

Shannon L. Johnson  
 Valley High School  
 3650 Woodland Avenue  
 West Des Moines, IA 50266  
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**Subject and Grade Levels:** Early American Literature, Grades 10-12 elective

## *“From Desperate to Deliberate: Transcendentalism’s 19<sup>th</sup> Century Lessons for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Lives”*

**Abstract:**

Henry David Thoreau said in *Walden* that “the mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation,” and he suggested that most of them weren’t even aware of their desperate states. This unit on Transcendentalism attempts to make students more aware of not only the ideas of the Transcendentalists, but also the ways in which their ideas can be meaningful to individuals in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Students will be introduced to the key ideas of Transcendentalism and participate in a brief research project and presentation to get a better understanding of the historical and social contexts that influenced the Transcendentalist writers. The first set of lessons focuses on Emerson’s “Self-Reliance” and the need for individuals to trust themselves and their ideas. Next, we’ll explore the relationship between individuals and nature through Emerson’s “Of Nature” and Thoreau’s essay “Walking,” nature journaling, and a field trip to a county park. Selections from *Walden* will help students to understand the Transcendentalist desire to live deliberately and what that might mean for their own lives. An excerpt from “Civil Disobedience” will allow students to discuss the transition from self to societal reform and how that affects the responsibilities of individuals within a society. As a culmination to the unit, students will complete a final project that asks students to connect their learning to their own lives as they demonstrate their understanding of the Transcendentalists and their ideas.

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

- understand the characteristics of Transcendentalism and the influence it had on the writing and thinking of 19<sup>th</sup> century authors
- understand how the Transcendentalists affected the development of American thought
- understand how literature reacts to the historical, social, cultural, and economic influences of the time period in which it was written
- experience the natural world and better understand the relationship between individuals and nature
- use observation skills to better identify the details in Nature and in their own lives
- recognize how some elements of Transcendentalism may help them to live more deliberate lives
- use journal writing to process their thinking
- use appropriate reading strategies to comprehend and interpret complex texts
- articulate ideas from research, reading, and their own thinking
- make personal connections between literary texts and their own lives
- participate in sustained conversation about literature and its connections to their lives
- document other students’ contributions during a discussion and provide peer feedback that will allow for continuous improvement of discussion skills

**Duration:** 19 class periods (four of these are block periods)

**Literature:**

- Excerpts from Ralph Waldo Emerson's "Self-Reliance," "The American Scholar," and "Nature"
- Excerpts from Henry David Thoreau's *Walden*: "Where I Lived and What I Lived For," "Sounds," "Solitude," "Ponds," and "Conclusion"
- Excerpts from Henry David Thoreau's essays "Walking," "Life Without Principle," and "Civil Disobedience"
- Annie Dillard's "Seeing" from *A Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*
- Howard Frumkin and Richard Louv, "Conserving Land, Preserving Human Health"

**Outline:**

Lessons	Days	Readings/ Activities
<u>Lesson 1: Understanding Transcendentalism</u> Essential Question: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is Transcendentalism?</li> </ul>	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction</li> <li>• Research and presentation</li> </ul>
<u>Lesson 2: Trusting yourself</u> Essential Questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What does it mean to be self-reliant?</li> <li>• What tensions exist between self-reliance and conformity?</li> </ul>	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Journal discussion</li> <li>• Emerson's "Self-Reliance" and "The American Scholar" (excerpts)</li> </ul>
<u>Lesson 3: Learning from Nature (5 days)</u> Essential Questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the relationship between individuals and Nature?</li> <li>• How can wildness be the preservation of the world? Are Nature and wildness the same thing?</li> </ul>	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Journal Discussion</li> <li>• Frumkin's and Louv's "Conserving Land, Preserving Public Health"</li> <li>• Emerson's "Nature" (excerpt)</li> <li>• Thoreau's "Walking" (excerpt)</li> <li>• Dillard's "Seeing"</li> <li>• Nature Journaling</li> <li>• Field trip to Jester Park</li> </ul>
<u>Lesson 4: Waking up to the possibilities</u> Essential Questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What does it mean to wake up and live deliberately?</li> <li>• How can individuals overcome the tensions with society that make it harder to live deliberately?</li> </ul>	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Journal Discussion</li> <li>• Thoreau's "Life Without Principle" (excerpt)</li> <li>• Thoreau's <i>Walden</i>, excerpts from "Where I Lived and What I Lived For," "Solitude," "Sounds," and "Conclusion"</li> </ul>
<u>Lesson 5: Putting ideas into action</u> Essential Questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the responsibilities of individuals within a society and why do those responsibilities exist?</li> <li>• How much power does an individual have to change society?</li> </ul>	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thoreau's "Civil Disobedience" (excerpt)</li> <li>• Seminar discussion</li> <li>• Work on final assignments</li> <li>• Sharing of large group assignments in class</li> </ul>

## Lesson Details:

**Lesson 1: Understanding Transcendentalism****Essential Question:**

- **What is Transcendentalism?**

**Day 1:**

Use PowerPoint and video clips to introduce students to the key ideas in Transcendentalism.

1. Discuss what it means to *transcend*. It's a verb, so it's something that requires action, in this case to go beyond. In order to go beyond, there must be an awareness of the ordinary, of conformity. Transcending demands something more.
2. Provide a brief overview of Transcendentalism. Definition, overview of time period, brief mention of key names and contributions.
3. Show a series of movie clips and images and then ask students to identify key ideas as each is presented.
  - a. *Dead Poet's Society*---clip #1 Carpe Diem—"Seize the day, boys—make your lives extraordinary." Theme: Do things that matter. Make the most of the time we have and spend our time on worthwhile actions that mean something to us. Thoreau will refer to this as "living deliberately."
  - b. *Dead Poet's Society* – clip #2 This is the scene in the movie where Mr. Keating demands that his students rip out the introduction to their textbooks because it tells them how to read poetry instead of letting them think for themselves. Theme: Trust ourselves and our own opinions. Don't depend on what others have always said or done. Explore on your own, pay attention to the details, and listen to our own ideas. The transcendentalists will call this intuition. Transcendentalists emphasized the intuitive over the empirical, what our souls revealed over what our senses could prove.
  - c. *Dead Poet's Society* – clip #3 (1:03:20-1:05:45) This scene is Mr. Keating's lesson on conformity where he his students walk around the courtyard. We shouldn't just follow the crowd. We need to follow our own principles even when society does not agree. Theme: We should trust ourselves enough to act on our intuition. Individuals should live according to their principles instead of blindly following the expectations of society.
  - d. *Sony High Definition Demo Video featuring nature images and sounds* (Available on YouTube ([http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nHoC5jr2m\\_M&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nHoC5jr2m_M&feature=related))). After viewing about two minutes of the video, ask students about the advantages of spending time in Nature. What does nature do for us? What are the contrasts between Nature and Society? Explain that the Transcendentalists believed people needed to get away from the distractions of society. They believed in what they called the Oversoul, a divine spirit or mind that connected each individual and everything in Nature. Attending to the divine spirit in humanity and in Nature, which were manifestations of God, made it possible to understand universal laws and the individual self. The Transcendentalists thought all people were inherently good and would be so if they listened to the right influences, especially those found in Nature.
  - e. *Photos on PowerPoint*: Henry David Thoreau, Mahatmas Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Atticus Finch. Ask students about the connections among the four photos. All demonstrated a sense of social responsibility. They acted against conventional views of society and sometimes even the laws of that society to fight injustice or encourage social reform. Theme: Individual action should reflect moral principles. Only this will lead to societal reform.
4. Transcendentalism in simple terms:
  - a. Individuals should strive to go beyond the ordinary (to transcend).
  - b. Every individual is capable of imaginative power, of becoming extraordinary.
  - c. One becomes extraordinary by means of the soul, not the senses—intuition.

- d. Individuals should live according to their intuition and principles instead of blindly following the rules of society.
  - e. The essence of truth is Good and all people are meant to be Good; a lack of Good comes from a lack of listening.
  - f. A divine spirit connects all humans and everything in Nature. The Oversoul unifies human beings and Nature. Both are manifestations of God. Humans will better understand themselves and their purpose by learning from and living in harmony with Nature.
  - g. Acting on all of these things allows individuals to live deliberately.
5. Introduce journal assignments (Appendix A).
6. Explain Transcendentalism research assignments, form groups, and choose topics.

Homework:

- Complete Journal #1 for the day after tomorrow and do preliminary research on presentation topic.

### **Journal #1:**

Passage:

*"What I must do is all that concerns me, not what the people think. This rule, equally arduous in actual and in intellectual life, may serve for the whole distinction between greatness and meanness. It is the harder, because you will always find those who think they know what is your duty better than you know it. It is easy in the world to live after the world's opinion; it is easy in solitude to live after our own; but the great man is he who in the midst of the crowd keeps with perfect sweetness the independence of solitude."*

Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Self-Reliance*

Preparation to Write:

Do some people watching during the school day. Closely observe the actions and appearances of your peers in study hall, lunch, classes, the student center, etc. How much of what you observe reflects a decision to follow the crowd or shows a lack of willingness (maybe confidence?) to stand out in some way? How much of what you see shows independent action or thought? What situations or circumstances seem to cause people to choose one action over the other?

Journal Prompt:

What does it mean to trust oneself? What prevents individuals from trusting themselves? When are people most likely to trust their own intuitions and not worry about what other people might think? Is this issue more difficult for teenagers than people of other ages? Why or why not? Reference some of your observations as you respond to the prompt and connect your thoughts to the original passage.

### **Day 2:**

Groups will work in the media center to gather information about their topics and organize key ideas. They should assign different group members to prepare specific slides to share the workload.

Homework:

- Complete Journal #1 for the next class.
- Work on assigned PowerPoint slide for the group presentation.

## **Lesson 2: Trusting yourself**

**Essential Questions:**

- **What does it mean to be self-reliant?**
- **What tensions exist between self-reliance and conformity?**

### **Day 3:**

1. Discuss student journal assignments. Focus on their examples of people following the crowd or doing something just because someone else did. Why do people do this? Ask for their specific examples of actions that demonstrated independence or confidence? What allows people to act in this way? Is trusting yourself the same as having confidence? Why or why not?
2. Give students the definition of "Self-Reliance." The American Heritage Dictionary defines self-reliance as "reliance on one's own capabilities, judgment, or resources; independence." For the Transcendentalists, this was more than just relying on oneself instead of other people. Their version of self-reliance was about trusting one's intuition and transcending what the evidence or experience might suggest.

Homework:

- Read and annotate the excerpts from "Self-Reliance" and "The American Scholar."
- Come to a class with a list of five points Emerson seems to be making in his writing.
- Continue work on group presentation.

**Day 4:** (*This lesson is designed for a 79-minute block period.*)

1. Homework check: Students will meet in small groups to share the key ideas they derived from Emerson's writing.
2. Assign each group a specific section of the text. The text will be divided into eight sections, essentially a paragraph or two for each group. The task for each group will be to create a poster that could be part of an Emersonian campaign to promote Self-Reliance. Students will first choose a slogan that reflects the main idea of their assigned passage. They may use a sentence of Emerson's or they may use original wording. In addition to the slogan, students will create a visual that reinforces the main idea. The visual may be simple stick figures as the idea behind the visual is more important than the aesthetic quality of the design. As a group they should be prepared to share their explanation of Emerson's main idea in the passage and how it helps to give us a better understanding of self-reliance. Students will create their posters on 11x17 paper.
3. After groups have completed their posters, each group will present its slogan and visual to the class. Before going on to the group explanation of the idea and its connection to self-reliance, the other students in the room will decide whether or not they strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree with each statement. A different corner of the room will be assigned for each opinion. The teacher will work with the presenting group to facilitate the discussion of the slogan and draw out student reasons for their stance on each main idea. After hearing student opinions on the slogan, the group will summarize ideas and make their connection to Emerson's main ideas.
4. Bring closure to the ideas in this lesson by reviewing and discussing the essential questions.
5. Explain Journal #2.
6. Give groups time for final preparations for their presentations.

**Journal #2:**

Passage:

*"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; to smell the whispering sedge where only some wilder and more solitary fowl builds her nest, and the mink crawls with its belly close to the ground. 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."*

Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*, "Spring"

Preparation to Write:

Read the article "Conserving Land, Preserving Human Health" by Howard Frumkin, M.D., and Richard Louv. Consider the benefits of contact with nature as discussed in the article. Has that been your experience? Why or why not?

Journal Prompt:

Identify a special place in nature where you have enjoyed spending your time. This may be somewhere you go to often or it may be a place you have visited only once. Give a brief description of this place, but devote most of your response to explaining why this place stands out in your memory. Consider your thoughts, emotions, and mood in this place. Did (or does) it affect you in any of the ways described in the article? Do you agree with what Thoreau, Frumkin, and Louv have to say? Do we need the “tonic of wildness”? Why or why not? In addition to your written response, try to bring in a picture of your place or a representative image.

## Homework:

- Complete Journal #2.
- Finalize presentation information and slides.

## Day 5:

1. Transcendentalism Presentations: Any groups that do not have time to present during class will present during the next class session.
2. Students will take notes as other groups present their information.

## Homework:

- Complete Journal #2 for the next class.

Lesson 3: Learning from Nature (5 days)

**Essential Questions:** *Think about how the Transcendentalists would answer these questions. Would their answers align with your own?*

- **What is the relationship between individuals and Nature?**
- **How can wildness be the preservation of the world? Are Nature and wildness the same thing?**

## Day 6:

1. Students will finish any remaining Transcendentalism presentations.
2. Students will share the ideas in today’s journal responses by explaining where their special place is located and why they like it and by sharing their picture or representative image using the document camera. If time is limited because of remaining group presentations, the sharing of images will only be done in small groups. As students share their places, the teacher can make a list of reasons these places are special to students, specifically focusing on the moods and emotions created by their place in nature.
3. Discuss the following ideas as a large group. Do you personally need the tonic of wildness? Do you agree with the ideas proposed by Frumkin and Louv? How have you been affected by the “tonic of wildness”? How much time do you spend in nature? Would you go more often if you could? Why or why not? Do we as a society demonstrate that we value the natural world? What evidence can you suggest to support your conclusion?
4. Read the follow passage from *Walden*:

*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 Æolian 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 to-day is not drear 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.

--Henry David Thoreau, "Solitude," *Walden*

- a) Focusing on what he says in this passage, what kind of relationship does Thoreau seem to have with Nature? What language does he use to suggest that?
- b) How does Thoreau's passage help to show the Transcendentalists' understanding of the Oversoul?

#### 5. Introduce *Nature*.

#### Homework:

- Read and annotate excerpts from *Nature* and "Walking." Answer your assigned questions.

#### Day 7:

Discussion structure adapted from Julie Wright's 2007 *Approaching Walden* unit

1. Students will discuss the excerpts and questions from *Nature* and "Walking" in small groups. Groups should be divided so all questions from the reading guide are presented since not all students answered each question. Each group should appoint a scribe to share ideas discussed in the group.
2. Additional group discussion questions:
  - a. Why did the Transcendentalists believe Nature was the best place for individuals to understand truth? What other advantages came out of time spent in Nature? How do those advantages compare with the studies discussed in the article by Frumkin and Louv?
  - b. Do you believe more time spent in Nature would be beneficial? In our media-driven, stay-indoors society, how can we increase the value we place on Nature?
  - c. As a group, decide on a definition of wildness. Is wildness the same thing as nature? Does it have the power that Thoreau suggests? Is it "the preservation of the world"? Why or why not?
  - d. As a group decide on the most meaningful quotation from today's assigned reading. Share it and your rationale with the rest of the class.
3. Whole class discussion---share responses and chosen quotations

#### Homework:

- Read and annotate the excerpt from Annie Dillard's "Seeing" from *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* on pp. 301-304 in the text. Consider how Dillard uses the pennies as symbols. What do they represent? After you have done so, spend a few minutes outside and observe one particular spot for about ten minutes. You don't need to go to anyplace that has been deemed Nature by the city or county. A spot just outside your front door will be fine. Take the time to see in the way that Dillard describes.

Identify one thing you saw during your observation that you might have missed if you hadn't been looking and be ready to share that with the class.

**Day 8:** two 44 minute class periods or one 79 minute block

Excerpt from Annie Dillard's "Seeing" and Nature Journaling workshop

1. Students will gather briefly in small groups to discuss their observations from the previous night's homework and discuss the following questions:
  - a. According to Dillard, what does it take in order to be able to "see"?
  - b. Why don't we see in the way that Dillard suggests? Would we be better off if we did? How so?
2. Brief group discussion of the small group ideas.
3. Introduce Nature Journaling using the handout. (Appendix D)
4. Weather permitting, take students outside for 15 minutes of observation. They should spread out in the grassy areas around the school and simply observe the natural world that exists outside the door. Students may choose to look up, look down, look around, but they should observe from one specific location for the entire time. As they observe, they should make notes about what they see, sounds they hear, things they feel, ideas they consider. Encourage students to pay attention to minor details they would normally overlook. After the fifteen minutes has passed, give them another ten to fifteen minutes to write about what they observed
5. Return to the classroom and ask students to share their experiences. Debrief with these questions:
  - a. What details did you observe that you have never noticed about the area around Valley High School?
  - b. Was it strange to just sit and look for 15 minutes without any interaction with other people? How did that affect you?
  - c. Did you find that your thoughts stayed focused on what you were observing or did what you were observing lead you to consider other topics? Explain some of those mind wanderings if that happened to you.
  - d. Were there any distractions that made it difficult to concentrate on the activity? If so, what were they and why were they a distraction?
  - e. If you spent more time observing the details in and around the school, do you believe you would have a greater sense of place in regard to Valley High School? If so, would that affect your thinking or actions in any way?
6. Transition to field trip details and last minute logistics. Remind students the purpose of the trip is to pay attention to the natural world. They will have the opportunity to learn about the natural history of Polk County, observe their natural surroundings, and write about their observations and experiences.

**Homework:** Bring the following items for the field trip:

- Lunch and a water bottle
- Appropriate clothing for the outdoors
- Notebook and pen or pencil

**Day 9:**

1. Field Trip to Jester Park (9:15-2:00)
2. Students from both classes will be divided into three groups that will rotate among the Polk Country Naturalists and other field trip assistants: observation of Pelican migration and/or Monarch Butterfly migration, natural history hike through the woods in Jester Park, Transparent Eyeball journaling experience. They should complete the field trip assignment questions as they go. (Appendix E) The Transparent Eyeball experience has been adapted from Nick Nelsen, Valley High School Language Arts Department.
3. Students will also meet back at the shelter for lunch and debriefing before returning to school.

**Homework:**

- Complete Jester Park reflection and bring field notes and journal responses to class. Be prepared to share your thoughts on the day with other students in the class.

**Day 10:**

1. Discuss and debrief the Jester Park experience. Return to some of the essential questions for this lesson during this discussion: What is the relationship between individuals and Nature? Do Nature and civilization have to be different? (How can we find Nature in the midst of civilization?) What is wildness? How can wildness be the preservation of the world?
2. Preview *Walden* using a fifteen minute segment of the video from the *Great Books* series. The segment provides a preview of the book's purpose and themes and also gives students a visual for Walden Pond and Walden Woods.
3. Introduce Journal #3.

**Journal #3:**Passage:

*"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."*

Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*, "Where I Lived and What I Lived For"

Preparation to Write:

Make a list of the activities of your typical day. How much of what you do is routine? Does that routine create a situation where you are just going through the motions and thinking very little about the meaning of your day? Do you spend more of your time "slumbering" through life or are you "awake" and intellectually engaged? Why? At what point in your day do you feel most invigorated, most alive? What would it take to make you "fully awake"?

Journal Prompt:

Drawing on the examples from your own life and those of your peers, explain whether or not you agree with Thoreau's ideas. Are people conscious of their actions? Are they fully awake? What gets in the way of conscious, deliberate living? What does it take to get people to "wake up and move on to a more deliberate life?"

**Homework:**

- Complete Journal #3 for the next class.

**Lesson 4: Waking up to the possibilities****Essential Questions:**

- **What does it mean to wake up and live deliberately?**
- **How can individuals overcome the tensions with society that make it harder to live deliberately?**

**Day 11: Journal discussion and "Life Without Principle"**

1. Discuss student journal assignments by having students react to the following statements. After each statement, have students go to designated corners of the room for strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree. Discuss and debrief each statement. Students should draw on the ideas in their journals as they respond to the statements.
  - a. Most of my friends are fully awake.

- b. I know someone who is fully awake.
- c. I am fully awake.
- d. I want to be fully awake.

2. Read and discuss this passage from Thoreau's essay, "Life Without Principle."

*Let us consider the way in which we spend our lives.*

*This world is a place of business. What an infinite bustle! I am awaked almost every night by the panting of the locomotive. It interrupts my dreams. There is no Sabbath. It would be glorious to see mankind at leisure for once. It is nothing but work, work, work. I cannot easily buy a blank-book to write thoughts in; they are commonly ruled for dollars and cents. An Irishman, seeing me making a minute in the fields, took it for granted that I was calculating my wages. If a man was tossed out of a window when an infant, and so made a cripple for life, or scared out of his wits by the Indians, it is regretted chiefly because he was thus incapacitated for--business! I think that there is nothing, not even crime, more opposed to poetry, to philosophy, ay, to life itself, than this incessant business.*

*There is a coarse and boisterous money-making fellow in the outskirts of our town, who is going to build a bank-wall under the hill along the edge meadow. The powers have put this into his head to keep him out of mischief, and he wishes me to spend three weeks digging there with him. The result will be that he will perhaps get some more money to hoard, and leave for his heirs to spend foolishly. If I do this, most will commend me as an industrious and hardworking man; but if I choose to devote myself to certain labors which yield more real profit, though but little money, they may be inclined to look on me as an idler. Nevertheless, as I do not need the police of meaningless labor to regulate me, and do not see anything absolutely praiseworthy in this fellow's undertaking, any more than in many an enterprise of our own or foreign governments however amusing it may be to him or them, I prefer to finish my education at a different school.*

*If a man walk in the woods for love of them half of each day, he is in danger of being regarded as a loafer; but if he spends his whole day as a speculator, shearing off those woods and making earth bald before her time, he is esteemed an industrious and enterprising citizen. As if a town had no interest in its forests but to cut them down!*

*Most men would feel insulted, if it were proposed all and to employ them in throwing stones over a wall, and then in throwing them back, merely that they might earn their wages. But many are no more worthily employed now. . . .*

*The aim of the laborer should be, not to get his living, to get 'a good job,' but to perform well a certain work; and, even in a pecuniary sense, it would be economy for a town to pay its laborers so well that they would not feel that they were working for low ends, as for a livelihood merely, but for scientific, or even moral ends. Do not hire a man who does your work for money, but him who does it for love of it.*

What is Thoreau's major complaint in this passage? How has he been misjudged? Are his criticisms still true in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?

- 3. Show a short video clip from the movie *Office Space* (Peter's meeting of with the Bobs where he discusses the lack of meaning and motivation in his job). Why does Peter feel this way about his job? What are the key factors in determining whether people enjoy their day whether it be a student in school or an adult in a career? How can an outside observer tell whether people find meaning in what they do?
- 4. Introduce "Where I Lived and What I Lived For."

**Homework:**

- Read and annotate the excerpt from "Where I Lived and What I Lived For." Focus annotations on identifying what Thoreau "lived for."

**Day 12: *Walden*, "Where I Lived and What I Lived For"**

1. Answer any questions students have from the previous night's reading.
2. Although memorable aphorisms from *Walden* can help to make the ideas more accessible to students, there is also the danger that the book can become a collection of sound bites without a solid understanding of how the ideas fit together. This organizer (Appendix F) will help students to focus on the purpose of the journey Thoreau describes for his readers in *Walden*. Thoreau wants his readers to "Wake Up" and pay attention to what is most important in their lives. By examining the self-reform necessary to reach this goal and the obstacles that get in the way, students will get a better understanding of one of *Walden's* main themes. Students will work on this organizer in small groups before discussing it as a whole class.
3. Large group discussion questions:
  - What does Thoreau mean when he says he "did not want to live what was not life"?
  - Does living deliberately require all of the steps Thoreau identifies?
  - What does Thoreau mean when he says "our life is frittered away by detail"? In what ways is this true in your own life?
  - Thoreau questioned the value of the railroad in his society? What modern day inventions might have questionable value?
  - Thoreau argues that we emphasize material acquisition more than intellectual and spiritual development. He also criticizes how easily we mistake appearances for reality. How might people use the materialism and busyness of their lives to mask reality?

**Homework:**

- Read and annotate the excerpts from "Sounds" and "Solitude." Students should bring three significant quotations from the text, two questions they have about Thoreau's ideas, and one connection they can make to the ideas in the text. This 3-2-1 exercise is adapted from Julie Wright's 2007 *Approaching Walden* unit.

**Day 13: "Sounds" and "Solitude" (block day)**

1. Students gather in small groups to discuss excerpts and ideas from their 3-2-1 choices. Share key ideas and insights with the whole class.
2. One of the key ideas to emphasize in this section of the text is the tension between Nature and the railroad. Even though Thoreau is now living at Walden, he cannot escape some of the distractions of society and the way those have changed life for him and others. Exploring this tension will be a main focus of the lesson.
  - a. Thoreau identifies benefits and problems with the railroad. Find examples of each. Does Thoreau believe the benefits outweigh the problems? Why or why not? Remind students of the changing economy; Concord was now part of a market economy, which made them less self-sufficient and placed more emphasis on profit because money was required to buy what people did not produce themselves. What are some parallels between modern technology and the benefits and problems of the railroad identified by Thoreau? Do the benefits of today's technology outweigh the problems?
  - b. With a partner, students will quickly find two examples of figurative language Thoreau uses to describe the railroad and find two strong verbs that reinforce his opinion. As a group discuss the image Thoreau creates. How does his language reinforce the tension?
3. "Solitude." Discuss the following ideas as a large group. Continue to emphasize conflicts between Nature and society and Thoreau's criticisms of modern life.
  - a. Was Thoreau lonely at the pond? Why or why not? What does Thoreau mean by solitude? Is it necessary to be alone to have solitude? Why or why not? What does Thoreau mean when he says, "I have never found the companion that was so companionable as solitude."
  - b. What does Thoreau mean when he says that "Society is commonly too cheap"? Is Thoreau against socializing or is he against something else? What is he saying about the

quality of our relationships? Are his opinions about relationships more or less valid in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? Why?

- c. Find examples in this section that reinforce the Transcendentalist relationship with Nature. How does this relationship help Thoreau to live more deliberately? How realistic is it to have these thoughts today?
4. In groups of two or three, students will create an 8 ½ x 11 visual to summarize the key contrasts and conflicts between Nature and society as they are discussed in this section of *Walden*. They may use a combination of images, words, sounds, and specific passages from the text to reinforce the ideas. Share these using the document camera.
5. Introduce Final Transcendentalism Assignments. (Appendix I)

### Homework:

- Read and annotate the excerpt from “Conclusion.” This is Thoreau’s final wrap-up. As you read and annotate, look for his parting thoughts. What does he really want his readers to understand and do with their lives?

### Days 14 and 15: “Conclusion”

1. In order to encourage elaboration and discussion of the ideas in this excerpt, this section will be processed using a discussion game adapted from an idea in Michael Degan’s book *Prospero’s Magic: Awaken Students Critical Thinking Skills*. Teams may earn up to twelve points for this activity.
  - a. The text will be divided into six sections and students will be divided into six teams. Each team will be assigned a specific passage of the text and will have 5 minutes to prepare their discussion of the passage.
  - b. After preparation, the first team presents their thoughts on the passage. All members of the team must speak, or each member must make a substantial comment at least once during the class period. Teams will be penalized for not meeting this requirement. All other teams must listen carefully during the presentation. Presenting team members have up to four minutes to cover the following ideas:
    1. Summary details: What is the main point of this passage (1)
    2. Interpretation: What is significant about this passage? How does it help to develop main ideas? How does it connect to the key ideas in Transcendentalism. Elaborate. (1-3)
    3. Analysis: How does Thoreau communicate your answer to 2? Diction? Details? Imagery? Allusion? How do the techniques further reinforce the ideas? (1-3)
  - c. After each team presents, the remaining teams have an opportunity to make extemporaneous comments about the passage (additional insights, thoughtful questions, meaningful connections, etc.) Each listening team may have up to one minute to add any additional comments that have not been mentioned. However, teams will lose points if they merely repeat comments stated by the previous team. This step forces students to go deeper into the text.
  - d. After each listening team has had an opportunity to respond extemporaneously, the next presenting team begins with its passage.
2. After all groups have presented their passages, go back to the essential questions. According to Thoreau, what does it take to live deliberately? How can we find ways to do this in our own lives? What will be the challenges? What will be the benefits?
3. End by showing the following student project found on YouTube. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QPO-9a-nApw>. This is high-quality video summary of the key ideas of Transcendentalists using images and quotations. Ask for student reactions. How do the images in the video reinforce understanding of Transcendentalism? How does it reinforce the idea of living deliberately?
4. Review the idea that most of the Transcendentalists also believed that societal reform was a natural extension of individual reform. Introduce “Civil Disobedience.”

**Day 14 Homework:**

- Begin work on final assignment.

**Day 15 Homework:**

- Read and annotate the excerpt from “Civil Disobedience.” Review seminar questions (Appendix G) and prepare answers to assigned questions.

**Lesson 5: Putting ideas into action****Essential Questions:**

- **What are the responsibilities of individuals within a society and why do those responsibilities exist?**
- **How much power does an individual have to change society?**

**Days 16 and 17: “Civil Disobedience”** (two class periods or one block class)

1. This lesson will be a seminar discussion, a strategy students will have used during earlier units in the course. For this seminar, students will be divided into two groups and questions for those groups will be assigned as part of the previous night’s homework. While one group discusses their assigned questions using the seminar format, the students in the other group will sit on the outside of the circle and record feedback about another student’s participation in the seminar (Appendix H). This helps to keep non-participants engaged in the seminar, and it sets up a peer coaching situation to help students reflect and improve upon their discussion skills. When it is time for students on the outside of the circle to discuss their assigned questions, they will each be evaluated by the student whose discussion they monitored during the first part of the seminar. The teacher will also monitor seminar discussion and participation for each student and keep track of the type and quality of participation. Students should try to earn the 15 point value of the activity. Bonus points can be earned for exemplary discussion. Points will be awarded as follows:
  - Make a comment during the discussion (1-3 points depending on the insightfulness of the comment). This is awarded for each comment in the discussion.
  - Refer to a specific example or event in the text as support for the comment (1 pt).
  - Ask a thoughtful question that helps to deepen the discussion (1 pt).
  - Connect to the comment of another classmate and refer to that person by name (1 pt—this point is only awarded if the student mentions the classmate by name).
  - Link the comment to a relevant and specific literary technique or stylistic device (1 pt).

Some of the seminar questions (Appendix G) draw upon the work of other teachers: Frances Bryant, author of a “Civil Disobedience” seminar posted on Learn NC.org and Nick Nelson, my Valley High School Language Arts colleague.

2. Begin with the opening question. All students will provide a brief (2-3 sentence) response to the opening.
3. Bring the first group into the discussion circle and begin with the first question. Other students will be documenting peer participation as described earlier. Students will have the main responsibility for the discussion. The teacher will only enter into the discussion to clarify ideas, answer questions, move students on to the next core question when discussion on the topic has been exhausted, redirect off-topic discussion, or diffuse any heated discussion that could threaten the classroom climate. Students in the initial discussion will trade roles with their peer evaluators for the appropriate questions.
4. After core questions have been addressed, all students have the opportunity to respond to the closing question.
5. Teacher question: One of the more popular misconceptions was that Henry David Thoreau was a hermit who stayed away from society and did not concern himself with others’ affairs. Think about the arguments Henry David Thoreau makes in “Civil Disobedience.” How is the misconception an unfair and uninformed assessment of Thoreau?

6. Students debrief with their peer coaching partners about individual participation in the discussion.

**Homework:**

- Work on final Transcendentalism assignment.

**Day 18:** In-class work time on final assignment.

**Day 19:** Students share Transcendentalism assignments in class. This will most likely be a day or two after the in-class work day

**List of Materials/equipment (worksheets, handouts, etc.)**

- All handouts included in this unit (Appendixes A-I)
- Projector
- Document Camera
- Computer with PowerPoint and Internet connection
- *Dead Poets Society* (DVD)
- *Office Space* (DVD)
- Poster Paper
- Markers

**Link to West Des Moines Schools Language Arts Standards:**

**Writing Standard #1** *Writing Process:* Students will plan, write, revise, and edit while identifying personal strengths and weaknesses.

**Writing Standard #2** *Writing Purpose:* Students will demonstrate an understanding of purpose and audience in their writing

**Reading Standard #1** *Reading for Information:* Students will read and understand informational materials, describe characteristics of information text and use facts, ideas, and perspectives in developing concepts.

**Reading Standard #2** *Reading Literature:* Students will read and understand a variety of classic and contemporary literature representing diverse historical and cultural perspectives to build an understanding of themselves and others, their environment, and the world.

**Reading Standard #3** *Process of Reading:* Students will demonstrate their understanding of the reading process by using reading and thinking skills and strategies to achieve their purposes in reading.

**Reading Standard #4** *Literacy Communities:* Students will recognize the value of personal and social connection of reading, read to satisfy personal interests, and to establish, maintain, and enhance personal relationships with others.

## Appendix A

# Transcendentalism Journals

In order to better prepare yourself to consider the ideas in our unit on the Transcendentalists, you will complete a series of journals designed to help you connect to the key themes. Each journal will be set up with a passage from one of our readings, a thinking or reading activity, and a journal prompt. Your journals should thoughtfully respond to the ideas in the passage, preparation, and prompt. In keeping with the spirit of the Transcendentalists, your reflections should show a thorough exploration of the ideas at hand and an attempt to unpack your thinking. Although I expect you to give consideration to language conventions, I'm primarily interested in the thoughtfulness, depth, and quality of your response. Since most of the journals will be completed as overnight homework assignments, your responses may be handwritten although typed responses are appreciated.

**Journal #1:**Passage:

*"What I must do is all that concerns me, not what the people think. This rule, equally arduous in actual and in intellectual life, may serve for the whole distinction between greatness and meanness. It is the harder, because you will always find those who think they know what is your duty better than you know it. It is easy in the world to live after the world's opinion; it is easy in solitude to live after our own; but the great man is he who in the midst of the crowd keeps with perfect sweetness the independence of solitude."*

Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Self-Reliance*

Preparation to Write:

Do some people watching during the school day. Closely observe the actions and appearances of your peers in study hall, lunch, classes, the student center, etc. How much of what you observe reflects a decision to follow the crowd or shows a lack of willingness (maybe confidence?) to stick out in some way? How much of what you see shows independent action or thought? What situations or circumstances seem to cause people to choose one action over the other?

Journal Prompt:

What does it mean to trust oneself? What prevents individuals from trusting themselves? When are people most likely to trust their own intuitions and not worry about what other people might think? Is this issue more difficult for teenagers than people of other ages? Why or why not? Reference some of your observations as you respond to the prompt and connect your thoughts to the original passage.

**Journal #2:**Passage:

*"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; to smell the whispering sedge where only some wilder and more solitary fowl builds her nest, and the mink crawls with its belly close to the ground. 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."*

Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*, "Spring"

Preparation to Write:

Read the article "Conserving Land, Preserving Human Health" by Howard Frumkin, M.D., and Richard Louv. Consider the benefits of contact with nature as discussed in the article. Has that been your experience? Why or why not?

Journal Prompt:

Identify a special place in nature where you have enjoyed spending your time. This may be somewhere you go to often or it may be a place you have visited only once. Give a brief description of this place, but devote most of your response to explaining why this place stands out in your memory. Consider your thoughts, emotions, and mood in this place. Did (or does) it affect you in any of the ways described in the article? Do you agree with what Thoreau, Frumkin, and Louv have to say? Do we need the “tonic of wildness”? Why or why not? In addition to your written response, try to bring in a picture of your place or a representative image.

**Journal #3:**Passage:

*“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.”*

Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*, “Where I Lived and What I Lived For”

Preparation to Write:

Make a list of the activities of your typical day. How much of what you do is routine? Does that routine create a situation where you are just going through the motions and thinking very little about the meaning of your day? Do you spend more of your time “slumbering” through life or are you “awake” and intellectually engaged? Why? At what point in your day do you feel most invigorated, most alive? What would it take to make you “fully awake”?

Journal Prompt:

Drawing on the examples from your own life and those of your peers, explain whether or not you agree with Thoreau’s ideas. Are people conscious of their actions? Are they fully awake? What gets in the way of conscious, deliberate living? What does it take to get people to “wake up” from the “duh” state and move on to a more deliberate life?

**Each Journal will be worth 20 points and will be evaluated in the following areas:**

**Ideas and Content** \_\_\_\_\_/15

Your response demonstrates

- an insightful exploration of the specific ideas in the passage and prompt
- attempts to stretch your thinking
- an elaborated, in-depth discussion

**Polish** \_\_\_\_\_/5

Although the primary emphasis is on the content, your response should also demonstrate

- a logical organization of ideas
- appropriate use of language conventions

## Appendix B

## Transcendentalism: Contributions and Influences

In order for you to better understand the Transcendentalists and their ideas, you need to have a better understanding of the forces that shaped their lives and the lives of others who lived in the time period. In groups of two to three students, you will present a brief presentation about one of the following topics. Your presentation should meet the following requirements:

- Cover key highlights on the topic, especially as the topic relates to influences on the lives and writings of the major Transcendentalists
- Use PowerPoint to highlight key information but you are limited to three slides on your topic and each slide should focus on graphics rather than text. Remember, text should only be used to call attention to key ideas and provide a focus for your audience
- Equally distribute the effort in the preparation and presentation of information to your peers.
- Present your information in a clear and organized matter.
- Demonstrate clear speaking skills (enunciation, volume, pacing, and inflection)
- Stay within a five minute time limit
- Include a bibliography of credible sources.

You will have one day in the media center to research your presentation and decide on the key elements of your presentation. You will then have a couple of days to finalize your presentation outside of class although I will allow some class time for you to check in with each other and make final preparations.

You will be expected to take notes on each other's presentation.

See me if you have questions or need some guidance on the information that is most significant for your topic.

### Research Topics:

- Ralph Waldo Emerson: brief biographical information from his early life, key early writing, influence on the town of Concord
- Ralph Waldo Emerson: relationship with Thoreau (influences, Walden support, opinions of Thoreau)
- Bronson Alcott: Transcendental ideas, influences, how he was viewed by contemporaries
- Henry David Thoreau: the scientist and naturalist (contributions)
- Henry David Thoreau: the social activist—stories behind civil disobedience, his beliefs about slavery
- Henry David Thoreau: his background, his family, his education, his writing process
- Concord, Massachusetts as a setting of two revolutions
- Margaret Fuller: writings and contributions
- The railroad and its effects on local economies
- The Industrial Revolution in the northeast and its effect on the economy and society
- The Massachusetts abolitionist movement and the Fugitive Slave Law

**Evaluation: Transcendentalism Presentation**

**Group Members:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Topic:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Content:** \_\_\_\_\_/20 points

- The group covers essential ideas of the topic with specific details and examples.
- Information is clear and factual.
- Research sources are clearly credited.

*Comments:*

**Display and Delivery of Information:** \_\_\_\_\_/10 points

- Visual elements are enhanced with appropriate use of font, images, color, etc.
- Presenters use appropriate volume, inflection, pacing, and enunciation
- Delivery is smooth and well-rehearsed.

*Comments:*

**Group Collaboration:** \_\_\_\_\_/5 points

- Students worked efficiently and effectively as a team during the preparation and presentation.
- Students showed equal effort and responsibility.

*Comments:*

**Total:** \_\_\_\_\_/35

## Appendix C

### *Nature*/"Walking" Reading Guide

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

*Complete your assigned questions for tomorrow's discussion.*

1. "To go into solitude, a man needs to retire as much from his chamber as from society." What does Emerson mean by this?
2. "I am glad to the brink of fear." Interpret. What situations or experiences might make one "glad to the brink of fear"?
3. Emerson suggests that individuals are different in the woods. How is time in Nature different from life in society? Do you agree with him?
4. The Transcendentalists saw reason as something that was naturally possessed; it's not learned from experience but understood through intuition. How does time in Nature make it easier to return to reason and faith?
5. "I become a Transparent eyeball." Explain what Emerson means by this. How does the line reflect key ideas in Transcendentalism?
6. What relationship exists between individuals and Nature? Give examples from the text to support your conclusion.
7. "Nature always wears the colors of the spirit." Interpret this line.
8. What is meant by wildness?
9. What is Thoreau's definition of sauntering? How does this definition connect to the Transcendentalist idea of the Oversoul?
10. According to Thoreau, how should a true walker go about a walk? If Thoreau is being figurative here, what does he mean?
11. How do the effects of Nature identified by Thoreau compare to those discussed by Emerson in *Nature*? Find specific comparisons.
12. What does it mean when Thoreau says "that in wildness is the preservation of the World"? Do you agree?

## Appendix D

## Nature Journaling

*"To see a wren in a bush, call it "wren," and go on walking is to have (self-importantly) seen nothing. To see a bird and stop, watch, feel, forget yourself for a moment, be in the bushy shadows, maybe then feel "wren"-- that is to have joined in a larger moment with the world."*

-- Gary Snyder, *Language Goes Two Ways*, 1995.

### ***What is a Nature Journal?***

A nature journal is a place where you can develop your own thoughts, feelings, ideas, activities, observations, and relationship with the natural world. It is also an opportunity to interpret your inner thoughts as they connect to the natural world and a space where the natural world can connect to you and make a lasting impression.

### ***Observing Nature:***

Nature is the source of inspiration for a nature journal, and observation of nature is the most important part of creating one. Try to set aside any preconceived notions you have about the natural world. Clear your mind and be open to new possibilities. Look closely, observe with a keen eye, and record what you see in a way that is meaningful to you.

Build upon experience, remembering a certain order of events, relating one to another. Look closely at nature and then look again and recall patterns, motions; consider the sky, weather, sounds, and temperature; reflect upon nature's temperament. To get an even better sense of a specific place in nature, revisit and record the changes that occur from one season to another.

### ***How to Begin Writing a Nature Journal:***

1. Listen to Nature's voice, literally and figuratively, and provide descriptive words and details for rivers, streams, flowers, trees, creatures, and the way the natural world interacts and is engaged in daily activity. Consider how you are a part of that ecosystem and that diversity. Look at nature as if through a lens. Study sounds, movements, atmosphere. This is what Henry David Thoreau did as he wrote about the natural world. In the following excerpt from *Walden* in the chapter called "Ponds," Thoreau's writing focuses on the physical description of Walden Pond and its surroundings.

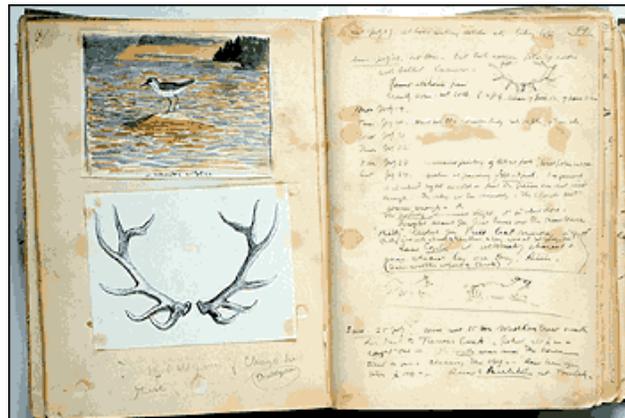
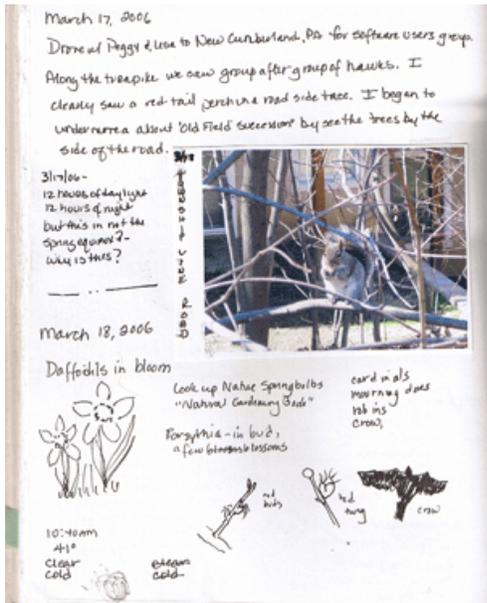
*The scenery of Walden is on a humble scale, and, though very beautiful, does not approach to grandeur, nor can it much concern one who has not long frequented it or lived by its shore; yet this pond is so remarkable for its depth and purity as to merit a particular description. It is a clear and deep green well, half a mile long and a mile and three quarters in circumference, and contains about sixty-one and a half acres; a perennial spring in the midst of pine and oak woods, without any visible inlet or outlet except by the clouds and evaporation. The surrounding hills rise abruptly from the water to the height of forty to eighty feet, though on the southeast and east they attain to about one hundred and one hundred and fifty feet respectively, within a quarter and a third of a mile. They are exclusively woodland . . . Walden is blue at one time and green at another, even from the same point of view. Lying between the earth and the heavens, it partakes of the color of both. Viewed from a hilltop it reflects the color of the sky; but near at hand it is of a yellowish tint next the shore where you can see the sand, then a light green, which gradually deepens to a uniform dark green in the body of the pond. In some lights, viewed even from a hilltop, it is of a vivid green next the shore. Some have referred this to the reflection of the verdure; but it is equally green there against the railroad sandbank, and in the spring, before the leaves are expanded, and it may be simply the result of the prevailing blue mixed with the yellow of the sand. Such is the color of its iris. . . . Yet a single glass of its water held up to the light is as colorless as an equal quantity of air.*

2. Incorporate your feelings, mood, and observations. What other ideas do your observations cause you to consider? In another passage from the "Ponds" chapter, Thoreau includes some of his observations about the pond that go further than physical description.

*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 be reflected in its bosom still.

3. Make note of some of the specifics. These details will be important if you plan to observe the same location over a period of time.
  - Date
  - Location
  - Time
  - Weather conditions
  - Vegetation characteristics
  - Human impacts and disturbance
4. Begin writing and keep writing. Do not be too critical or edit your writing to the detriment of spontaneity. Let your writing flow.
5. Your journal can take different forms. You can write as if writing a letter to yourself, a friend, or a family member. You could also create a narrative account of your experience. Your writing can be prose or poetry or a combination of both. Nature journals can also go beyond the written word in the form of pictures with words, drawings, photographs, or pressed plants.



<http://www.amnh.org/nationalcenter/youngnaturalistawards/resources/fieldjournal.html>

<http://www.connecting-with-nature.net/journal.html>

*Find a space in Nature, attempt to "see" in the way Annie Dillard discussed, and record your observations and thoughts. Enjoy!*

*Information for this handout comes from the following sources:*

Gisel, Bonnie Johanna. "Environmental Education: Keeping a Nature Journal." Sierra Club. 2002. 9 Aug.

2008 <[http://www.sierraclub.org/education/nature\\_journal.asp](http://www.sierraclub.org/education/nature_journal.asp)>.

Matsumoto, Karen. "The Nature Journal as a Tool for Learning." New Horizons for Learning. May 2003. 8

Aug. 2008 <http://www.newhorizons.org/strategies/environmental/matsumoto.htm>>.

## Appendix E

## Early American Literature: Jester Park Excursion

*Your trip will be divided into three separate experiences: a woodland hike with a Polk County naturalist, a pelican migration study, and a time for nature observation and journaling.*

### I. Woodland Hike:

A Polk County naturalist will lead you through one of the many woodland trails in Jester Park. You will hear about the history of Iowa's woodlands and the surrounding ecology. Pay attention to the trees and creatures you encounter along your hike. Record interesting information and observations in your notebook.



**Jester Park Fall Foliage**

<http://picasaweb.google.com/hanna.strait/Fall07/photo#5128355788447499826>

### II. Pelican Observation

Each year thousands of white pelicans can be seen around Saylorville Lake during spring and fall migration. You will have the chance to learn more about these birds, hear about environmental issues that threaten them, and use spotting scopes to observe their movement and behavior. As you listen to one of the Polk County naturalists, jot down interesting thoughts and information about these birds and note interesting details about your observations.

### III. The Transparent Eyeball Experience:

*Read and ponder the following passages from our Transcendental sages as you prepare for some alone time in Nature.*

#### From *Nature*—Ralph Waldo Emerson

*“Standing on the bare ground, — my head bathed by the blithe air, and uplifted into infinite space, — all mean egotism vanishes. I become a transparent eye-ball; I am nothing; I see all . . . ”*

*“Nature always wears the colors of the spirit.”*

#### From *Walden*—Henry David Thoreau

*“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.”*

*“Our life is frittered away by detail . . . Simplify, simplify.”*

*“It is remarkable how easily and insensibly we fall into a particular route, and make a beaten track for ourselves. . . . The surface of the earth is soft and impressible by the feet of men; and so with the paths which the mind travels.”*

#### From “The Apology” by Ralph Waldo Emerson

*Think me not unkind and rude,  
That I walk alone in grove and glen;  
I go to the god of the wood  
To fetch his word to men.*

*Tax not my sloth that I  
Fold my arms beside the brook;  
Each cloud that floated in the sky  
Writes a letter in my book.*

**Your assignment for this section is simple. To be successful, you must follow these instructions:**

1. Find a quiet place in the open space around the shelter, on one of the trails, or by the lake.
2. Put away all cell phones, music players, and other technological distractions.
3. Absolutely, **do not talk to anyone** during this experience.
4. Look, listen, feel, smell, and connect to the environment around you and write about what you observe. You can choose your format: poetry, prose, drawing, or simply free association. Do not talk to anyone.
5. When you hear the whistle blow four times, return to the shelter. You will have 45 minutes for this experience.

#### **IV. The Reflection:**

In addition to your field notes and journal, please bring a written response to the following ideas when you come to our next class meeting.

- How was this experience different from a natural encounter that you might experience within the city limits of Clive, West Des Moines, or Urbandale? Did it seem more authentic or more “natural”? Would you be able to have the same experience within your city limits if you looked for the right place or observed with a similar mindset? Explain.
- Reflecting on your Transparent Eyeball experience, have you ever spent that much time by yourself in Nature before? What did you notice during your extended alone time? How did the setting influence your thinking? Would you do this type of thing more often if you could?
- Thinking Transcendental for a moment, did you sense a greater connection to nature during your Jester Park excursion? Why or why not? Would more time in Nature strengthen your relationship with the natural world?
- Reflect on the following quotation: “In the end, we will only conserve what we love, we will love only what we understand, and we will understand only what we have been taught” –Baba Dioum. Refer to some of your Jester Park experiences as you discuss your understanding of the quotation.

#### **Evaluation:**

- Your nature journal and field notes will be worth ten points. The evaluation is simple; if I see specific details and a deliberate attempt to observe and ponder the natural world, you will earn ten points.
- The reflection will be evaluated using the same criteria as other journals in this unit. (20 points)

Appendix F

Walden, "Where I Lived and What I Lived For"  
Preparation for the Journey

*Literal Destination:*



*Intellectual Destination:*

**What actions are necessary to reach the destination?**

*What does Thoreau encourage people to do in this chapter if they are to complete the journey and live deliberately?*

**What are the potential derailments or detours?**

*What cautions does Thoreau identify? What situations and ideas keep people from living deliberately?*



**Appendix G****“Civil Disobedience” – Seminar Discussion**

Consider the following questions after reading the excerpt from “Civil Disobedience” and prepare answers to your assigned questions.

**Opening:**

- Which line in Thoreau’s excerpt has the most meaning to you? Why?

**Core:**

1. Do you agree with Thoreau’s claim that the government which governs least is better? Why or why not? Does government get in the way?
2. What would it take to have a better government according to Thoreau? According to you? Would it be good to have a government that governs not at all? Explain.
3. Thoreau makes some arguments about why certain people get into power and why individuals lose their influence. How does this happen? Do you see it happening in government today?
4. To what lengths should individuals go to reform society? What are the potential consequences? What are the benefits?
5. How much power does an individual have to change society? How much power should individuals have to change society? Would we have a better society if all individuals used conscience as their guide for actions?
6. Give examples of civil disobedience from more recent history. What made actions of these individuals successful? Why don’t more individuals act on their principles?
7. Does Thoreau believe civil disobedience must be an outcome of deliberate living? Do you? Support your response.
8. Who is ultimately more important: the individual, the citizens as a whole, or the government? According to Thoreau? According to society? According to you?

**Closing:**

- Give examples of circumstances that might be different if more people acted on their principles.

**Appendix H**

**Seminar Discussion Peer Coaching**

**Literature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Discussion Participant:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Peer Evaluator:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Student Observation Responsibilities:**

Pay close attention to your discussion partner during his or her participation in the discussion. Complete the following items for the chart:

- Record any questions the student asked during the discussion.
- Record a brief summary of each comment made by your discussion partner
- Did the comment refer to a specific action/event within the text?
- Did the comment include a specific passage (quotation) in the text to support his/her comment?
- Did the comment make a connection to an idea of another classmate and did your peer identify that person by name?
- Did the comment make a direct connection to a specific literary concept or stylistic device and use the language of the discipline (characterization, theme, setting, metaphor, allusion, etc.)?

<b>Summary of Comment</b>	<b>Specific example or quotation? (Y/N)</b>	<b>Connection to another student's comment? (Y/N—give name)</b>	<b>Connection to literary concept? (Y/N—give concept)</b>

**To be completed by the evaluator:**

**Questions asked by the student:**

**(Evaluation comments on the back)**

**Strength of discussion participation:**

**Something to improve on next time:**

**Discussion Participant Reaction:**

**1. What do you think you did well in this discussion?**

**2. What do you want to improve upon in the next class discussion?**

**3. What point did you want to make during the discussion that you didn't have a chance to say?**

## Appendix I

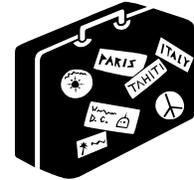
## Transcendentalism: Final Assessment Options

I fear that Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau would take issue with me if I gave you a major test over their work and the lessons of Transcendentalism. They would be disappointed if I did not require you to stretch your thinking and do something out of the ordinary. In an attempt to assess you in a manner worthy of the Transcendentalists, I offer you the following options:

### Option 1: Transcendentalist Bumper Stickers

Create at least six Transcendentalist bumper stickers that reflect the key ideas of Transcendentalism.

- Choose a combination of quotes from the Transcendentalists we read in class (a balanced set of quotations from the works of Emerson and Thoreau). The quotes should come from the excerpts we read in class. Select your quotations, design the layout, add graphics, etc.
- On a separate sheet of paper from your bumper stickers, explain the quotations you have chosen. A separate explanation is needed for each bumper sticker.
- Your explanation should identify the selection from which it was taken, your interpretation(s) of the meaning, and how your design reinforces the ideas behind each quotation.
- Explain how the quotation promotes key ideas in Transcendentalism.
- Finally, provide your personal thoughts on the quotation. Where in your life might this idea be relevant, either now or in the future? If you can't make a specific connection to your own life right now, at what point in life might this quotation be relevant (for you or someone else)? What did this line mean for people in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century? What does it mean for people at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup>? How does the quotation promote deliberate living?



Your quotes must reflect some significant aspect of Transcendentalism and your explanations should show that you understand the connection. I also want to see significant effort in the design of your bumper stickers. Each should be reflective of high school work and have a design that reflects the meaning (graphics, text design, etc.). Your explanations should be accurate, thoughtful, and developed.

### Option 2: Thoreau in a bag

Imagine Thoreau has been transported to the 21<sup>st</sup> century. What would he carry around in his backpack? Describe eight to ten things he possesses and how they reflect his character, personality, and beliefs. You need to explain each item in your collection, provide and explain a specific passage from our reading that supports the choice of each item and how your item connects to that, and explain why the item is representative of Thoreau and Transcendentalism. Include your collection of items (or representations of the items). Do more research about Thoreau's life and learn other details not discussed in class. Use in-text citation and include a works cited if you use biographical information to lend support to your choices. You should have a well-developed paragraph to support each item. Be creative in your selection of items and don't be too predictable. Thoreau wanted people go beyond the ordinary.



### Option 3: Thoreau: Simplify! Simplify!

In the century and a half since Thoreau wrote *Walden*, life for most Americans has become increasingly complex rather than simpler. Write an editorial for a major newspaper either advocating or rejecting Thoreau's ideas of simplicity for today's world. In your editorial, you will need to introduce Thoreau and outline his ideas. Use quotations from his writings to illustrate your points. Anticipate and answer the arguments of those who may disagree with you. A strong piece of writing will include thoughtful analysis, insightful interpretation, specific supporting examples from the text and daily life, and an accurate discussion of the key themes of Thoreau's works and the philosophy of Transcendentalism.

**Option 4: Go Forth and Conquer: The words of Emerson and Thoreau**

Emerson and Thoreau are two of the most frequently quoted authors when people are in need of words to inspire and motivate others. Congratulations! You've been selected to give the commencement address to the Valley High School Class of 2008 on the theme of Living Deliberately. Base your address on the writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau. Select specific passages from the works we read in class and use those as support for the advice you wish to give to graduates. Your advice should include why these ideas are important for young people to consider as they prepare to move on to the next phase of their lives. A strong piece of writing will include thoughtful analysis, insightful interpretation, specific supporting examples from the texts and daily life, and an accurate discussion of the key themes Emerson, Thoreau, and Transcendentalism. Your speech should be addressed to the Class of 2008.

**Option 5: Finding the Wild around you:**

Thoreau argued that we need “the tonic of wildness” and Frumkin and Louv presented 21<sup>st</sup> century research to support Thoreau’s 19<sup>th</sup> century claim. Take some time to find the “wildness” around you. Choose a natural location within a fifteen minute drive of your house and observe it through the lens of the Transcendentalists. This could be a park, your backyard, or random urban green space. Make at least three visits to your location at different times of day, moods, and circumstances. Do some journaling Thoreau style and document your visits in some way. Put together a final product that creatively communicates your observations, your insights, and your understanding of specific passages from the works of Emerson and Thoreau. Your final project will show that you attempted to “see” in the way Annie Dillard described. Although writing will be necessary to explain your understanding of the Transcendentalists and specific passages in their works, you may also incorporate photographs, drawings, poetry, natural artifacts, etc. Display your understanding of a small piece of the natural world around you and what it has to offer you.

**Your project will be evaluated in the following areas:**

- Understanding of ideas and concepts (themes, Transcendentalism, passage specifics)—40 points
- Support of ideas (examples, explanation, textual references)—20 points
- Presentation (neatness, high school work, limited errors)—50 points

You will share your assignment in class on the due date.

***Carpe Diem!!***  
***Make your assignments extraordinary!!***

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Class Period: \_\_\_\_\_

## *The Transcendentalists*

### Final Assignment Evaluation

Project Option:

	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D/F</b>
<b>Understanding of Ideas and Concepts</b>  <b>40</b>	The assignment gives evidence of exemplary understanding of major ideas and literary concepts in the Transcendentalist readings. Almost all of the work shows interpretation, analysis, synthesis, or evaluation of ideas.	The assignment gives evidence of a good understanding of major ideas and literary concepts in the Transcendentalist readings. Most of the work shows interpretation, analysis, synthesis or evaluation of ideas.	The assignment shows some evidence of understanding the major ideas and literary concepts in the Transcendentalist readings. A small amount of the work shows interpretation, analysis, synthesis, or evaluation of ideas.	The assignment gives little or no evidence of an understanding of major ideas and/or literary concepts in the Transcendentalist readings. The work does not show interpretation, analysis, synthesis, or evaluation of ideas.
<b>Support for Ideas</b>  <b>20</b>	Explanations are clear, convincing, and accurate, with no significant errors. The assignment effectively uses specific textual references as support for almost all ideas.	Explanations are present. They are reasonably clear and accurate, but may be less convincing. The assignment uses some specific textual references to support explanations.	Explanations are present. However, they may not be finished, may omit a significant idea, or may contain significant errors. Textual references are vague and/or limited.	Explanations are absent, or if present, are incomplete, inappropriate, or incorrect. Little to know textual support is given.
<b>Presentation</b>  <b>15</b>	The assignment uses exemplary word choice, sentence fluency, and conventions. For more visual project options, designs are purposeful and reflective of high school work and use appropriate, high quality graphics and images.	The assignment uses satisfactory word choice, sentence fluency, and conventions. There are a few errors, but they present no problem for understanding meaning. For visual project options, most of the designs are purposeful and reflective of high school work and use appropriate graphics.	There are problems in word choice, sentence fluency, and conventions, and it is difficult but not impossible to understand the student's meaning. For visual options, the designs may distract from the content in ways related to neatness, lack of purpose, and/or selection of graphics.	The use of word choice, sentence fluency, and/or conventions does not meet minimum standards. For visual options, the designs prevent ideas from being communicated or are not at all reflective of high school work.

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