

# Transcendentalism: Emerson, Thoreau, and Nature

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

## LEARNING OBJECTIVE

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Students will understand core Transcendentalist beliefs about nature and self-reliance and apply them by observing nature firsthand and writing a reflective response.

## MATERIALS NEEDED

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- notebook paper
- pencil or pen
- a spot outdoors or near a window
- timer (phone or clock)

## HANDS-ON ACTIVITY

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1. Read the excerpt below, adapted from Ralph Waldo Emerson's *Nature* (1836): "In the woods, we return to reason and faith... I become a transparent eyeball; I am nothing; I see all; the currents of the Universal Being circulate through me."
2. Read the excerpt below, adapted from Henry David Thoreau's *Walden* (1854): "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."
3. Set a timer for 10 minutes. Sit outdoors (or by a window) in silence and observe nature closely – sounds, colors, movement, weather.
4. Write a list of at least 8 specific sensory observations from your 10 minutes (things you saw, heard, felt, smelled).
5. Write a 6-8 sentence reflection connecting your observations to the Transcendentalist idea that spending time in nature helps a person think more clearly and know themselves better.

## QUESTIONS

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1. **According to Emerson, what happens to a person's sense of self when they are deeply immersed in nature?**
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2. **What does Thoreau mean by wanting to 'live deliberately'?**
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3. **List three of your specific sensory observations from your 10 minutes outdoors.**

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4. Did your quiet observation time change how you were thinking or feeling by the end?  
Explain, connecting to Transcendentalist ideas.
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