”
2. Listening and writing activity (20 min)
 - a. Read aloud the passage from “Sounds” on page 300 to set the tone.
 - b. Lead students on a mini “field trip” to listen to the sounds outside. Go to the grass. Everyone sits and shuts their eyes for three minutes, then records notes in their notebooks.
 - c. When we return to the classroom, introduce the quotes on the board and tell about how James Wilkinson’s book *The Human Body and Its Connexion with Man* inspired Thoreau to examine and “see” his environment more poetically. Remind the students that the Transcendentalists believed the divine existed in nature. Analogies are a linguistic tool to make sense of that connection. It’s our way to understanding, to “seeing.” Tell them to compare what they heard to something else and see what “truth” they can find. They write for another five minutes, then share.
3. Group sharing: Students meet with peers appointed to the same excerpt in groups of three-five and compare observations. Instruct one student from each group to present one of their analogies or metaphors to the class. I take notes on the board.
4. Discuss:
 - a. To what length and in what detail does Thoreau develop his observations about something as miniscule as an ant?
 - b. What can you write about to this length and in this amount of detail?
 - c. How can comparisons like analogies, metaphors and similes, enhance your writing?

Students note answers in their notebooks.

Homework: Read selections for Day 5 (excerpts from “Economy”, “The Bean Field”, “Higher Laws”, and “Visitors”); write two conversation starters; continue your experiment

Day 5 Lesson – What does it mean to *know* something?

Duration: 55 minutes

Materials:

- Selected Readings handout
- Walt Whitman’s poem, “When I Heard the Learn’d Astronomer”

Students will be able to:

- Identify and apply Thoreau’s principles on learning
1. Write on the board: “What does it mean to know something? How can we come to know something well?”
 2. Creative/critical thinking activity: (20 min)
 - a. Students form groups of 4-6 to solve this problem: Each of you is a disciple of Thoreau. You are in charge of the education of 100 children aged 10 years old for one week. You are responsible for teaching them about an endangered species of tree.
 - b. If you are Thoreau, how will you ensure that they know this tree well by the end of the week? You have fifteen minutes to outline a typical day in the your week with them and write a mission statement expressing your school’s teaching philosophy. Be specific about the materials students will need, the learning environment, activities you will conduct, etc. Include quotations from last night’s reading in your mission statement.
 3. Brief lecture about Thoreau’s experience as a teacher and the Transcendentalist view of education. (5 min)
 4. Discussion of last night’s readings to analyze Thoreau’s principles on knowing and learning. Guide them to key principles. (10 min)
 5. Inform the class that tomorrow we will be venturing outdoors to write, so to dress appropriately.

Homework: Read Walt Whitman’s poem, “When I Heard the Learn’d Astronomer” and answer the questions as conversation starters for tomorrow.

Grading: Component Weights

Conversation starters a.k.a. nightly homework (10 x 5 points each = 50 points)

Participation (50 points)

Experiment of Living essay (100 points)

Persuasive speech for lyceum (150 points)

Transcendentalism test (150 points)

Standards

This unit meets the following Common Core Standards:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.9

Demonstrate knowledge of eighteenth-, nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century foundational works of American literature, including how two or more texts from the same period treat similar themes or topics.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.1

Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.4

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including words with multiple meanings or language that is particularly fresh, engaging, or beautiful. (Include Shakespeare as well as other authors.)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.11-12.10

Write routinely over extended time frames (time for reflection and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.11-12.1

Write arguments focused on *discipline-specific content*.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.11-12.4

Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.11-12.5

Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.11-12.2.B

Develop the topic thoroughly by selecting the most significant and relevant facts, extended definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples appropriate to the audience's knowledge of the topic.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.11-12.2.C

Use varied transitions and sentence structures to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships among complex ideas and concepts.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.11-12.2.D

Use precise language, domain-specific vocabulary and techniques such as metaphor, simile, and analogy to manage the complexity of the topic; convey a knowledgeable stance in a style that responds to the discipline and context as well as to the expertise of likely readers.

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Letters to Thoreau

A Lesson about Why We Need Nature, Solitude & Figurative Language

Directions: Read both quotations and choose one to which to respond. Imagine you are corresponding with Thoreau from the afterlife. Respond to the prompt in the form of a letter to Thoreau.

1

Our village life would stagnate if it were not for the unexplored forests and meadows which surround it. We need the tonic of wildness, - to wade sometimes in marshes where the bittern and the meadow-hen lurk, and hear the booming of the snipe.... At the same time that we are earnest to explore and learn all things, we require that all things be mysterious and unexplorable, that land and sea be infinitely wild, unsurveyed and unfathomed by us because unfathomable. We can never have enough of nature. We must be refreshed by the sight of inexhaustible vigor, vast and titanic features, the sea-coast with its wrecks, the wilderness with its living and its decaying trees, the thunder-cloud, and the rain which lasts three weeks.... We need to witness our own limits transgressed, and some life pasturing freely where we never wander. (from "Spring" in Walden, 454-455)

- a. When have you been "refreshed" by "the tonic of wildness"? Recall an occasion in your life when you interacted with nature. Briefly describe the situation – the time, place, and context. Tell what you experienced in nature. Include many sensory details and imagery in your description. Finally, explain why this experience is important to you. Do you agree with anything Thoreau says about nature? Comment on something specific he wrote here.
- b. Thoreau often uses descriptive language like imagery, metaphor and simile to make his argument more persuasive. Underline examples you see in the passage.

2

What sort of space is that which separates a man from his fellows and makes him solitary? I have found that no exertion of the legs can bring two minds much nearer to one another.... We are for the most part more lonely when we go abroad among men than when we stay in our chambers.... Society is commonly too cheap. We meet at very short intervals, not having had time to acquire any new value for each other. We meet at meals three times a day, and give each other a new taste of that old musty cheese that we are. We have had to agree on a certain set of rules, called etiquette and politeness, to make this frequent meeting tolerable and that we need not come to open war. We meet at the post-office, and at the sociable, and about the fireside every night; we live thick and are in each other's way, and stumble over one another, and I think that we thus lose some respect for one another. Certainly less frequency would suffice for all important and hearty communications....It would be better if there were but one inhabitant to a square mile, as where I live. The value of a man is not in his skin, that we should touch him. (from "Solitude" in Walden, pages 306, 308-309)

- a. When have you felt alone? Recall an occasion in your life when you experienced solitude and briefly describe the time, place, and context. Tell how it made you feel. Were you lonely or content? Uncomfortable or at ease? Finally, consider what Thoreau argues about solitude and "society". Do you agree or disagree with him? Explain your perspective and comment on something specific he wrote here.
- b. Thoreau often uses descriptive language like imagery, metaphor and simile to make his argument more persuasive. Underline examples you see in the passage.

When I Heard the Learn'd Astronomer

BY WALT WHITMAN

When I heard the learn'd astronomer,
When the proofs, the figures, were ranged in columns before me,
When I was shown the charts and diagrams, to add, divide, and measure them,
When I sitting heard the astronomer where he lectured with much applause in the lecture-room,
How soon unaccountable I became tired and sick,
Till rising and gliding out I wander'd off by myself,
In the mystical moist night-air, and from time to time,
Look'd up in perfect silence at the stars.

1. How are you and the speaker in the poem similar? How are you different?
2. Comment on the significance of the word, "learn'd" in the poem (abbreviation for *learned*, meaning "well studied and knowledgeable"). According to Whitman, how does an individual acquire knowledge?
3. We will "now walk into the wild," or more precisely, venture into the field or woods on campus. During this brief visit with the outdoors, find a comfortable place on your own and in quietude, breathe and look around you with all of your senses, and record your thoughts about what you observe. If the environment could speak, what does it tell you? What is there to appreciate in nature? What can you find, learn, or be while outside our classroom?

Experiments of Living

Henry David Thoreau asks, "How could youths better learn to live than by at once trying the experiment of living?" (238). In the transcendentalist spirit, we will endeavor to **live from experience** and to **learn from reflection** on our experiences.

Choose one experiment from the following pages to conduct over the course of the next seven days. You will write an essay reflecting on your experience and present your writing, along with any other relevant materials, to the class approximately one week from today. An excellent essay will show deliberate efforts to ponder and make meaning of your experience; it will present great insights, creativity, and sophisticated style. Writing mediocre material at great length will not result in a higher grade. Focus on the quality of your work. Your essay must be 2-3 pages, typed, and formatted according the class standard (double-spaced, size 12 font, Times New Roman or Calibri, 1-inch margins). To be on time, it must be printed prior to class and handed in on paper on the due date.

* * *

1

*There were times when I could not afford to sacrifice the bloom of the present moment to any work, whether of the head or hands.... Sometimes, in a summer morning, having taken my accustomed bath, I sat in my sunny doorway from sunrise till noon, rapt in a reverie, amidst the pines and hickories and sumachs, in undisturbed solitude and stillness, while the birds sing around or flitted noiseless through the house, until by the sun falling in at my west window, or the noise of some traveller's wagon on the distant highway, I was reminded of the lapse of time. I grew in those seasons like corn in the night, and they were far better than any work of the hands would have been. They were not time subtracted from my life, but so much over and above my usual allowance. I realized what the Orientals mean by contemplation and the forsaking of works.... This was sheer idleness to my fellow-townsmen, no doubt; but if the birds and flowers had tried me by their standard, I should have been found wanting. A man must find his occasions in himself, it is true. (from "Sounds" in *Walden*, page 288)*

- A. Preparation to write – Forsake your work. Take yourself away alone to a quiet place in nature: woods, field, lake, seaside, etc. Go into the wild. Stay there for at least one full hour. If you go to the sea, avoid where others are sunbathing; if you venture to the woods, consider following a trail unfamiliar to you. Bring nothing with you (except maybe a blanket to sit on, some bug spray, and your notebook). This experiment will work best if you leave your phone behind. Do tell someone where you are going, though. Repeat visits over the week are encouraged.
- B. Reflection – Write a reflective essay on this experience. How did your mind occupy itself? At some point in your essay, perhaps at its end, respond to some or all of Thoreau's quotation above.

*Meanwhile my beans, the length of whose rows, added together, was seven miles already planted, were impatient to be hoed, for the earliest had grown considerably before the latest were in the ground....What shall I learn of beans or beans of me? My auxiliaries are the dews and rains which water this dry soil....my enemies are worms, cool days, and most of all woodchucks....When I was four years old, as well I remember, I was brought from Boston to this my native town, through these very woods and this field, to the pond...The pines still stand here older than I; or, if some have fallen, I have cooked my supper with their stumps, and a new growth is rising all around, preparing another aspect for new infant eyes....In the course of the summer it appeared by the arrowheads which I turned up in hoeing, that an extinct nation had anciently dwelt here and planted corn and beans ere white men came to clear the land....As I drew a still fresher soil about the rows with my hoe, I disturbed the ashes of unchronicled nations who in primeval years lived under these heavens...It was a singular experience that long acquaintance which I cultivated beans, what with planting, and hoeing, and harvesting, and threshing, and picking over and selling them. - the last was the hardest of all, - I might add eating, for I did taste. I was determined to know beans. (from "The Bean Field" in *Walden*, pages 327-329)*

- A. Preparation to write – Determine to know something deeply and variously. Choose your favorite fresh fruit or vegetable. Get one. Sit with it for a period of time without touching it. Put it in your hand, close your eyes, and “know” it through your fingers. Smell it for at least one full minute. Take a bite, if it’s edible in its raw state. Record your observations in writing. Sketch it or take a photograph. Place your fruit or vegetable on a plate and let it sit, undisturbed, for a week. Meanwhile, go to a gardening resource and gather facts about its cultivation or growing habits. What conditions does it require? What are its enemies? How many varieties are there? Research its uses. Research its past – has it always been used as it is today? (For example, in the early 1800s, apple pie was not served as dessert, but rather as part of the entrée.) Wow far back in time is there evidence of its consumption? Is it linked to any cultural traditions? Check several cookbooks (or try Pinterest) and determine how many ways it can be prepared. Check the aisles of the supermarket. In how many forms can this fruit or vegetable be purchased? Talk to friends and family members to find out what they know of this food. Finally, at the end of the week, return to the plate and observe your fruit or vegetable again. Record any new observations, especially considering that you know more about it now. Sketch or photograph it for a final time.
- B. Reflection – How does knowing about something in depth alter your perception of that item? What happens to us when we determine to know something well? Refer to the above activity to illustrate your insights and conclusions. What other things besides foodstuffs do you think would benefit from our knowing in depth? Comment on some or all of Thoreau’s quotation at some point in your writing.
- C. Creation – Either bring in the week-old fruit/veggie, or create something (visual, edible, artistic, etc.) using a fresh version of it to share with the class as part of your presentation.

3

*I had not lived there a week before my feet wore a path from my door to the pondside; and though it is five or six years since I trod it, it is still quite distinct. It is true, I fear, that others may have fallen into it, and so helped keep it open. The surface of the earth is soft and dusty, then must be the highways of the world, how deep the ruts of tradition and conformity. (from "Conclusion" in *Walden*, pages 459-460)*

- A. Preparation to write – Break out of the rut! Choose one particular pattern that is a regular part of your life – perhaps the way you drive to a friend's house, the order of your morning or bedtime routine, the way you typically spend a Sunday afternoon...and do it in a totally new and different way. Do things in reverse or cease doing them entirely; begin doing something else that you have never done before as part of your routine. Deliberately alter the pattern of your past behavior in such a way that you are essentially, walking on untrod ground. The more often you practice this change over the week, the more you will discover.
- B. Reflection – Describe the changes you made, but focus most of your essay on the effect they had on you. How did it make you feel to break routine? What was easy? Difficult? Did anyone notice or question the changes you made to your routine? What did you learn about yourself? Routines? Human nature? At some point in your essay, comment on Thoreau's quotation.

4

*We are often reminded that if there were bestowed on us the wealth of Croesus, our aims must still be the same, and our means essentially the same. Moreover, if you are restricted in your range by poverty, if you cannot buy books and newspapers, for instance, you are but confined to the most significant and vital experiences; you are compelled to deal with the material which yields the most sugar and the most starch. It is life near the bone where it is sweetest. You are defended from being a trifler. No man loses ever on a lower level by magnanimity on a higher. Superfluous wealth can buy superfluities only. Money is not required to buy one necessary of the soul. (from "Conclusion" in *Walden*, page 464)*

- A. Preparation to write – Go three to five days without spending any money. Prepare for this by reviewing your typical expenditures: Do you buy school lunches or iced coffees from Dunkin Donuts? Buy Doritos from vending machines? Order songs on iTunes? Shop at the mall on Fridays? What will you need to do as alternatives to these activities, e.g. do you have to get up earlier to make a lunch to avoid buying one? *It is not acceptable to stockpile lunches, snacks, Amazon orders, etc.!* To appreciate the intent of this assignment, it is necessary for you to do without.
- B. Reflection – Evaluate the experience: Of what did you feel deprived? What did you not really miss? What creative alternatives did you discover? Did you surprise yourself in any way as a response to this activity? What do your reactions to this assignment show you about your priorities? Based on this assignment, how do you differentiate between "need" and "want"? Comment on Thoreau's quotation somewhere in your essay.

*As for Clothing, to come at once to the practical part of the question, perhaps we are led oftener by the love of novelty and a regard for the opinions of men, in procuring it, than by a true utility. Let him who has work to do recollect that the object of clothing is, first, to retain the vital heat, and secondly, in this state of society, to cover nakedness, and he may judge how much of any necessary or important work may be accomplished without adding to his wardrobe....No man ever stood the lower in my estimation for having a patch in his clothes; yet I am sure that there is greater anxiety, commonly, to have fashionable, or at least clean and unpatched clothes, than to have a sound conscience....I sometimes try my acquaintances by such tests as this; -- Who could wear a patch, or two extra seams only, over the knee? Most behave as if they believed that their prospects for life would be ruined if they should do it. It would be easier for them to hobble to town with a broken leg than with a broken pantaloon. (from "Economy" in *Walden*, page 214)*

- A. Preparation to write – Wear the same outfit for five days straight, laundering it as necessary but always dressing into it again each day. Don't announce to anyone that you are doing this, but be prepared to explain yourself if asked. Does anyone notice that your outfit isn't changing? On your phone or in a notebook, keep a log of your feelings and observations throughout the day.
- B. Reflection – How did what you were wearing impact your life each day? Describe your attitude about this experiment as the days passed – were you anxious? More comfortable than ever? Did not having to plan an outfit each day affect your thinking? What observations did you make about yourself – your time, needs, concerns – and about the American culture in which you live as a result of this experiment? What importance do most of us place on clothing, and do you agree with it? Conclude by responding to all or part of Thoreau's quotation above.

*Our life is frittered away by detail. An honest man has hardly need to count more than his ten fingers, or in extreme cases he may add his ten toes, and lump the rest. Simplicity, simplicity, simplicity! I say, let your affairs be as two or three, and not a hundred or a thousand; instead of a million count half a dozen, and keep your accounts on your thumb-nail....Simplify, simplify. Instead of three meals a day, if it be necessary eat but one; instead of a hundred dishes, five; and reduce other things in proportion. (from "Where I Lived and What I Lived For" in *Walden*, page 271)*

- A. Preparation to write - Thoreau's cabin at Walden Pond measured 10'x15', similar in measurement to most "tiny houses" today. Pretend that you are moving into a tiny house. (If you have not heard of the tiny house trend, acquaint yourself with this movement online or by watching HGTV.) Go outside to your yard or driveway with a measuring tape and some chalk/string, and measure out a square by these dimensions. Stand in your "house". Judge how much room you will have for your things, figuring in necessary furniture and appliances. Next, pack for the move. Go through your room, your closet, and each drawer in your desk to determine which things are essential to bring and which you will give away. Visit the kitchen, bathroom, and garage, for you will need more than just your clothes and toothbrush to live. Obtain boxes or containers for your move and actually pack your things into them. Make sure to pack breakables carefully. Finally, carry your boxes out to your square. Photo-document the entire process from start to finish and show the class these pictures when you present.
- B. Reflection - Is it easy to "simplify"? What do details, like material things, do to us, negatively and positively? What can be gained by simplifying the number of physical things in our lives? By having to sort, take inventory of, and literally carry the weight of your things, what have you discovered about yourself and about the human relationship to the physical world? React to Thoreau's quotation at some point in your reflection.

Conversation Starters

Henry David Thoreau writes in his chapter, "Reading" in *Walden*:

The book exists for us...[to] explain our miracles and reveal new ones.
The present unutterable things we find somewhere uttered.

Students are directors of daily class discussion, not the teacher! You will be challenged by Thoreau's writing, so each night when I ask you to read, I want you to seek out the passages that resound with you, the ones that strike you as compelling, beautiful, curious, or bothersome. These are the passages on which we will focus our attention. My hope is you will find your "present unutterable things...uttered" in Thoreau's essays and maybe even discover a "new miracle" to share with the class.

Directions

1. While reading, underline all of your favorite quotations as well as ones that perplex you or those with which you disagree. Thoreau says that "To read well, that is, to read true books in a true spirit, is a noble exercise, and one that will task the reader more than any exercise which the customs of the day esteem. It requires training such as the athletes underwent." Since I tend to assign five to ten pages of Thoreau's essays, I expect you will spend as much time reading these as you would spend reading twenty pages in a less challenging text. Rigor is a good quality to work at.
2. After reading, create a heading on a new page in your notebook titled "Day 1" followed by the date and titles of assigned readings. (You will need to rip the page out and turn it in then next day. Subsequent entries will be "Day 2", "Day 3", etc.) Record two of your underlined quotations and beneath each, write your commentary in preparation for tomorrow's discussion. Your commentaries must answer each of these questions and be in paragraph form: *What do you think you noticed in the reading that no one else did? What does the quote mean to you? Why are you drawn to it? Why should your peers pay attention to it also?*

Grading

- I will collect and grade your conversation starters for completion and effort.
10 points = Completed on time; thoughtful and detailed, legible writing
5 points = One day late but thoughtful, or on time but showing weak effort
0 points = Incomplete or illegible
- You will also earn one grade for the quality of your vocal participation. See the rubric on the reverse side.

Participation Rubric

An energetic discussion is what makes an English class enjoyable to attend. Use your voice to make our class one you'll look forward to! Your vocal participation in daily discussions, as well as your focus during in-class activities and writing counts a good deal: it is **worth 15% of your quarterly grade**. If you make it your goal to **contribute to the learning of others**, just think of how much more you will learn from your peers each day when everyone is engaged in the discussion.

A note about technology: Smartphones, laptops, and other electronic devices can be both aids and impediments to your education. **Unless I give you specific instructions to use your phone, computer, etc., I expect all devices to be turned off and stored out of sight for the duration of our class period.** I will confiscate any device for the day that I deem a distraction to the goals of our class.

I enter two Participation Grades per quarter, one mid-way, and one at the conclusion. Here are the criteria by which I grade participation:

- A You always make a commendable effort to contribute to our class. In discussion, you make insightful comments or ask unique questions that enhance your peers' learning and deepen their understanding of the literature. You make it a habit to open the book and quote from the text to support your ideas, always guiding us to discover something new. You invigorate the room with your enthusiasm and model positive leadership. You complete your work with rigor and focus.
- B You frequently make a positive impact on the learning of your peers. In discussion, you build on others' ideas, offer opinions and ask questions that enrich our discussion, though not as often or to the degree to earn an "A". You refer to specific details in the literature to support your ideas. You work cooperatively with others and complete your work with dedication and focus.
- C You occasionally make an impact on the learning of your peers. You always appear to be listening attentively and sometimes, you participate vocally; you may support what peers say by repeating their commentary, referring to basic details from the literature without actually quoting the literature, or asking clarifying questions. You let others take the lead on assignments and contribute minimally, but always follow directions given to you. You complete your work but could put more effort into it.
- D You do not participate vocally in class discussion and sometimes appear to not be listening, though you do not distract others. You do not engage with your peers or play an active role in assignments. You do minimal work with weak effort.
- F You make it difficult for others to engage or focus in class. You distract yourself and/or others, fail to listen, ignore instructions, disrespect fellow students or the teacher, or make no progress on assignments. You may have excessive absences or frequently arrive late to class.

1 - From "Where I Lived, and What I Lived For" (pages 271-272)

AT A CERTAIN season of our life we are accustomed to consider every spot as the possible site of a house. I have thus surveyed the country on every side within a dozen miles of where I live. In imagination I have bought all the farms in succession, for all were to be bought, and I knew their price. I walked over each farmer's premises, tasted his wild apples, discoursed on husbandry with him, took his farm at his price, at any price, mortgaging it to him in my mind; even put a higher price on it- took everything but a deed of it- took his word for his deed, for I dearly love to talk- cultivated it, and him too to some extent, I trust, and withdrew when I had enjoyed it long enough, leaving him to carry it on. This experience entitled me to be regarded as a sort of real-estate broker by my friends. Wherever I sat, there I might live, and the landscape radiated from me accordingly. What is a house but a sedes, a seat?-better if a country seat. I discovered many a site for a house not likely to be soon improved, which some might have thought too far from the village, but to my eyes the village was too far from it. Well, there I might live, I said; and there I did live, for an hour, a summer and a winter life; saw how I could let the years run off, buffet the winter through, and see the spring come in. The future inhabitants of this region, wherever they may place their houses, may be sure that they have been anticipated. An afternoon sufficed to lay out the land into orchard, wood-lot, and pasture, and to decide what fine oaks or pines should be left to stand before the door, and whence each blasted tree could be seen to the best advantage; and then I let it lie, fallow, perchance, for a man is rich in proportion to the number of things which he can afford to let alone.

My imagination carried me so far that I even had the refusal of several farms- the refusal was all I wanted- but I never got my fingers burned by actual possession. The nearest that I came to actual

possession was when I bought the Hollowell place, and had begun to sort my seeds, and collected materials with which to make a wheelbarrow to carry it on or off with; but before the owner gave me a deed of it, his wife- every man has such a wife- changed her mind and wished to keep it, and he offered me ten dollars to release him. Now, to speak the truth, I had but ten cents in the world, and it surpassed my arithmetic to tell, if I was that man who had ten cents, or who had a farm, or ten dollars, or all together. However, I let him keep the ten dollars and the farm too, for I had carried it far enough; or rather, to be generous, I sold him the farm for just what I gave for it, and, as he was not a rich man, made him a present of ten dollars, and still had my ten cents, and seeds, and materials for a wheelbarrow left. I found thus that I had been a rich man without any damage to my poverty. But I retained the landscape, and I have since annually carried off what it yielded without a wheelbarrow. With respect to landscapes,

"I am monarch of all I survey,
My right there is none to dispute."

I have frequently seen a poet withdraw, having enjoyed the most valuable part of a farm, while the crusty farmer supposed that he had got a few wild apples only. Why, the owner does not know it for many years when a poet has put his farm in rhyme, the most admirable kind of invisible fence, has fairly impounded it, milked it, skimmed it, and got all the cream, and left the farmer only the skimmed milk.

....

Still we live meanly, like ants; though the fable tells us that we were long ago changed into men; like pygmies we fight with cranes; it is error upon error, and clout upon clout, and our best virtue has for its occasion a superfluous and evitable wretchedness. Our life is frittered away by detail. An honest man has hardly need to count

SELECTED READINGS from *WALDEN* by HENRY DAVID THOREAU
Gr. 11 Honors American Lit. with Mrs. DelMonico

more than his ten fingers, or in extreme cases he may add his ten toes, and lump the rest. Simplicity, simplicity, simplicity! I say, let your affairs be as two or three, and not a hundred or a thousand; instead of a million count half a dozen, and keep your accounts on your thumb-nail. In the midst of this chopping sea of civilized life, such are the clouds and storms and quicksands and thousand-and-one items to be allowed for, that a man has to live, if he would not founder and go to the bottom and not make his port at all, by dead reckoning, and he must be a great calculator indeed who succeeds. Simplify, simplify. Instead of three meals a day, if it be necessary eat but one; instead of a hundred dishes, five; and reduce other things in proportion. Our life is like a German Confederacy, made up of petty states, with its boundary forever fluctuating, so that even a German cannot tell you how it is bounded at any moment. The nation itself, with all its so-called internal improvements, which, by the way are all external and superficial, is just such an unwieldy and overgrown establishment, cluttered with furniture and tripped up by its own traps, ruined by luxury and heedless expense, by want of calculation and a worthy aim, as the million households in the land; and the only cure for it, as for them, is in a rigid economy, a stern and more than Spartan simplicity of life and elevation of purpose. It lives too fast. Men think that it is essential that the Nation have commerce, and export ice, and talk through a telegraph, and ride thirty miles an hour, without a doubt, whether they do or not; but whether we should live like baboons or like men, is a little uncertain. If we do not get out sleepers, and forge rails, and devote days and nights to the work, but go to tinkering upon our lives to improve them, who will build railroads? And if railroads are not built, how shall we get to heaven in season? But if we stay at home and mind our business, who will want railroads? We do not ride on the railroad; it rides upon us. Did you ever think what those sleepers are that underlie the railroad? Each one is a man, an Irishman, or a Yankee man. The rails are laid on them, and they are covered with sand, and the cars run smoothly over them. They are sound sleepers, I assure you. And every few

years a new lot is laid down and run over; so that, if some have the pleasure of riding on a rail, others have the misfortune to be ridden upon. And when they run over a man that is walking in his sleep, a supernumerary sleeper in the wrong position, and wake him up, they suddenly stop the cars, and make a hue and cry about it, as if this were an exception. I am glad to know that it takes a gang of men for every five miles to keep the sleepers down and level in their beds as it is, for this is a sign that they may sometime get up again.

1 - From "Conclusion" (pages 463-464)

However mean your life is, meet it and live it; do not shun it and call it hard names. It is not so bad as you are. It looks poorest when you are richest. The fault-finder will find faults even in paradise. Love your life, poor as it is. You may perhaps have some pleasant, thrilling, glorious hours, even in a poor-house. The setting sun is reflected from the windows of the almshouse as brightly as from the rich man's abode; the snow melts before its door as early in the spring. I do not see but a quiet mind may live as contentedly there, and have as cheering thoughts, as in a palace. The town's poor seem to me often to live the most independent lives of any. Maybe they are simply great enough to receive without misgiving. Most think that they are above being supported by the town; but it oftener happens that they are not above supporting themselves by dishonest means, which should be more disreputable. Cultivate poverty like a garden herb, like sage. Do not trouble yourself much to get new things, whether clothes or friends. Turn the old; return to them. Things do not change; we change. Sell your clothes and keep your thoughts. God will see that you do not want society. If I were confined to a corner of a garret all my days, like a spider, the world would be just as large to me while I had my thoughts about me. The philosopher said: "From an army of three divisions one can take away its general, and put it in disorder; from the man the most abject and vulgar one cannot take away his thought." Do not seek so anxiously to be

developed, to subject yourself to many influences to be played on; it is all dissipation. Humility like darkness reveals the heavenly lights. The shadows of poverty and meanness gather around us, "and lo! Creation widens to our view." We are often reminded that if there were bestowed on us the wealth of Croesus, our aims must still be the same, and our means essentially the same. Moreover, if you are restricted in your range by poverty, if you cannot buy books and newspapers, for instance, you are but confined to the most significant and vital experiences; you are compelled to deal with the material which yields the most sugar and the most starch. It is life near the bone where it is sweetest. You are defended from being a trifle. No man loses ever on a lower level by magnanimity on a higher. Superfluous wealth can buy superfluities only. Money is not required to buy one necessary of the soul.

1 - From "Baker Farm" (pages 363-368)

Thoreau writes about his encounter with John Field, a poor Irish immigrant, and his family.

Meanwhile my host told me his story, how hard he worked "boggling" for a neighboring farmer, turning up a meadow with a spade or bog hoe at the rate of ten dollars an acre and the use of the land with manure for one year, and his little broad-faced son worked cheerfully at his father's side the while, not knowing how poor a bargain the latter had made. I tried to help him with my experience, telling him that he was one of my nearest neighbors, and that I too, who came a-fishing here, and looked like a loafer, was getting my living like himself; that I lived in a tight, light, and clean house, which hardly cost more than the annual rent of such a ruin as his commonly amounts to; and how, if he chose, he might in a month or two build himself a palace of his own; that I did not use tea, nor coffee, nor butter, nor milk, nor fresh meat, and so did not have to work to get them; again, as I did not work hard, I did not have to eat hard, and it cost me but a trifle for my food; but as he began with tea, and coffee, and butter, and milk, and beef, he had to work hard to

pay for them, and when he had worked hard he had to eat hard again to repair the waste of his system- and so it was as broad as it was long, indeed it was broader than it was long, for he was discontented and wasted his life into the bargain; and yet he had rated it as a gain in coming to America, that here you could get tea, and coffee, and meat every day. But the only true America is that country where you are at liberty to pursue such a mode of life as may enable you to do without these, and where the state does not endeavor to compel you to sustain the slavery and war and other superfluous expenses which directly or indirectly result from the use of such things....But alas! the culture of an Irishman is an enterprise to be undertaken with a sort of moral bog hoe. I told him, that as he worked so hard at bogging, he required thick boots and stout clothing, which yet were soon soiled and worn out, but I wore light shoes and thin clothing, which cost not half so much, though he might think that I was dressed like a gentleman (which, however, was not the case), and in an hour or two, without labor, but as a recreation, I could, if I wished, catch as many fish as I should want for two days, or earn enough money to support me a week. If he and his family would live simply, they might all go a-huckleberrying in the summer for their amusement. John heaved a sigh at this, and his wife stared with arms a-kimbo, and both appeared to be wondering if they had capital enough to begin such a course with, or arithmetic enough to carry it through. It was sailing by dead reckoning to them, and they saw not clearly how to make their port so; therefore I suppose they still take life bravely, after their fashion, face to face, giving it tooth and nail, not having skill to split its massive columns with any fine entering wedge, and rout it in detail;- thinking to deal with it roughly, as one should handle a thistle. But they fight at an overwhelming disadvantage- living, John Field, alas! without arithmetic, and failing so.

2 - From "Economy" (pages 214-217)

As for Clothing, to come at once to the practical part of the question, perhaps we are led oftener by the love of novelty and a regard for the opinions of men, in procuring it, than by a true utility. Let him who has work to do recollect that the object of clothing is, first, to retain the vital heat, and secondly, in this state of society, to cover nakedness, and he may judge how much of any necessary or important work may be accomplished without adding to his wardrobe. Kings and queens who wear a suit but once, though made by some tailor or dressmaker to their majesties, cannot know the comfort of wearing a suit that fits. They are no better than wooden horses to hang the clean clothes on. Every day our garments become more assimilated to ourselves, receiving the impress of the wearer's character, until we hesitate to lay them aside without such delay and medical appliances and some such solemnity even as our bodies. No man ever stood the lower in my estimation for having a patch in his clothes; yet I am sure that there is greater anxiety, commonly, to have fashionable, or at least clean and unpatched clothes, than to have a sound conscience. But even if the rent is not mended, perhaps the worst vice betrayed is improvidence. I sometimes try my acquaintances by such tests as this- Who could wear a patch, or two extra seams only, over the knee? Most behave as if they believed that their prospects for life would be ruined if they should do it. It would be easier for them to hobble to town with a broken leg than with a broken pantaloons. Often if an accident happens to a gentleman's legs, they can be mended; but if a similar accident happens to the legs of his pantaloons, there is no help for it; for he considers, not what is truly respectable, but what is respected. We know but few men, a great many coats and breeches. Dress a scarecrow in your last shift, you standing shiftless by, who would not soonest salute the scarecrow? Passing a cornfield the other day, close by a hat and coat on a stake, I recognized the owner of the farm. He was only a little

more weather-beaten than when I saw him last. I have heard of a dog that barked at every stranger who approached his master's premises with clothes on, but was easily quieted by a naked thief. It is an interesting question how far men would retain their relative rank if they were divested of their clothes. Could you, in such a case, tell surely of any company of civilized men which belonged to the most respected class? When Madam Pfeiffer, in her adventurous travels round the world, from east to west, had got so near home as Asiatic Russia, she says that she felt the necessity of wearing other than a travelling dress, when she went to meet the authorities, for she "was now in a civilized country, where... people are judged of by their clothes." Even in our democratic New England towns the accidental possession of wealth, and its manifestation in dress and equipage alone, obtain for the possessor almost universal respect. But they yield such respect, numerous as they are, are so far heathen, and need to have a missionary sent to them. Beside, clothes introduced sewing, a kind of work which you may call endless; a woman's dress, at least, is never done.

A man who has at length found something to do will not need to get a new suit to do it in; for him the old will do, that has lain dusty in the garret for an indeterminate period. Old shoes will serve a hero longer than they have served his valet- if a hero ever has a valet- bare feet are older than shoes, and he can make them do. Only they who go to soirees and legislative balls must have new coats, coats to change as often as the man changes in them. But if my jacket and trousers, my hat and shoes, are fit to worship God in, they will do; will they not? Who ever saw his old clothes- his old coat, actually worn out, resolved into its primitive elements, so that it was not a deed of charity to bestow it on some poor boy, by him perchance to be bestowed on some poorer still, or shall we say richer, who could do with less? I say, beware of all enterprises that require new clothes, and not rather a new wearer of clothes. If there is not a new man, how can the new clothes be made to fit? If you have any enterprise

before you, try it in your old clothes. All men want, not something to do with, but something to do, or rather something to be. Perhaps we should never procure a new suit, however ragged or dirty the old, until we have so conducted, so enterprised or sailed in some way, that we feel like new men in the old, and that to retain it would be like keeping new wine in old bottles. Our moulting season, like that of the fowls, must be a crisis in our lives. The loon retires to solitary ponds to spend it. Thus also the snake casts its slough, and the caterpillar its wormy coat, by an internal industry and expansion; for clothes are but our outmost cuticle and mortal coil. Otherwise we shall be found sailing under false colors, and be inevitably cashiered at last by our own opinion, as well as that of mankind.

We don garment after garment, as if we grew like exogenous plants by addition without. Our outside and often thin and fanciful clothes are our epidermis, or false skin, which partakes not of our life, and may be stripped off here and there without fatal injury; our thicker garments, constantly worn, are our cellular integument, or cortex; but our shirts are our liber, or true bark, which cannot be removed without girdling and so destroying the man. I believe that all races at some seasons wear something equivalent to the shirt. It is desirable that a man be clad so simply that he can lay his hands on himself in the dark, and that he live in all respects so compactly and preparedly that, if an enemy take the town, he can, like the old philosopher, walk out the gate empty-handed without anxiety. While one thick garment is, for most purposes, as good as three thin ones, and cheap clothing can be obtained at prices really to suit customers; while a thick coat can be bought for five dollars, which will last as many years, thick pantaloons for two dollars, cowhide boots for a dollar and a half a pair, a summer hat for a quarter of a dollar, and a winter cap for sixty-two and a half cents, or a better be made at home at a nominal cost, where is he so poor that, clad in such a suit, of his own earning, there will not be found wise men to do him reverence?

When I ask for a garment of a particular form, my tailor tells me gravely, "They do not make them so now," not emphasizing the "They" at all, as if she quoted an authority as impersonal as the Fates, and I find it difficult to get made what I want, simply because she cannot believe that I mean what I say, that I am so rash. When I hear this oracular sentence, I am for a moment absorbed in thought, emphasizing to myself each word separately that I may come at the meaning of it, that I may find out by what degree of consanguinity "They" are related to me, and what authority they may have in an affair which affects me so nearly; and, finally, I am inclined to answer her with equal mystery, and without any more emphasis of the "they"- "It is true, they did not make them so recently, but they do now." Of what use this measuring of me if she does not measure my character, but only the breadth of my shoulders, as it were a peg to bang the coat on? We worship not the Graces, nor the Parcee, but Fashion. She spins and weaves and cuts with full authority. The head monkey at Paris puts on a traveller's cap, and all the monkeys in America do the same. I sometimes despair of getting anything quite simple and honest done in this world by the help of men. They would have to be passed through a powerful press first, to squeeze their old notions out of them, so that they would not soon get upon their legs again; and then there would be some one in the company with a maggot in his head, hatched from an egg deposited there nobody knows when, for not even fire kills these things, and you would have lost your labor. Nevertheless, we will not forget that some Egyptian wheat was handed down to us by a mummy.

On the whole, I think that it cannot be maintained that dressing has in this or any country risen to the dignity of an art. At present men make shift to wear what they can get. Like shipwrecked sailors, they put on what they can find on the beach, and at a little distance, whether of space or time, laugh at each other's masquerade. Every generation laughs at the old fashions, but follows religiously the new.

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3 - From "Spring" (pages 454-455)

Our village life would stagnate if it were not for the unexplored forests and meadows which surround it. We need the tonic of wildness, - to wade sometimes in marshes where the bittern and the meadow-hen lurk, and hear the booming of the snipe.... At the same time that we are earnest to explore and learn all things, we require that all things be mysterious and unexplorable, that land and sea be infinitely wild, unsurveyed and unfathomed by us because unfathomable. We can never have enough of nature. We must be refreshed by the sight of inexhaustible vigor, vast and titanic features, the sea-coast with its wrecks, the wilderness with its living and its decaying trees, the thunder-cloud, and the rain which lasts three weeks.... We need to witness our own limits transgressed, and some life pasturing freely where we never wander.

3 - From "The Village" (page 338)

It is a surprising and memorable, as well as valuable experience, to be lost in the woods any time. Often in a snow-storm, even by day, one will come out upon a well-known road and yet find it impossible to tell which way leads to the village. Though he knows that he has travelled it a thousand times, he cannot recognize a feature in it, but it is as strange to him as if it were a road in Siberia. By night, of course, the perplexity is infinitely greater. In our most trivial walks, we are constantly, though unconsciously, steering like pilots by certain well-known beacons and headlands, and if we go beyond our usual course we still carry in our minds the bearing of some neighboring cape; and not till we are completely lost, or turned round- for a man needs only to be turned round once with his eyes shut in this world to be lost- do we appreciate the vastness and strangeness of nature. Every man has to learn the points of compass again as often as he awakes, whether from sleep or any abstraction.

Not till we are lost, in other words not till we have lost the world, do we begin to find ourselves, and realize where we are and the infinite extent of our relations.

3 - From "Solitude" (pages 303-309)

THIS IS A delicious evening, when the whole body is one sense, and imbibes delight through every pore. I go and come with a strange liberty in Nature, a part of herself. As I walk along the stony shore of the pond in my shirt-sleeves, though it is cool as well as cloudy and windy, and I see nothing special to attract me, all the elements are unusually congenial to me. The bullfrogs trump to usher in the night, and the note of the whip-poor-will is borne on the rippling wind from over the water. Sympathy with the fluttering alder and poplar leaves almost takes away my breath; yet, like the lake, my serenity is rippled but not ruffled. These small waves raised by the evening wind are as remote from storm as the smooth reflecting surface. Though it is now dark, the mind still blows and roars in the wood, the waves still dash, and some creatures lull the rest with their notes. The repose is never complete. The wildest animals do not repose, but seek their prey now; the fox, and skunk, and rabbit, now roam the fields and woods without fear. They are Nature's watchmen- links which connect the days of animated life.

When I return to my house I find that visitors have been there and left their cards, either a bunch of flowers, or a wreath of evergreen, or a name in pencil on a yellow walnut leaf or a chip. They who come rarely to the woods take some little piece of the forest into their hands to play with by the way, which they leave, either intentionally or accidentally. One has peeled a willow wand, woven it into a ring, and dropped it on my table. I could always tell if visitors had called in my absence, either by the bended twigs or grass, or the print of their shoes, and generally of what sex or age or quality they were by some slight trace left, as a flower dropped, or a bunch of grass

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plucked and thrown away, even as far off as the railroad, half a mile distant, or by the lingering odor of a cigar or pipe. Nay, I was frequently notified of the passage of a traveller along the highway sixty rods off by the scent of his pipe.

There is commonly sufficient space about us. Our horizon is never quite at our elbows. The thick wood is not just at our door, nor the pond, but somewhat is always clearing, familiar and worn by us, appropriated and fenced in some way, and reclaimed from Nature. For what reason have I this vast range and circuit, some square miles of unfrequented forest, for my privacy, abandoned to me by men? My nearest neighbor is a mile distant, and no house is visible from any place but the hill-tops within half a mile of my own. I have my horizon bounded by woods all to myself; a distant view of the railroad where it touches the pond on the one hand, and of the fence which skirts the woodland road on the other. But for the most part it is as solitary where I live as on the prairies. It is as much Asia or Africa as New England. I have, as it were, my own sun and moon and stars, and a little world all to myself. At night there was never a traveller passed my house, or knocked at my door, more than if I were the first or last man; unless it were in the spring, when at long intervals some came from the village to fish for pouts- they plainly fished much more in the Walden Pond of their own natures, and baited their hooks with darkness- but they soon retreated, usually with light baskets, and left "the world to darkness and to me," and the black kernel of the night was never profaned by any human neighborhood. I believe that men are generally still a little afraid of the dark, though the witches are all hung, and Christianity and candles have been introduced.

Yet I experienced sometimes that the most sweet and tender, the most innocent and encouraging society may be found in any natural object, even for the poor misanthrope and most melancholy man. There can be no very black melancholy to him who lives in the midst

of nature and has his senses still. There was never yet such a storm but it was Aeolian music to a healthy and innocent ear. Nothing can rightly compel a simple and brave man to a vulgar sadness. While I enjoy the friendship of the seasons I trust that nothing can make life a burden to me. The gentle rain which waters my beans and keeps me in the house today is not dreary and melancholy, but good for me too. Though it prevents my hoeing them, it is of far more worth than my hoeing. If it should continue so long as to cause the seeds to rot in the ground and destroy the potatoes in the low lands, it would still be good for the grass on the uplands, and, being good for the grass, it would be good for me. Sometimes, when I compare myself with other men, it seems as if I were more favored by the gods than they, beyond any deserts that I am conscious of; as if I had a warrant and surety at their hands which my fellows have not, and were especially guided and guarded. I do not flatter myself, but if it be possible they flatter me. I have never felt lonesome, or in the least oppressed by a sense of solitude, but once, and that was a few weeks after I came to the woods, when, for an hour, I doubted if the near neighborhood of man was not essential to a serene and healthy life. To be alone was something unpleasant. But I was at the same time conscious of a slight insanity in my mood, and seemed to foresee my recovery. In the midst of a gentle rain while these thoughts prevailed, I was suddenly sensible of such sweet and beneficent society in Nature, in the very pattering of the drops, and in every sound and sight around my house, an infinite and unaccountable friendliness all at once like an atmosphere sustaining me, as made the fancied advantages of human neighborhood insignificant, and I have never thought of them since. Every little pine needle expanded and swelled with sympathy and befriended me. I was so distinctly made aware of the presence of something kindred to me, even in scenes which we are accustomed to call wild and dreary, and also that the nearest of blood to me and humanest was not a person nor a villager, that I thought no place could ever be strange to me again.

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"Mourning untimely consumes the sad;
Few are their days in the land of the living,
Beautiful daughter of Toscar."

Some of my pleasantest hours were during the long rain-storms in the spring or fall, which confined me to the house for the afternoon as well as the forenoon, soothed by their ceaseless roar and pelting; when an early twilight ushered in a long evening in which many thoughts had time to take root and unfold themselves. In those driving northeast rains which tried the village houses so, when the maids stood ready with mop and pail in front entries to keep the deluge out, I sat behind my door in my little house, which was all entry, and thoroughly enjoyed its protection. In one heavy thunder-shower the lightning struck a large pitch pine across the pond, making a very conspicuous and perfectly regular spiral groove from top to bottom, an inch or more deep, and four or five inches wide, as you would groove a walking-stick. I passed it again the other day, and was struck with awe on looking up and beholding that mark, now more distinct than ever, where a terrific and resistless bolt came down out of the harmless sky eight years ago. Men frequently say to me, "I should think you would feel lonesome down there, and want to be nearer to folks, rainy and snowy days and nights especially." I am tempted to reply to such- This whole earth which we inhabit is but a point in space. How far apart, think you, dwell the two most distant inhabitants of yonder star, the breadth of whose disk cannot be appreciated by our instruments? Why should I feel lonely? is not our planet in the Milky Way? This which you put seems to me not to be the most important question. What sort of space is that which separates a man from his fellows and makes him solitary? I have found that no exertion of the legs can bring two minds much nearer to one another. What do we want most to dwell near to? Not to many men surely, the depot, the post-office, the bar-room, the meeting-house, the school-house, the grocery, Beacon Hill, or the Five Points, where men most congregate, but to the perennial source of our life,

whence in all our experience we have found that to issue, as the willow stands near the water and sends out its roots in that direction.
....

Any prospect of awakening or coming to life to a dead man makes indifferent all times and places. The place where that may occur is always the same, and indescribably pleasant to all our senses. For the most part we allow only outlying and transient circumstances to make our occasions. They are, in fact, the cause of our distraction. Nearest to all things is that power which fashions their being. Next to us the grandest laws are continually being executed. Next to us is not the workman whom we have hired, with whom we love so well to talk, but the workman whose work we are.

....
We are the subjects of an experiment which is not a little interesting to me. Can we not do without the society of our gossips a little while under these circumstances- have our own thoughts to cheer us? Confucius says truly, "Virtue does not remain as an abandoned orphan; it must of necessity have neighbors."

With thinking we may be beside ourselves in a sane sense. By a conscious effort of the mind we can stand aloof from actions and their consequences; and all things, good and bad, go by us like a torrent. We are not wholly involved in Nature. I may be either the driftwood in the stream, or Indra in the sky looking down on it. I may be affected by a theatrical exhibition; on the other hand, I may not be affected by an actual event which appears to concern me much more. I only know myself as a human entity; the scene, so to speak, of thoughts and affections; and am sensible of a certain doubleness by which I can stand as remote from myself as from another. However intense my experience, I am conscious of the presence and criticism of a part of me, which, as it were, is not a part of me, but spectator, sharing no experience, but taking note of it, and that is no more I than it is you. When the play, it may be the tragedy,

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of life is over, the spectator goes his way. It was a kind of fiction, a work of the imagination only, so far as he was concerned. This doubleness may easily make us poor neighbors and friends sometimes.

I find it wholesome to be alone the greater part of the time. To be in company, even with the best, is soon wearisome and dissipating. I love to be alone. I never found the companion that was so companionable as solitude. We are for the most part more lonely when we go abroad among men than when we stay in our chambers. A man thinking or working is always alone, let him be where he will. Solitude is not measured by the miles of space that intervene between a man and his fellows. The really diligent student in one of the crowded hives of Cambridge College is as solitary as a dervish in the desert. The farmer can work alone in the field or the woods all day, hoeing or chopping, and not feel lonesome, because he is employed; but when he comes home at night he cannot sit down in a room alone, at the mercy of his thoughts, but must be where he can "see the folks," and recreate, and, as he thinks, remunerate himself for his day's solitude; and hence he wonders how the student can sit alone in the house all night and most of the day without ennui and "the blues"; but he does not realize that the student, though in the house, is still at work in his field, and chopping in his woods, as the farmer in his, and in turn seeks the same recreation and society that the latter does, though it may be a more condensed form of it.

Society is commonly too cheap. We meet at very short intervals, not having had time to acquire any new value for each other. We meet at meals three times a day, and give each other a new taste of that old musty cheese that we are. We have had to agree on a certain set of rules, called etiquette and politeness, to make this frequent meeting tolerable and that we need not come to open war. We meet at the post-office, and at the sociable, and about the fireside every night; we live thick and are in each other's way, and stumble over one

another, and I think that we thus lose some respect for one another. Certainly less frequency would suffice for all important and hearty communications. Consider the girls in a factory- never alone, hardly in their dreams. It would be better if there were but one inhabitant to a square mile, as where I live. The value of a man is not in his skin, that we should touch him.

4 - From "The Ponds" (pages 350-352, 361)

A lake is the landscape's most beautiful and expressive feature. It is earth's eye; looking into which the beholder measures the depth of his own nature. The fluviatile trees next the shore are the slender eyelashes which fringe it, and the wooded hills and cliffs around are its overhanging brows.

Standing on the smooth sandy beach at the east end of the pond, in a calm September afternoon, when a slight haze makes the opposite shore-line indistinct, I have seen whence came the expression, "the glassy surface of a lake." When you invert your head, it looks like a thread of finest gossamer stretched across the valley, and gleaming against the distant pine woods, separating one stratum of the atmosphere from another... Not a fish can leap or an insect fall on the pond but it is thus reported in circling dimples, in lines of beauty, as it were the constant welling up of its fountain, the gentle pulsing of its life, the heaving of its breast. The thrills of joy and thrills of pain are undistinguishable. How peaceful the phenomena of the lake! Again the works of man shine as in the spring. Ay, every leaf and twig and stone and cobweb sparkles now at mid-afternoon as when covered with dew in a spring morning. Every motion of an oar or an insect produces a flash of light; and if an oar falls, how sweet the echo!

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In such a day, in September or October, Walden is a perfect forest mirror, set round with stones as precious to my eye as if fewer or rarer. Nothing so fair, so pure, and at the same time so large, as a lake, perchance, lies on the surface of the earth. Sky water. It needs no fence. Nations come and go without defiling it. It is a mirror which no stone can crack, whose quicksilver will never wear off, whose gilding Nature continually repairs; no storms, no dust, can dim its surface ever fresh;— a mirror in which all impurity presented to it sinks, swept and dusted by the sun's hazy brush— this the light dust-cloth— which retains no breath that is breathed on it, but sends its own to float as clouds high above its surface, and he reflected in its bosom still.

....

White Pond and Walden are great crystals on the surface of the earth, Lakes of Light. If they were permanently congealed, and small enough to be clutched, they would, perchance, be carried off by slaves, like precious stones, to adorn the heads of emperors; but being liquid, and ample, and secured to us and our successors forever, we disregard them, and run after the diamond of Kohinoor. They are too pure to have a market value; they contain no muck. How much more beautiful than our lives, how much more transparent than our characters, are they! We never learned meanness of them. How much fairer than the pool before the farmers door, in which his ducks swim! Hither the clean wild ducks come. Nature has no human inhabitant who appreciates her. The birds with their plumage and their notes are in harmony with the flowers, but what youth or maiden conspires with the wild luxuriant beauty of Nature? She flourishes most alone, far from the towns where they reside. Talk of heaven! ye disgrace earth.

4 - From "Sounds" (pages 288-298)

BUT WHILE we are confined to books, though the most select and classic, and read only particular written languages, which are

themselves but dialects and provincial, we are in danger of forgetting the language which all things and events speak without metaphor, which alone is copious and standard. Much is published, but little printed. The rays which stream through the shutter will be no longer remembered when the shutter is wholly removed. No method nor discipline can supersede the necessity of being forever on the alert. What is a course of history or philosophy, or poetry, no matter how well selected, or the best society, or the most admirable routine of life, compared with the discipline of looking always at what is to be seen? Will you be a reader, a student merely, or a seer? Read your fate, see what is before you, and walk on into futurity.

I did not read books the first summer; I hoed beans. Nay, I often did better than this. There were times when I could not afford to sacrifice the bloom of the present moment to any work, whether of the head or hands. I love a broad margin to my life. Sometimes, in a summer morning, having taken my accustomed bath, I sat in my sunny doorway from sunrise till noon, rapt in a reverie, amidst the pines and hickories and sumachs, in undisturbed solitude and stillness, while the birds sing around or flitted noiseless through the house, until by the sun falling in at my west window, or the noise of some traveller's wagon on the distant highway, I was reminded of the lapse of time. I grew in those seasons like corn in the night, and they were far better than any work of the hands would have been. They were not time subtracted from my life, but so much over and above my usual allowance. I realized what the Orientals mean by contemplation and the forsaking of works.... This was sheer idleness to my fellow-townsmen, no doubt; but if the birds and flowers had tried me by their standard, I should not have been found wanting. A man must find his occasions in himself, it is true. The natural day is very calm, and will hardly reprove his indolence.

....

As I sit at my window this summer afternoon, hawks are circling about my clearing; the tativity of wild pigeons, flying by two and

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threes athwart my view, or perching restless on the white pine boughs behind my house, gives a voice to the air; a fish hawk dimples the glassy surface of the pond and brings up a fish; a mink steals out of the marsh before my door and seizes a frog by the shore; the sedge is bending under the weight of the reed-birds fitting hither and thither; and for the last half-hour I have heard the rattle of railroad cars, now dying away and then reviving like the beat of a partridge, conveying travellers from Boston to the country . . .

The Fitchburg Railroad touches the pond about a hundred rods south of where I dwell. I usually go to the village along its causeway, and am, as it were, related to society by this link. . . . The whistle of the locomotive penetrates my woods summer and winter, sounding like the scream of a hawk sailing over some farmer's yard, informing me that many restless city merchants are arriving within the circle of the town, or adventurous country traders from the other side. As they come under one horizon, they shout their warning to get off the track to the other, heard sometimes through the circles of two towns. Here come your groceries, country; your rations, countrymen! Nor is there any man so independent on his farm that he can say them nay. And here's your pay for them! screams the countryman's whistle; timber like long battering-rams going twenty miles an hour against the city's walls, and chairs enough to seat all the weary and heavy-laden that dwell within them. With such huge and lumbering civility the country hands a chair to the city. All the Indian huckleberry hills are stripped, all the cranberry meadows are raked into the city. Up comes the cotton, down goes the woven cloth; up comes the silk, down goes the woolen; up come the books, but down goes the wit that writes them.

When I meet the engine with its train of cars moving off with planetary motion- or, rather, like a comet, for the beholder knows not if with that velocity and with that direction it will ever revisit this system, since its orbit does not look like a returning curve- with its

steam cloud like a banner streaming behind in golden and silver wreaths, like many a downy cloud which I have seen, high in the heavens, unfolding its masses to the light- as if this traveling demigod, this cloud- compeller, would ere long take the sunset sky for the livery of his train; when I hear the iron horse make the bills echo with his snort like thunder, shaking the earth with his feet, and breathing fire and smoke from his nostrils (what kind of winged horse or fiery dragon they will put into the new Mythology I don't know), it seems as if the earth had got a race now worthy to inhabit it. If all were as it seems, and men made the elements their servants for noble ends! If the cloud that hangs over the engine were the perspiration of heroic deeds, or as beneficent as that which floats over the farmer's fields, then the elements and Nature herself would cheerfully accompany men on their errands and be their escort.

I watch the passage of the morning cars with the same feeling that I do the rising of the sun, which is hardly more regular. . . . The startings and arrivals of the cars are now the epochs in the village day. They go and come with such regularity and precision, and their whistle can be heard so far, that the farmers set their clocks by them, and thus one well-conducted institution regulates a whole country. Have not men improved somewhat in punctuality since the railroad was invented? Do they not talk and think faster in the depot than they did in the stage-office? There is something electrifying in the atmosphere of the former place. I have been astonished at the miracles it has wrought; that some of my neighbors, who, I should have prophesied, once for all, would never get to Boston by so prompt a conveyance, are on hand when the bell rings. To do things "railroad fashion" is now the byword; and it is worth the while to be warned so often and so sincerely by any power to get off its track.

....

I am refreshed and expanded when the freight train rattles past me, and I smell the stores which go dispensing their odors all the way from Long Wharf to Lake Champlain, reminding me of foreign parts,

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of coral reefs, and Indian oceans, and tropical climes, and the extent of the globe. I feel more like a citizen of the world at the sight of the palm-leaf which will cover so many flaxen New England heads the next summer, the Manila hemp and cocoanut husks, the old junk, gunny bags, scrap iron, and rusty nails.

....
While these things go up other things come down. Warned by the whizzing sound, I look up from my book and see some tall pine, hewn on far northern hills, which has winged its way over the Green Mountains and the Connecticut, shot like an arrow through the township within ten minutes, and scarce another eye beholds it, going

"to be the mast
Of some great admiral."

And hark! here comes the cattle-train bearing the cattle of a thousand hills, sheepcots, stables, and cow-yards in the air, drovers with their sticks, and shepherd boys in the midst of their flocks, all but the mountain pastures, whirled along like leaves blown from the mountains by the September gales. The air is filled with the bleating of calves and sheep, and the hustling of oxen, as if a pastoral valley were going by....

What's the railroad to me?
I never go to see
Where it ends.
It fills a few hollows,
And makes banks for the swallows,
It sets the sand a-blowing,
And the blackberries a-growing,

but I cross it like a cart-path in the woods. I will not have my eyes put out and my ears spoiled by its smoke and steam and hissing.

Now that the cars are gone by and all the restless world with them, and the fishes in the pond no longer feel their rumbling, I am more alone than ever. For the rest of the long afternoon, perhaps, my meditations are interrupted only by the faint rattle of a carriage or team along the distant highway.

Sometimes, on Sundays, I heard the bells, the Lincoln, Acton, Bedford, or Concord bell, when the wind was favorable, a faint, sweet, and, as it were, natural melody, worth importing into the wilderness. At a sufficient distance over the woods this sound acquires a certain vibratory hum, as if the pine needles in the horizon were the strings of a harp which it swept. All sound heard at the greatest possible distance produces one and the same effect, a vibration of the universal lyre, just as the intervening atmosphere makes a distant ridge of earth interesting to our eyes by the azure tint it imparts to it. There came to me in this case a melody which the air had strained, and which had conversed with every leaf and needle of the wood, that portion of the sound which the elements had taken up and modulated and echoed from vale to vale. The echo is, to some extent, an original sound, and therein is the magic and charm of it. It is not merely a repetition of what was worth repeating in the bell, but partly the voice of the wood; the same trivial words and notes sung by a wood-nymph.

....

When other birds are still, the screech owls take up the strain, like mourning women their ancient u-lu-lu. Their dismal scream is truly Ben Jonsonian. Wise midnight bags! It is no honest and blunt tu-whit tu-who of the poets, but, without jesting, a most solemn graveyard ditty, the mutual consolations of suicide lovers remembering the pangs and the delights of supernal love in the infernal groves. Yet I love to hear their wailing, their doleful responses, trilled along the roadside; reminding me sometimes of music and singing birds; as if it were the dark and tearful side of music, the regrets and sighs that

4 - From "Brute Neighbors" (pages 384-387)

would fain be sung. They are the spirits, the low spirits and melancholy forebodings, of fallen souls that once in human shape night-walked the earth and did the deeds of darkness, now expiating their sins with their wailing hymns or threnodies in the scenery of their transgressions....

I rejoice that there are owls. Let them do the idiotic and maniacal hooting for men. It is a sound admirably suited to swamps and twilight woods which no day illustrates, suggesting a vast and undeveloped nature which men have not recognized. They represent the stark twilight and unsatisfied thoughts which all have....

I kept neither dog, cat, cow, pig, nor hens, so that you would have said there was a deficiency of domestic sounds; neither the chum, nor the spinning-wheel, nor even the singing of the kettle, nor the hissing of the urn, nor children crying, to comfort one. An old-fashioned man would have lost his senses or died of ennui before this. Not even rats in the wall, for they were starved out, or rather were never baited in- only squirrels on the roof and under the floor, a whip-poor-will on the ridge-pole, a blue jay screaming beneath the window, a hare or woodchuck under the house, a screech owl or a cat owl behind it, a flock of wild geese or a laughing loon on the pond, and a fox to bark in the night. Not even a lark or an oriole, those mild plantation birds, ever visited my clearing. No cockerels to crow nor hens to cackle in the yard. No yard! but unfenced nature reaching up to your very hills. A young forest growing up under your meadows, and wild sumachs and blackberry vines breaking through into your cellar; sturdy pitch pines rubbing and creaking against the shingles for want of room, their roots reaching quite under the house. Instead of a scuttle or a blind blown off in the gale- a pine tree snapped off or torn up by the roots behind your house for fuel. Instead of no path to the front-yard gate in the Great Snow- no gate- no front-yard- and no path to the civilized world.

I was witness to events of a less peaceful character. One day when I went out to my wood-pile, or rather my pile of stumps, I observed two large ants, the one red, the other much larger, nearly half an inch long, and black, fiercely contending with one another. Having once got hold they never let go, but struggled and wrestled and rolled on the chips incessantly. Looking farther, I was surprised to find that the chips were covered with such combatants, that it was not a duellum, but a bellum, a war between two races of ants, the red always pitted against the black, and frequently two red ones to one black. The legions of these Myrmidons covered all the hills and vales in my woodyard, and the ground was already strewn with the dead and dying, both red and black. It was the only battle which I have ever witnessed, the only battle-field I ever trod while the battle was raging: internecine war; the red republicans on the one hand, and the black imperialists on the other. On every side they were engaged in deadly combat, yet without any noise that I could hear, and human soldiers never fought so resolutely. I watched a couple that were fast locked in each other's embraces, in a little sunny valley amid the chips, now at noonday prepared to fight till the sun went down, or life went out. The smaller red champion had fastened himself like a vice to his adversary's front, and through all the tumblings on that field never for an instant ceased to gnaw at one of his feelers near the root, having already caused the other to go by the board; while the stronger black one dashed him from side to side, and, as I saw on looking nearer, had already divested him of several of his members. They fought with more pertinacity than bulldogs. Neither manifested the least disposition to retreat. It was evident that their battle-cry was "Conquer or die." In the meanwhile there came along a single red ant on the hillside of this valley, evidently full of excitement, who either had despatched his foe, or had not yet taken part in the battle; probably the latter, for he had lost none of his limbs; whose mother had charged him to return with his shield or upon it. Or perchance he

was some Achilles, who had nourished his wrath apart, and had now come to avenge or rescue his Patroclus. He saw this unequal combat from afar- for the blacks were nearly twice the size of the red- he drew near with rapid pace till he stood on his guard within half an inch of the combatants; then, watching his opportunity, he sprang upon the black warrior, and commenced his operations near the root of his right fore leg, leaving the foe to select among his own members; and so there were three united for life, as if a new kind of attraction had been invented which put all other locks and cements to shame....I was myself excited somewhat even as if they had been men. The more you think of it, the less the difference. And certainly there is not the fight recorded in Concord history, at least, if in the history of America, that will bear a moment's comparison with this, whether for the numbers engaged in it, or for the patriotism and heroism displayed. For numbers and for carnage it was an Austerlitz or Dresden. Concord Fight! Two killed on the patriots' side, and Luther Blanchard wounded! ...I have no doubt that it was a principle they fought for, as much as our ancestors, and not to avoid a three-penny tax on their tea; and the results of this battle will be as important and memorable to those whom it concerns as those of the battle of Bunker Hill, at least....I never learned which party was victorious, nor the cause of the war; but I felt for the rest of that day as if I had had my feelings excited and harrowed by witnessing the struggle, the ferocity and carnage, of a human battle before my door.

5 - From "Economy" (pages 236-239)

I thus found that the student who wishes for a shelter can obtain one for a lifetime at an expense not greater than the rent which he now pays annually. If I seem to boast more than is becoming, my excuse is that I brag for humanity rather than for myself; and my shortcomings and inconsistencies do not affect the truth of my

statement. Notwithstanding much cant and hypocrisy- chaff which I find it difficult to separate from my wheat, but for which I am as sorry as any man- I will breathe freely and stretch myself in this respect, it is such a relief to both the moral and physical system; and I am resolved that I will not through humility become the devil's attorney. I will endeavor to speak a good word for the truth. At Cambridge College the mere rent of a student's room, which is only a little larger than my own, is thirty dollars each year, though the corporation had the advantage of building thirty-two side by side and under one roof, and the occupant suffers the inconvenience of many and noisy neighbors, and perhaps a residence in the fourth story. I cannot but think that if we had more true wisdom in these respects, not only less education would be needed, because, forsooth, more would already have been acquired, but the pecuniary expense of getting an education would in a great measure vanish. Those conveniences which the student requires at Cambridge or elsewhere cost him or somebody else ten times as great a sacrifice of life as they would with proper management on both sides. Those things for which the most money is demanded are never the things which the student most wants. Tuition, for instance, is an important item in the term bill, while for the far more valuable education which he gets by associating with the most cultivated of his contemporaries no charge is made. The mode of founding a college is, commonly, to get up a subscription of dollars and cents, and then, following blindly the principles of a division of labor to its extreme- a principle which should never be followed but with circumspection- to call in a contractor who makes this a subject of speculation, and he employs Irishmen or other operatives actually to lay the foundations, while the students that are to be are said to be fitting themselves for it; and for these oversights successive generations have to pay. I think that it would be better than this, for the students, or those who desire to be benefited by it, even to lay the foundation themselves. The student who secures his coveted leisure and retirement by systematically shirking any labor necessary to man obtains but an ignoble and

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unprofitable leisure, defrauding himself of the experience which alone can make leisure fruitful. "But," says one, "you do not mean that the students should go to work with their hands instead of their heads?" I do not mean that exactly, but I mean something which he might think a good deal like that; I mean that they should not play life, or study it merely, while the community supports them at this expensive game, but earnestly live it from beginning to end. How could youths better learn to live than by at once trying the experiment of living? Methinks this would exercise their minds as much as mathematics. If I wished a boy to know something about the arts and sciences, for instance, I would not pursue the common course, which is merely to send him into the neighborhood of some professor, where anything is professed and practised but the art of life;- to survey the world through a telescope or a microscope, and never with his natural eye; to study chemistry, and not learn how his bread is made, or mechanics, and not learn how it is earned; to discover new satellites to Neptune, and not detect the moles in his eyes, or to what vagabond he is a satellite himself; or to be devoured by the monsters that swarm all around him, while contemplating the monsters in a drop of vinegar. Which would have advanced the most at the end of a month- the boy who had made his own jackknife from the ore which he had dug and smelted, reading as much as would be necessary for this- or the boy who had attended the lectures on metallurgy at the Institute in the meanwhile, and had received a Rodgers penknife from his father? Which would be most likely to cut his fingers?... To my astonishment I was informed on leaving college that I had studied navigation!- why, if I had taken one turn down the harbor I should have known more about it. Even the poor student studies and is taught only political economy, while that economy of living which is synonymous with philosophy is not even sincerely professed in our colleges. The consequence is, that while he is reading Adam Smith, Ricardo, and Say, he runs his father in debt irretrievably.

As with our colleges, so with a hundred "modern improvements"; there is an illusion about them; there is not always a positive advance. The devil goes on exacting compound interest to the last for his early share and numerous succeeding investments in them. Our inventions are wont to be pretty toys, which distract our attention from serious things. They are but improved means to an unimproved end, an end which it was already but too easy to arrive at; as railroads lead to Boston or New York. We are in great haste to construct a magnetic telegraph from Maine to Texas; but Maine and Texas, it may be, have nothing important to communicate. Either is in such a predicament as the man who was earnest to be introduced to a distinguished deaf woman, but when he was presented, and one end of her ear trumpet was put into his hand, had nothing to say. As if the main object were to talk fast and not to talk sensibly. We are eager to tunnel under the Atlantic and bring the Old World some weeks nearer to the New; but perchance the first news that will leak through into the broad, flapping American ear will be that the Princess Adelaide has the whooping cough. After all, the man whose horse trots a mile in a minute does not carry the most important messages; he is not an evangelist, nor does he come round eating locusts and wild honey. I doubt if Flying Childers ever carried a peck of corn to mill.

5 - From "The Bean Field" (pages 324-326)

MEANWHILE MY beans, the length of whose rows, added together, was seven miles already planted, were impatient to be hoed, for the earliest had grown considerably before the latest were in the ground; indeed they were not easily to be put off. What was the meaning of this so steady and self-respecting, this small Herculean labor, I knew not. I came to love my rows, my beans, though so many more than I wanted. They attached me to the earth, and so I got strength like Antaeus. But why should I raise them? Only Heaven knows. This was my curious labor all summer- to make this portion of the earth's

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surface, which had yielded only cinquefoil, blackberries, john's wort, and the like, before, sweet wild fruits and pleasant flowers, produce instead this pulse. What shall I learn of beans or beans of me? I cherish them, I hoe them, early and late I have an eye to them; and this is my day's work.

....
Removing the weeds, putting fresh soil about the bean stems, and encouraging this weed which I had sown, making the yellow soil express its summer thought in bean leaves and blossoms rather than in worm wood and piper and millet grass, making the earth say beans instead of grass- this was my daily work. As I had little aid from horses or cattle, or hired men or boys, or improved implements of husbandry, I was much slower, and became much more intimate with my beans than usual. But labor of the hands, even when pursued to the verge of drudgery, is perhaps never the worst form of idleness. It has a constant and imperishable moral, and to the scholar it yields a classic result.

....
It was a singular experience that long acquaintance which I cultivated with beans, what with planting, and hoeing, and harvesting, and threshing, and picking over and selling them- the last was the hardest of all- I might add eating, for I did taste. I was determined to know beans.

5 - From "Higher Laws" (page 369)

Fishermen, hunters, woodchoppers, and others, spending their lives in the fields and woods, in a peculiar sense a part of Nature themselves, are often in a more favorable mood for observing her, in the intervals of their pursuits, than philosophers or poets even, who approach her with expectation.

5 - From "Visitors" (pages 315-321)

I had more visitors while I lived in the woods than at any other period in my life; I mean that I had some.

Who should come to my lodge this morning but ... a Canadian, a woodchopper and post-maker, who can hole fifty posts in a day, who made his last supper on a woodchuck which his dog caught. He, too, has heard of Homer, and, "if it were not for books," would "not know what to do rainy days, "though perhaps he has not read one wholly through for many rainy seasons. Some priest who could pronounce the Greek itself taught him to read his verse in the Testament in his native parish far away; and now I must translate to him, while he holds the book....

He says, "That's good." He has a great bundle of white oak bark under his arm for a sick man, gathered this Sunday morning.- I suppose there's no harm in going after such a thing today," says he. To him Homer was a great writer, though what his writing was about he did not know. A more simple and natural man it would be hard to find.... He was about twenty-eight years old, and had left Canada and his father's house a dozen years before to work in the States, and earn money to buy a farm with at last, perhaps in his native country. He was cast in the coarsest mould; a stout but sluggish body, yet gracefully carried, with a thick sunburnt neck, dark bushy hair, and dull sleepy blue eyes, which were occasionally lit up with expression. He wore a flat gray cloth cap, a dingy wool-colored greatcoat, and cowhide boots.

He was a skillful chopper, and indulged in some flourishes and ornaments in his art. He cut his trees level and close to the ground, that the sprouts which came up afterward might be more vigorous and a sled might slide over the stumps; and instead of leaving a whole tree to support his corded wood, he would pare it away to a slender stake or splinter which you could break off with your hand at last.

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He interested me because he was so quiet and solitary and so happy withal; a well of good humor and contentment which overflowed at his eyes. His mirth was without alloy. Sometimes I saw him at his work in the woods, felling trees, and he would greet me with a laugh of inexpressible satisfaction, and a salutation in Canadian French, though he spoke English as well.... Looking round upon the trees he would exclaim - "By George! I can enjoy myself well enough here chopping; I want no better sport." Sometimes, when at leisure, he amused himself all day in the woods with a pocket pistol, firing salutes to himself at regular intervals as he walked. In the winter he had a fire by which at noon he warmed his coffee in a kettle; and as he sat on a log to eat his dinner the chickadees would sometimes come round and alight on his arm and peck at the potato in his fingers; and he said that he "liked to have the little fellers about him."

In him the animal man chiefly was developed. In physical endurance and contentment he was cousin to the pine and the rock.... But the intellectual and what is called spiritual man in him were slumbering as in an infant. He had been instructed only in that innocent and ineffectual way in which the Catholic priests teach the aborigines, by which the pupil is never educated to the degree of consciousness, but only to the degree of trust and reverence, and a child is not made a man, but kept a child.... He was so genuine and unsophisticated that no introduction would serve to introduce him, more than if you introduced a woodchuck to your neighbor.... He was so simply and naturally humble- if he can be called humble who never aspires- that humility was no distinct quality in him, nor could he conceive of it.

To a stranger he appeared to know nothing of things in general; yet I sometimes saw in him a man whom I had not seen before, and I did not know whether he was as wise as Shakespeare or as simply ignorant as a child, whether to suspect him of a fine poetic consciousness or of stupidity. A townsman told me that when he met

him sauntering through the village in his small close-fitting cap, and whistling to himself, he reminded him of a prince in disguise.

There was a certain positive originality, however slight, to be detected in him, and I occasionally observed that he was thinking for himself and expressing his own opinion, a phenomenon so rare that I would any day walk ten miles to observe it, and it amounted to the re-origination of many of the institutions of society. Though he hesitated, and perhaps failed to express himself distinctly, he always had a presentable thought behind. Yet his thinking was so primitive and immersed in his animal life, that, though more promising than a merely learned man's, it rarely ripened to anything which can be reported. He suggested that there might be men of genius in the lowest grades of life, however permanently humble and illiterate, who take their own view always, or do not pretend to see at all; who are as bottomless even as Walden Pond was thought to be, though they may be dark and muddy.

From "Conclusion"

TO THE sick the doctors wisely recommend a change of air and scenery. Thank Heaven, here is not all the world.... The universe is wider than our views of it.... Our voyaging is only great-circle sailing, and the doctors prescribe for diseases of the skin merely. One hastens to southern Africa to chase the giraffe; but surely that is not the game he would be after....

"Direct your eye right inward, and you'll find
A thousand regions in your mind
Yet undiscovered. Travel them, and be
Expert in home-cosmography."

What does Africa - what does the West stand for? Is not our own

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interior white on the chart? black though it may prove, like the coast, when discovered. Is it the source of the Nile, or the Niger, or the Mississippi, or a Northwest Passage around this continent, that we would find? Are these the problems which most concern mankind? Does Mr. Grinnell know where he himself is? Be rather the Mungo Park, the Lewis and Clark and Frobisher, of your own streams and oceans; explore your own higher latitudes....

I left the woods for as good a reason as I went there. Perhaps it seemed to me that I had several more lives to live, and could not spare any more time for that one. It is remarkable how easily and insensibly we fall into a particular route, and make a beaten track for ourselves. I had not lived there a week before my feet wore a path from my door to the pond-side; and though it is Eve or six years since I trod it, it is still quite distinct. It is true, I fear, that others may have fallen into it, and so helped to keep it open. The surface of the earth is soft and impressible by the feet of men; and so with the paths which the mind travels. How worn and dusty, then, must be the Highways of the world, how deep the ruts of tradition and conformity! I did not wish to take a cabin passage, but rather to go before the mast and on the deck of the world, for there I could best see the moonlight amid the mountains. I do not wish to go below now.

I learned this, at least, by my experiment: that if one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams, and endeavors to live the life which he has imagined, he will meet with a success unexpected in common hours. He will put some things behind, will pass an invisible boundary; new, universal, and more liberal laws will begin to establish themselves around and within him; or the old laws be expanded, and interpreted in his favor in a more liberal sense, and he will live with the license of a higher order of beings. In proportion as he simplifies his life, the laws of the universe will appear less complex, and solitude will not be solitude, nor poverty poverty, nor

weakness weakness. If you have built castles in the air, your work need not be lost; that is where they should be. Now put the foundations under them.

....
Why should we be in such desperate haste to succeed and in such desperate enterprises? If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer. Let him step to the music which he hears, however measured or far away. It is not important that he should mature as soon as an apple tree or an oak. Shall he turn his spring into summer? If the condition of things which we were made for is not yet, what were any reality which we can substitute? We will not be shipwrecked on a vain reality. Shall we with pains erect a heaven of blue glass over ourselves, though when it is done we shall be sure to gaze still at the true ethereal heaven far above, as if the former were not?

....
Rather than love, than money, than fame, give me truth. I sat at a table where were rich food and wine in abundance, and obsequious attendance, but sincerity and truth were not; and I went away hungry from the inhospitable board.

....
We know not where we are. Beside, we are sound asleep nearly half our time. Yet we esteem ourselves wise, and have an established order on the surface. Truly, we are deep thinkers, we are ambitious spirits! As I stand over the insect crawling amid the pine needles on the forest floor, and endeavoring to conceal itself from my sight, and ask myself why it will cherish those humble thoughts, and bide its head from me who might, perhaps, be its benefactor, and impart to its race some cheering information, I am reminded of the greater Benefactor and Intelligence that stands over me the human insect.

There is an incessant influx of novelty into the world, and yet we

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tolerate incredible dullness....

The life in us is like the water in the river. It may rise this year higher than man has ever known it, and flood the parched uplands; even this may be the eventful year, which will drown out all our muskrats. It was not always dry land where we dwell....

The light which puts out our eyes is darkness to us. Only that day dawns to which we are awake. There is more day to dawn. The sun is but a morning star.

From "Where I Lived, and What I Lived For"

The morning, which is the most memorable season of the day, is the awakening hour. Then there is least somnolence in us; and for an hour, at least, some part of us awakes which slumbers all the rest of the day and night. Little is to be expected of that day, if it can be called a day, to which we are not awakened by our Genius, but by the mechanical nudgings of some servitor, are not awakened by our own newly acquired force and aspirations from within, accompanied by the undulations of celestial music, instead of factory bells, and a fragrance filling the air- to a higher life than we fell asleep from; and thus the darkness bear its fruit, and prove itself to be good, no less than the light. That man who does not believe that each day contains an earlier, more sacred, and auroral hour than he has yet profaned, has despaired of life, and is pursuing a descending and darkening way. After a partial cessation of his sensuous life, the soul of man, or its organs rather, are reinvigorated each day, and his Genius tries again what noble life it can make. All memorable events, I should say, transpire in morning time and in a morning atmosphere. The Vedas say, "All intelligences awake with the morning." Poetry and art, and the faire stand most memorable of the actions of men, date from such an hour. All poets and heroes, like Memnon, are the children of Aurora, and emit their music at sunrise. To him whose

elastic and vigorous thought keeps pace with the sun, the day is a perpetual morning. It matters not what the clocks say or the attitudes and labors of men. Morning is when I am awake and there is a dawn in me. Moral reform is the effort to throw off sleep. Why is it that men give so poor an account of their day if they have not been slumbering? They are not such poor calculators. If they had not been overcome with drowsiness, they would have performed something. The millions are awake enough for physical labor; but only one in a million is awake enough for effective intellectual exertion, only one in a hundred millions to a poetic or divine life. To be awake is to be alive. I have never yet met a man who was quite awake. How could I have looked him in the face?

We must learn to reawaken and keep ourselves awake, not by mechanical aids, but by an infinite expectation of the dawn, which does not forsake us in our soundest sleep. I know of no more encouraging fact than the unquestionable ability of man to elevate his life by a conscious endeavor. It is something to be able to paint a particular picture, or to carve a statue, and so to make a few objects beautiful; but it is far more glorious to carve and paint the very atmosphere and medium through which we look, which morally we can do. To affect the quality of the day, that is the highest of arts. Every man is tasked to make his life, even in its details, worthy of the contemplation of his most elevated and critical hour. If we refused, or rather used up, such paltry information as we get, the oracles would distinctly inform us how this might be done.

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. I did not wish to live what was not life, living is so dear; nor did I wish to practise resignation, unless it was quite necessary. I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life, to live so sturdily and Spartan- like as to put to rout all that was not life, to cut a broad

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swath and shave close, to drive life into a corner, and reduce it to its lowest terms, and, if it proved to be mean, why then to get the whole and genuine meanness of it, and publish its meanness to the world; or if it were sublime, to know it by experience, and be able to give a true account of it in my next excursion. For most men, it appears to me, are in a strange uncertainty about it, whether it is of the devil or of God, and have somewhat hastily concluded that it is the chief end of man here to "glorify God and enjoy him forever."