

**TOOLKIT FOR  
HIGH SCHOOLS  
& COLLEGES**

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The Walden Woods Project, Freedom's Way National Heritage Area, University of Massachusetts Lowell Honors College, and Massachusetts Center for the Book are thrilled to announce the **Thoreau Bicentennial Statewide Read** in celebration of the 200th birthday of the great American writer and philosopher *Henry David Thoreau*.

The goal of the Statewide Read is to have *every* town or city in Massachusetts participate by coordinating at least one event in 2017 that brings community members together to read a work by Thoreau. We hope that some of these events are planned by educational institutions across the state!

In the spirit of self-determination championed by Thoreau, the coordinators of each town/city's Read event can choose *when* in 2017 they want to carry out their Read; *how* they want to implement their Read (book group, public reading, a day of activities, etc.); and *which* Thoreau piece they will read. With that said, to facilitate some shared experience among participants across the state, one brief excerpt from *Walden* is provided in this toolkit (p. 10) that your community can read in addition to your chosen piece.

To promote and coordinate, a calendar of Read-related events will be maintained throughout the year (as part of a larger, global Bicentennial events calendar). By utilizing this tool, each community can share information about their Read, see what other communities are doing and maybe even discover opportunities for multi-site collaboration! To access the calendar, visit [www.thoreaubicentennial.com](http://www.thoreaubicentennial.com).

Thank you for your interest in becoming a partner in this project and for helping to celebrate Henry. The Thoreau Bicentennial Statewide Read is funded in part by support from the Freedom's Way National Heritage Area.



The  
**Honors**  
College  
*at UMass Lowell*



MASSACHUSETTS  
CENTER *for the* BOOK

**FREEDOM'S WAY**  
National Heritage Area | Nature • Culture • History

## About the Toolkit

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This toolkit is provided to schools throughout Massachusetts to enhance the Thoreau Bicentennial Statewide Read. In this toolkit, you will find helpful resources for organizing lessons about Thoreau. Also included are ideas for how you can use Thoreau's works to host a variety of reading activities at your school, and where you might be able to get copies of Thoreau's works. Finally, you will find a brief discussion guide to six of Thoreau's major works, which you can use to encourage new thoughts and ideas among your students.

## About Henry David Thoreau

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Social reformer — Naturalist — Philosopher — Transcendentalist — Scientist. These are just some of the terms by which Henry David Thoreau can be described.

Henry David Thoreau lived in the mid-nineteenth century during turbulent times in America. He said he was born "in the nick of time" in Concord, Massachusetts, during the flowering of America when the transcendental movement was taking root and when the anti-slavery movement was rapidly gaining momentum.

Thoreau's contemporaries and neighbors were Nathaniel Hawthorne, Bronson Alcott, Margaret Fuller, and his mentor, Ralph Waldo Emerson. He was at once philosopher and naturalist; abolitionist and teacher; scientist and moralist; poet and surveyor; pencil maker and author. It is perhaps the many "lives" of Thoreau, both individually and collectively, that beckon such a diversity of people to his writings.

Unquestionably, Thoreau enjoys greater national and international popularity today than ever before. His books are selling at an unprecedented rate. People are particularly drawn to his belief of finding spirituality in nature – a philosophy woven throughout his books and essays. As our lives become ever more complex, we hunger for simplicity and a communion with nature that Thoreau insists will lead to truth and spiritual renewal.

*—Adapted from the Walden Woods Project's website*

## Resources for Educators

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The Walden Woods Project offers many resources for teachers who are interested in educating their students about Thoreau or Transcendentalism and want their class to participate in the Statewide Read:

1. The Walden Woods Project maintains a rich collection of curriculum units. These units were created by teachers who have attended our summer professional development seminars (and have given their permission to have them shared online). Most are intended for a high school audience (exception noted below). They are organized by theme or audience (though, due to the interdisciplinary and rich nature of Thoreau as subject matter, many units could easily fit into more than one category). <https://www.walden.org/education/curriculum-collection/>
2. "A Teachers' Guide to Transcendentalism": <https://www.walden.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Teachers-Guide-to-Transcendentalism.pdf>
3. The Walden Woods Project offers an annual professional development summer seminar, "Approaching Walden," for teachers who want to deepen their understanding of Thoreau while spending time in his beloved Walden Woods. Visit <https://www.walden.org/education/approaching-walden/> for more information.
4. The Walden Woods Project also offers a variety of one-day workshops for educators, conservation professionals and the general public. For more information, visit <https://www.walden.org/education/professional-development/workshops/>.
5. The Live Deliberately Essay Contest is open to youth ages 14-21 from around the globe. The contest asks students to respond thoughtfully to Thoreau's words and ideas. Winner in each age group receives \$250 and a signed edition of *Walden*. For this year's prompt: <https://www.walden.org/education/essay-contest/>.
6. If you would like help planning a lesson or would like more information, please email [education@walden.org](mailto:education@walden.org). You can also find more ideas and educational resources at <https://www.walden.org/education>.
7. If you have students interested in studying Nature and the environment, the Henry David Thoreau Foundation gives out college scholarships to students who demonstrate environmental leadership. Visit their website for more information: <http://www.thoreauscholar.org/undergraduate-scholarships/application>.

## Introducing *The Readers' Thoreau*

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*The Readers' Thoreau* is a network for reading and discussing the works of Henry David Thoreau online. To get started, go to <http://commons.digitalthoreau.org>. Follow the link to *Walden* or "Resistance to Civil Government" (aka "Civil Disobedience") and begin reading Thoreau's works along with comments posted right in the margins by students, teachers, scholars, and general readers. From each paragraph, follow links to articles in JSTOR that reference that paragraph. Join the network and share your own ideas about *Walden* or "Resistance to Civil Government" in the margins.

If you're a teacher, you can create a dedicated reading group for your students. They can converse with each other both in the margins of Thoreau's works and in their own discussion forum. Showcase your students' conversation, keep it private, or share it with selected other groups. Read papers about Thoreau delivered at the 2016 Thoreau Society Annual Gathering and comment in the margins of those, too. Have your students write their own essays about Thoreau and, if they choose, open those essays to reader comments. The Readers' Thoreau is a project of Digital Thoreau (<http://digitalthoreau.org>), an online resource and community developed collaboratively by the State University of New York at Geneseo, The Thoreau Society, and The Walden Woods Project.

**"The Library is a wilderness of books."**

— *Journal*, 16 March 1852

## Recommended Editions of Thoreau's Works

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If you are interested in reading Thoreau in your class, it is highly recommended that you select an annotated version of one of his works to read. Some of the books below are compilations of multiple books or essays. Thoreau's works are also available for **free online**:

<https://www.walden.org/thoreau/the-writings-of-henry-david-thoreau-the-digital-collection>

*Cape Cod.* Ed. Joseph J. Moldenhauer. Princeton University Press, 2004.

*Cape Cod.* Illustrated ed. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2008. Photographs by Scot Miller.

*Henry David Thoreau: A Week, Walden, The Maine Woods, Cape Cod.* Ed. Robert F. Sayre. New York, NY: Library of America, 1985.

*The Maine Woods: A Fully Annotated Edition.* Ed. Jeffrey S. Cramer.

*The Maine Woods.* Ed. Joseph J. Moldenhauer. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 2004.

*The Portable Thoreau.* Ed. Jeffrey S. Cramer. New York: Penguin, 2012.

**Contents:** "Natural History of Massachusetts," *A Winter Walk*, "Ktaadn (From *The Maine Woods*)," "Civil Disobedience," "The Journal: Selections from Thoreau's Journal on the Art of Writing," Selected Poems, *Walden*, *Cape Cod*, Correspondence: Selections from Thoreau's Letters to H.G.O. Blake, "The Last Days of John Brown," "Walking," "Life Without Principle."

*Thoreau Essays: A Fully Annotated Edition.* Ed. Jeffrey S. Cramer.

**Contents:** "Natural History of Massachusetts," *A Winter Walk*, "A Walk to Wachusett," "Paradise (to be) Regained," "Wendell Phillips Before Concord Lyceum," "Thomas Carlyle and His Works," "Resistance to Civil Government [Civil Disobedience]," "Slavery in Massachusetts," John Brown Essays ("A Plea for Captain John Brown," "The Last Days of John Brown"), "An Address on the Succession of Forest Trees," "Walking," "Autumnal Tints," "Wild Apples," "Life Without Principle."

*Walden: A Fully Annotated Edition* Ed. Jeffrey S. Cramer. Yale University Press, 2006.

*Walden.* Ed. J. Lyndon Shanley. Princeton, NJ: Princeton U Pres, 2004.

*Walden, Civil Disobedience, and Other Writings: Authoritative Texts, Journal, Reviews and Posthumous Assessments, Criticism.* Ed. William John Rossi. Norton Critical Editions, 3rd ed. New York: W.W. Norton, 2008.

## Classroom Activities

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For teachers who want their class to participate in the Statewide Read, here are some suggested activities that can enhance the reading experience:

1. Encourage your students to take nature walks and write about their observations or thoughts in a journal.
2. If you want to do an outdoor walk and intersperse Thoreau's words throughout, we have compiled excerpts from "Walking" that might work for this purpose. Visit: [www.walden.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Walking-excerpts.pdf](http://www.walden.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Walking-excerpts.pdf)
3. Show a movie that highlights Thoreau's work or life. Suggested films: *Holiday* (1938), *New Walden* (1991), *Little Women* (1994), *Into the Wild* (2007), *Marbles with Thoreau* (2009), *The Lorax* (2012).
4. Reach out to a community garden and have the students plant a bean field like Thoreau did at Walden Pond.
5. Host a field trip to Walden Woods. For information on guided tours email [education@walden.org](mailto:education@walden.org).
6. Host an interactive Skype session with Jeffrey Cramer, Walden Woods Project's Thoreau Institute Library Curator of Collections and renowned Thoreau scholar. For more information, visit:  
<https://education.microsoft.com/Story/SkypeLesson?token=13e60>
7. Host a Thoreau scholar to give a presentation in your classroom or school auditorium. Email [education@walden.org](mailto:education@walden.org) for more information.
8. Have students keep a journal on their thoughts about/reactions to Thoreau's writing. For some journal prompts based on Thoreau's words, visit:  
[https://www.walden.org/education/journaling-resources/](http://www.walden.org/education/journaling-resources/)
9. Create an essay contest or summer reading program for your students and challenge them to write about Thoreau or Walden Pond. You can also have students participate in the Walden Wood's Project's Annual Live Deliberately Essay Contest! For more information, visit <https://walden.org/education/essay-contest>.
10. Encourage students to give readings of Thoreau's works. Students from UMass Lowell Honors College are trained to facilitate discussions and activities. If you would like help from one of these students, contact the Walden Woods Project by emailing [education@walden.org](mailto:education@walden.org).

## Discussion Guides

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To get readers started, the Walden Woods Project has provided a brief set of discussion questions for some of Thoreau's more popular works. However, you are more than welcome to choose other works from Thoreau for your class to read. The Walden Woods Project would be happy to create additional discussion guides upon request. In the future, a link will be provided on the Bicentennial website to more in-depth discussion guides.

### ***Walden:***

- Why do you think Thoreau moved closer to nature to conduct his experiment?
- How does Thoreau suggest we live life? What was his main message? Why?
- What do you think it means to "live deliberately"? How does Thoreau accomplish this? Do you live deliberately?
- Thoreau refers to Walden Pond as a mirror. In what ways does it—and nature in general—serve as a mirror?
- What do you think is the most central metaphor for the book as a whole?

### **"Walking":**

- How does Thoreau connect the experiences of walking and writing?
- Thoreau often makes use of metaphor to link various aspects of his surroundings with themes of religion and faith. What is he trying to say? How does Thoreau relate walking to a sacred journey (pilgrimage)?
- What is the difference between wilderness and wildness?
- Thoreau recalls walking on Spaulding's Farm. How and why does he add a sense of nobleness to the simplicity he sees around him?
- What does Thoreau mean when he compares Knowledge and Ignorance?

### **"Ktaadn":**

- Solitude is a common theme in "Ktaadn." Where does Thoreau see solitude? How does he connect solitude with wilderness? How does he seem to feel about solitude? Do you agree with him?
- What do you think Thoreau thought about Native Americans and their way of life?
- Thoreau writes about passing through the villages of Stillwater and Oldtown. What does he think about their lumber business? Can you make connections to environmental problems today?

### **Cape Cod:**

Suggested chapters: "The Shipwreck" (**Disclaimer:** graphic descriptions of death), "The Wellfleet Oysterman", and "The Highland Light"

- In "The Shipwreck," as well as other chapters, Thoreau describes horrible and heart-wrenching scenes of death, while also showing the business-like manner with which people attended to the dead. How does Thoreau contrast death with the business of life?
- In "The Wellfleet Oysterman," the old oysterman shares his life's experiences with Thoreau. What do you think are some of the reasons that Thoreau seems to like and respect him? What are your favorite interactions that Thoreau has with the oysterman?
- The oysterman enjoys reading the Bible, but did not enjoy attending church. Why do you think that is?
- Throughout *Cape Cod*, Thoreau comments on nature interfering with human endeavors, whether it is as violent as a storm wrecking a ship or as gradual as coastal erosion. What does Thoreau think about this relationship between nature and humans? What do you think he wants to show readers?

### **"Civil Disobedience":**

- Thoreau discusses his frustrations with the government during his time. What are some of the problems you see in government and society today? What are some ways you can live your own life to promote change?
- We live in a democratic country, where the majority rules on important issues. What value does Thoreau see in the minority? In the individual?
- Why does Thoreau not seem to mind that he had to spend the night in jail?
- "Civil Disobedience" has inspired people throughout history – from Gandhi to Martin Luther King Jr. to protesters of the Vietnam War. What do you think is inspirational about Thoreau's writing?

## Excerpts from *Walden*

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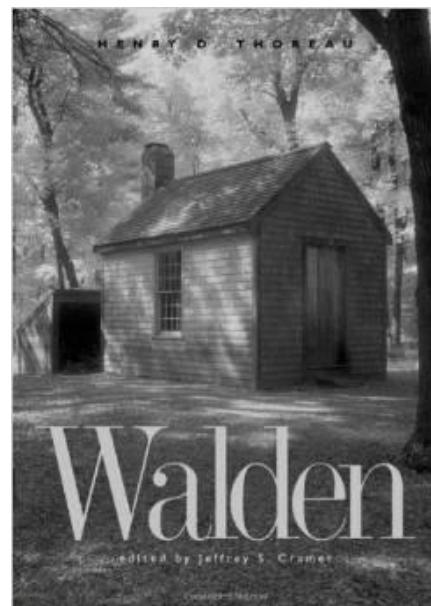
While we support each town/city/community in choosing the larger work that will be the focus of their Read event, we do hope for some shared experience among Statewide Read participants across the Commonwealth. With that in mind, we offer the following excerpts, both from *Walden*, which we encourage you to incorporate into your Read event in some way.

### From “Economy”

*The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation. What is called resignation is confirmed desperation. From the desperate city you go into the desperate country, and have to console yourself with the bravery of minks and muskrats. A stereotyped but unconscious despair is concealed even under what are called the games and amusements of mankind. There is no play in them, for this comes after work. But it is a characteristic of wisdom not to do desperate things.*

### From “Conclusion”

*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 bears 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?*



## Publicizing your Statewide Read event(s)

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We hope that you are excited to tell people about your participation in the Thoreau Bicentennial Statewide Read!

An easy way to promote your event to the public is with a news release to your local paper(s). A sample release is included below. Be sure to submit it at least three weeks prior to your event (or the first day of your event). A call to your newspaper will help you determine to whom your release should be sent.

The same release could be sent to local radio stations, as well. Your local National Public Radio station(s) or other local stations may be helpful when it comes to promoting events such as this.

Church bulletins, labor newspapers, some cable access TV systems, and any other local media may be able to provide you with free promotion. We have engaged with libraries across the state about the Read, as well, so you may want to contact them to either partner and/or promote your Read event. They will probably be happy to place signage or flyers in their buildings for you.

Social media is a good tool to promote your participation in the Statewide Read. If you have a Facebook page for your agency, post every day about the Statewide Read and the book's message. Ask your "friends" to share your posts. Encourage your staff as well as volunteers to post to their Facebook pages too. Use Twitter to keep your message in front of people. The key to using social media is to use it consistently. If your school allows, please like and follow the Statewide Read sponsoring organizations. For their Facebook addresses and twitter handles, see the following page.

## Hashtag

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When posting on any social media platform about your participation in the Thoreau Bicentennial Statewide Read (including pictures from your event!), please encourage people to use the hashtag:

**#thoreau200read**

## Sample Facebook Posts

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(*Your program name*) invites you to join us as for the Thoreau Bicentennial Statewide Read, brought to you by @WaldenWoodsProject, @Freedom'sWayNationalHeritageArea, @umlhonors, and @masscenterforthebook, as we read (*work you have chosen*) by Henry David Thoreau. Community discussion will be held on (*date*) at (*time*) in the (*location*). We will be discussing chapters (*the numbers*). For details call (---) -----. #thoreau200read

Have you read (*work you have chosen*) by Henry David Thoreau? Our (*students, staff, volunteers, etc.*) are reading it now! Join us for the Thoreau Bicentennial Statewide Read, brought to you by @WaldenWoodsProject, @Freedom'sWayNationalHeritageArea, @umlhonors, and @masscenterforthebook as we discuss chapters (*the numbers*) on (*date*) at (*time*). We'll meet at (*location*). Everyone is welcome! #thoreau200read

Do you have an interest in great American literature? Then join us on (*date*) at (*time*) in the (*location*) to read (*work you have chosen*) by Henry David Thoreau for the Thoreau Bicentennial Statewide Read, brought to you by @WaldenWoodsProject, @Freedom'sWayNationalHeritageArea, @umlhonors, and @masscenterforthebook. If you'd like to know more about this, please call us at (---) -----. #thoreau200read

**Facebook pages:** **@WaldenWoodsProject** **@Freedom'sWayNationalHeritageArea**  
**@umlhonors** **@masscenterforthebook**

## Sample Tweets

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Celebrate Thoreau's 200th birthday with us and all of MA. We're participating in the #thoreau200Read <http://bit.ly/2chaR3d>

Are Thoreau's works relevant to you? Read (*your selected work*) along with us to find out (*insert event URL*)

Need a reason to celebrate? Celebrate Thoreau's 200th birthday throughout the year <http://bit.ly/2ccdFQT>

You're invited! Celebrate Thoreau's 200th birthday with us (*add your event and URL*) #thoreau200read

**Twitter handles:** **@TheWaldenWoods** **@Freedom'sWayNHA** **@HonorsUML** **@MassBook**

# Sample News Release Format

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For Immediate Use through (*end date of your Read event*)

Contact: (*Person at your school who can give more info. and his/her phone number*)

**(Your school name)** is reading **(work you have chosen)** as part of the Thoreau Bicentennial Statewide Read, celebrating Henry David Thoreau's 200th birthday

(*Your town/city, MA*) The students and faculty (*or certain class or club, etc.*) of (*your school's name*) are reading **(work you have chosen)** by Henry David Thoreau as part of the **Thoreau Bicentennial Statewide Read**, with events taking place in every city/town in Massachusetts throughout 2017. The Thoreau Bicentennial Statewide Read is part of a global celebration that highlights the continued relevance of Thoreau's writings and philosophical contributions, even 200 years after his birth (July 12, 1817).

(*Your town*) will host our reading of Thoreau on (*Date, time, place*), reading **(work you have chosen)**. (*Insert more information about your Read event here, if applicable; e.g., children's activities, how to register, etc.*) Please join us in celebrating this great American author, philosopher, and poet. His message still rings clear in our hectic society, and perhaps some of his words might help to alleviate the pressures of modern-day life.

The Walden Woods Project (Lincoln, MA), Freedom's Way National Heritage Area (Devens, MA), University of Massachusetts Lowell Honors College (Lowell, MA), and Massachusetts Center for the Book (Boston, MA) are co-sponsors of the Thoreau Bicentennial Statewide Read. Their goal is to have every town or city in Massachusetts participate by coordinating at least one event in 2017 that brings community members together to read a work by Thoreau.

In the spirit of self-determination championed by Thoreau, the coordinators of each town/city's Read event can choose when in 2017 they want to carry out their Read; how they want to implement their Read (book group, public reading, a day of activities, etc.); and which Thoreau piece they will read. With that said, to facilitate some shared experience among participants across the state, organizers will provide a brief excerpt from *Walden* for all participants to read, providing a connecting thread between all Read events across the state.

For more information about the Read event in (*your city/town*), please contact (*insert contact person and information*).

For more information about the Thoreau Bicentennial Statewide Read as a whole, please contact the Walden Woods Project at [education@walden.org](mailto:education@walden.org) or visit <https://www.walden.org/bicentennial/read>.

# Frequently Asked Questions

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## **Q. What are the goals for the Read?**

A. Our hope is that students and faculty of every school in Massachusetts have the opportunity to participate in a Read at some point in 2017. Each school will get to choose what work they wish to read, when they wish to read it and in what manner they wish to do it. Thus, you could read *Cape Cod* in the summer via a book challenge, "A Winter Walk" in mid-January with a historical re-enactor, or anything in between. The choice is up to you.

## **Q. Will you be supplying copies of books to us?**

A. Thanks to a very generous donation, we had about 140 copies of a Signet Classics edition of *Walden* and "Civil Disobedience" that we were able to give at no cost to participating communities! Those are gone, unfortunately but we've received another charitable gift of copies of *Thoreau on Freedom*. Find out more at:

<https://www.walden.org/bicentennial/read/book-application/>.

All of Thoreau's works are also available for **FREE ONLINE** at:

[www.walden.org/Library/The Writings of Henry David Thoreau: The Digital Collection](http://www.walden.org/Library/The%20Writings%20of%20Henry%20David%20Thoreau%3A%20The%20Digital%20Collection)

## **Q. Is there anyone you might be able to send out to help us with our discussion/read?**

A. Yes! Students from the UMass Lowell Honors College are trained to facilitate discussions and activities. If you need help from one of these students, contact us and we will put you in touch with one of them to coordinate. We also encourage schools to join together or with bigger adjacent school districts for their Read event. We'd be happy to connect you with someone in a neighboring district if you'd like. Which leads us to our next question...

## **Q. Will we be the only Read event in our town/city?**

A. As we are reaching out to schools, libraries and other organizations that might be interested in participating, it's possible that there might be more than one Read event in your town or city. If you'd like to know what other sites in your town are involved in the Read, email [education@walden.org](mailto:education@walden.org) and we can give you more information!

## **Q. Do you have a website link with more information?**

A. Yes! <https://www.walden.org/bicentennial/read>.

*The universe is wider than our views of it.*

— *Walden*



*"If I do not see any inquiry there,  
I cannot answer it."*

*Henry D. Thoreau*

If you have a question about Thoreau, please ask it.  
Email or text: [curator@walden.org](mailto:curator@walden.org)

**THE WALDEN WOODS PROJECT**  
**WWW.WALDEN.ORG**