AMERICAN LITERATURE - I

M.A., (English)

Semester – III, Paper-IV

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FOREWORD

Since its establishment in 1976, Acharya Nagarjuna University has been forging a head in the path of progress and dynamism, offering a variety of courses and research contributions. I am extremely happy that by gaining 'A' grade from the NAAC in the year 2016, Acharya Nagarjuna University is offering educational opportunities at the UG, PG levels apart from research degrees to students from over 443 affiliated colleges spread over the two districts of Guntur and Prakasam.

The University has also started the Centre for Distance Education in 2003-04 with the aim of taking higher education to the door step of all the sectors of the society. The centre will be a great help to those who cannot join in colleges, those who cannot afford the exorbitant fees as regular students, and even to housewives desirous of pursuing higher studies. Acharya Nagarjuna University has started offering B.A., and B.Com courses at the Degree level and M.A., M.Com., M.Sc., M.B.A., and L.L.M., courses at the PG level from the academic year 2003-2004onwards.

To facilitate easier understanding by students studying through the distance mode, these self-instruction materials have been prepared by eminent and experienced teachers. The lessons have been drafted with great care and expertise in the stipulated time by these teachers. Constructive ideas and scholarly suggestions are welcome from students and teachers involved respectively. Such ideas will be incorporated for the greater efficacy of this distance mode of education. For clarification of doubts and feedback, weekly classes and contact classes will be arranged at the UG and PG levels respectively.

It is my aim that students getting higher education through the Centre for Distance Education should improve their qualification, have better employment opportunities and in turn be part of country's progress. It is my fond desire that in the years to come, the Centre for Distance Education will go from strength to strength in the form of new courses and by catering to larger number of people. My congratulations to all the Directors, Academic Coordinators, Editors and Lesson-writers of the Centre who have helped in these endeavors.

Prof. P. RajaSekhar
Vice-Chancellor
Acharya Nagarjuna University

Semester – III

304EG21: AMERICAN LITERATURE - I

Paper-IV

SYLLABUS

UNIT – I

Transcendentalism, Influence of Vedic Thought, Puritanism, Beginnings of the American Novel, The Frontier Experience, Mysticism, the Picaresque novel, Romanticism, Nationalism.

UNIT II

Walt Whitman : "When Lilacs last in the Dooryard Bloomed", "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking"

Emily Dickinson : Poems 258, 303, 328, 341, 511, 640, 712

UNIT III

R.W. Emerson : "The American Scholar", "Self Reliance"

UNIT IV

Henry David Thoreau : Walden

UNIT V

Mark Twain : Huckleberry Finn

SUGGESTED READINGS:

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LESSON 1

BRIEF OUTLINE OF HISTORY OF AMERICAN LITERATURE

OBJECTIVES

By the end of the lesson you will know

- The origin and development of American literature
- Major periods of American literature
- The features and authors of these periods

STRUCTURE

1.1. Introduction
1.2. colonization 1570-1750
1.3. Independent America- Nation- Early 19th century.
1.4. New England writers and mid 19th century.
1.5. Rise of realism (1860-1914).
1.6. Modernism and experimentalism.
1.7. Emergence of Women writing
1.8. Post modern Scenario
1.9. Summing up
1.10. Comprehension Check questions
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1.1 INTRODUCTION—ORIGIN OF LITERATURE IN AMERICA AND ORAL LITERATURES

History of American Literature has to be discussed by looking at the tradition of the native Indian tribes who were gradually pushed to the interiors of the Americas with rapid colonization by the European countries, the majority being from the Britain. There were 500 different Indian languages and cultures that had transmitted their oral literature in the form of myths, incantations, proverbs, riddles, epics, tales and lyrics. As numerous the tribes were so diverse were the oral literatures like that of quasi – nomadic hunting cultures and those of agricultural tribes. The literatures of these tribes had in common reverence for nature as a spiritual as well as physical mother. Elements of nature were the characters. The oral Indian literatures are thus the richest area of American literature about which not much research has been done. Some concrete evidence is in the form of many words that are there in every day American English like tobacco, Potato, Totem, Canoe, Moose etc.

1.2 COLONIZATION 1570 – 1750

The first colony was set up in 1585 at Roanoke, off the coast of North Carolina, but all its colonists disappeared. The second colony Jamestown, established in 1607 was more permanent. The 17th century colonization by adventurers and explorers was rather permanent

as they brought families and farm tools and professional implements. The literature of this exploratory period consisted diaries, letters, travel journals, ships' log and reports to financial bankers back at home. The early colonists brought with them books and language from home. When the colonizers who settled and evolved into Americans over the course of time started writing they were closely following the English models.

The major literary contribution at the time of colonization was by puritans who were migrants in large numbers from England. From 1650 onwards they migrated to America in order to escape the religious persecution at home and establish the rule of God, with all those tenets in which they believed. Their literary style ranged from complex metaphysical poetry to journals and religious history. The major theme was that failure led to eternal damnation and hell fire and success to heavenly bliss. American literature and life of this period draw their most interesting traits from Elizabethan initiative, ingenuity and democracy. Most of the American literature of this period was produced by Virginia & Massachusetts.

Another evolving feature of this period was the spirit of tolerance and religious freedom which originated in Rhode Island and Pennsylvania. The Quakers or friends who inhabited these colonies were humane and believed in sacredness of the individual conscience, universal love and brotherhood resulting in democratic spirit. The societal and historical factors of this period were that the people lived by agriculture. There were not many schools. With the presence of more number of slaves, with rural atmosphere New England which had commanding clergy, schools and urban town life had more writers.

The major writers of this period who hailed from Virginia were Captain John Smith who gave the story of Pocahontas by describing the Indians and the country side. William Strachey, George Sandys, Robert Beverly and William Byrd were other known and documented writers .The New England writers of this period were William Bradford with his "History of Plymouth plantation", John Winthrop, Anne Breed Street, Nathaniel Ward, and Samuel Sewall who was very famous for his diaries. Cotton Mather and Jonathan Edwards greatest American Metaphysician with his philosophy that the substance of this universe is Divine Idea were some other major writers.

The spirit of the literature of this period is "moral heroism", "the determination to follow the single path of the eternal over the wave and through the forest to a new temple of human liberty" as it is found in writers like Bradford, Winthrop and Edwards.

1.3 INDEPENDENT AMERICA –A NATION – EARLY 19TH CENTURY

The colonies started fighting against the colonial powers and it resulted in the French and India war that began in 1754 that made the Anglo Saxons, the British, the controllers of the colonies. But the conclusion of this war made the British authoritative and the Americans started feeling the need for freedom from all colonial power and thus emerged the American Revolution which declared independence in 1776. The states chose George Washington their leader and adopted a constitution that would bind all the states into a nation.

Military victory paved way for new independent literature as the Americans were aware of their dependence on English literary models. The early essays pamphlets and papers projected human liberty which is a result of the revolution. The prominent essayists of this period are Thomas Paine (1737-1809),Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826), Alex and Hamilton (1757-1804). The other well known writers include John Woolman (1720-1772), Timothy

Dwight (1752-1817), Joel Barlow (1755-1812), John Trumbull (1750-1831), and Philip Francall (1752 -1832)The greatest writer of this period was Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790) whose auto – biography is immensely valued till to day along with his "Poor Richards Almanac" and they teach the principles of "self culture, self reliance, thrift and the value of practical common sense". His writings carry a balanced sense of humour, practicality, altruism James Fennimore Cooper (1789-1851) a great early American and romantic longs for the past and the American wilderness, the powerful myth of "Golden age" and grief over its loss. He frequently mourns the loss of the great wilderness, the " new Eden " that has disappeared at the arrival of colonizer. His "Leather stalking tales" present Natty Bumppo a frontiersman and touchstone for ethical values. The novels of Cooper portray the total colonization that began with early settlers, the arrival of the middle class, the Western civilized classes displacing the native Indians ,the process of civilization three schools churches. Washington Irving (1783-1859) with Knicker Bocker legend in his history of New York is an important writer, and his Rip Van Winkle and the legend of Sleepy Hollow are read for pure pleasure. He is a romantic in the treatment of a subject which carries "humour and restrained sentiment". This period saw the birth of American fiction. Some novelists are Mrs. Sarah Morton (1759-1846), Charles Brockden Brown (1711 -1810).These novels of this period are proxy, didactic. Brockden gave imagination a free reign and used Gothic element of strangeness, terror and added American colour by presenting the Indian and the forest romantically.

However the literature of this period still showed the influence the older English Classical school. William Cullent Bryant (1794-1878) is the first American Poet and is a nature poet. His poetry is reflective and descriptive and carries the features of elevator, simplicity and moral earnestness.

This period of literature is marked by romanticism which entered America around 1820. Romanticism centered around spiritual and aesthetics dimension of nature along with the importance of the individual mind and spirit. The development of the self has preoccupied the romantics. They believed that self and nature were one and self awareness led to the universe. They used many new words like 'Self – realization", "self expression" and "self reliance" .It was affirmative and appropriate to American literary creation as the vast mountains, tropics and deserts embodied the sublime. It particularly suited the spirit of American democracy that emphasized individuation.

1.4 NEW ENGLAND WRITERS AND MID 19TH CENTURY

Emerson (1803-1882), Thoreau (1817-1862), Hawthorne (1804-1864) popularly known as Concord group are the most prominent among the writers of this period. Harriett Beecher Stowe (1811-1896), Daniel Webster (1782-1852) ,Long Fellow (1807-1882) Whiter (1807-1892) Lowe (1819-1891) Holmes (1809-1894) are other major writers of this time.

The writers of this period are men of highest ideas and Character. They all carried themselves quite dignifiedly and practised all those ideas of human spirit in its dignity which they have preached in their writings. The objective of their writings was to make individuals free, cultivated, Self reliant, kind and spiritual. They represented the puritan spirituality and energy and new ideas though some of them were illusory transcendentalism, though could not understand the unknown, reached deeper into spiritual realities. The literature of this period looked at the world from moral point of view by making the cultivated intellect the servant of spirit.

The Chief tenet of this period is transcendentalism. The writers who practised this philosophy in their works aimed at going beyond the range of human sense and experience and reach the unknowable. The transcendentalists relied on intuition, espoused individuality and despised imitation and repetition, severed with the past, believed in social and spiritual renaissance emphasized culture, plain living and high thinking and preferred living in solitude.

The social changes that were marking the nation of this period were shown in the writings like Stow's Uncle Tom's cabin, poetry of whiter and Lowell. Emerson's writings depicted the moral development of the individual while his poetry is nature personified. Thoreau shows the enchanting world of nature. Hawthorne in his short stories and romances paints trail and moral development of human souls. Long fellow showed that poetry could be written simple yet capture the hearts of reader by making the common place appear attractive. Whitter falls into the same category.

1.5 RISE OF REALISM (1860-1914)

The civil war 1861-65 has changed the mental landscape of America. The Americans have started adoring the progress of industrial and "self – made" man. The success of business dictated the end and sometimes ignored the means. Emphasis on success; big business, industrialization marginalization of farming community have evolved the country into a big modern industrial nation. The country has become the strongest and wealthiest nation of the world by the turn of the 20th century. The establishment of intercontinental rail system, transcontinental telegraph have developed and strengthened market and communication system. The obvious consequence of industrialization is alienation and the impact of economic forces on the weak of the society is reflected in the writings of this period. The effects of industrialization on the society are urban housing and infrastructure problems, Low pay, and difficult working conditions. Farmers have started struggling in the new economic conditions.

Realism is nothing more or less than the truthful treatment of material. The philosophy of realism is not to amuse by a pleasant story but to reflect on life as it happens not just the unusual and exceptional. Realism looks upon human life in the world without subjectivity or making judgments. For the writers like Twain of the late 19th century, realism was a way of speaking truth and exploding worn-out-conventions that is deeply liberating and at crosses with the society of the day. The popular literary trends of the 19th century are frontier humour, Local colour or "regionalism". These trends that began in 1830's have their roots the local oral traditions. A marked form of storytelling has emerged in the frontier villages, mining camps that carry exaggerated tall tales, incredible boast, comic work force and heroes as their chief characteristics. These forms were found in the frontier villages, with each region portraying its own iconic hero whose exploits were exaggerated. The writings of the majority of the writers of this era owe to these humorous frontier tales.

Howell & James were the leaders of realistic. Howell uses every day incidents and conversations. James takes unusual situation and subjects them to scrutiny of psycho analysis. Mary Wilkins freeman shows exceptional skill in depicting with realistic interest, the humble life of provincial England. Walt Whitman brings excessive realism into the form and matters of verse. His work is characteristic of altruism and embraces empathy; emphasizes the democratic angle of society and reflects over nature and sea.

Some of the most important writers of realism in American Literature are Mark Twain (1831-1910)Mary Wilkins Freeman (1852-1930) Harriet Beecher Stow (1811-1896) Bret Harte (1836-1902), William Dean Howells (1837-1920)Henry James (1843-1914) Edith Wharton (1862-1937) Walt Whitman(1819-1892)

Naturalism is yet another quality that marked the literature of this period. Naturalist writers like Stephen Crane (1871-1900) Jack London (1876-1916) Frank Norris, Theodore Dreiser (1871-1945) Upton Sinclair used realism to relate the individual to society exposing social problems. These writers are influenced by determines that looks at individuals as helpless powers of economics and social forces. Naturalism, first appeared in Europe daringly discussed the seamy dark side of society with screw topics as Divorce, Sex, adultery, poverty and crime. The American literary scenario was greatly impressed by naturalism it was urbanized and become strong economic force becoming aware of social and economic forces.

1.6 MODERNISM AND EXPERIMENTALISM

Though Americans did not play an active role during the two World Wars and fought the war only for a short period the Americans who went and fought the war have changed permanently. They are influenced by the modern Europe and desired the same life. Tools and implements of farming have lessened the need for manual works in agriculture but still farming was not profitable. Business was the key to success and making money. Education was realized the key to success and 1920's saw America as the World's highest income earner. Technical gadgets like phone, camera, typewriter, sewing machine etc. entertainment in the form of movies, clubs, touring were the craze of time. At the same western youth were rebelling, angry and disillusioned with war.

Women felt liberated with the right to vote in 1920. Intellectual thinking like freedom, psychology and Marxism slowly broke down the traditional values that were upheld till then. The modern views that were sweeping the world especially Europe took the frenzy of American Youth too. However the youth of this period were called the "Lost generation" because of lack of stable, traditional structure of values resulting in the individual's sense of losing one's identity. The security of family life, the natural rhythm of nature that guide plantation and harvest of farm, patriotism, moral values indicated by realistic benefits are under mined because of World War and it's after effects. The great depression of 1930's that shook the world disturbed the strong America of 1920. America faced the serious effect by many of its citizen losing work. John Steinbeck (1902-1968) projects it in "The Grapes of Wrath".

The major literary trends of this post war period have taken lot of new and hither to unknown dimensions. Subject and technique became inseparable in both the visual and literary art of the period. The idea of form as the equivalent of content, crystallized in this period. Vision and viewpoint became an essential aspect of the modernist novel as well. The way the story was told became as important as the story itself.

The most significant 20th-century regional literary movement was that of the Fugitives led by poet-critic-theoretician John Crowe Ransom (1888-1974), poet Allen Tate (1899-1979), and novelist-poet-essayist Robert Penn Warren(1905-1989). This southern literary school rejected "northern" urban, commercial values, which they felt had taken over America. The Fugitives called for a return to the land and to American traditions that could be found in the South. Criticism is looked upon as an approach to understanding literature

through close readings and attentiveness to formal patterns (of imagery, metaphors, metrics, sounds, and symbols) and their suggested meanings. Ransom, leading theorist of the southern renaissance between the wars, published a book, The New Criticism (1941), on this method, which offered an alternative to previous extra-literary methods of criticism based on history and biography. New Criticism became the dominant American critical approach in the 1940s and 1950s because it proved to be well- suited to modernist writers such as Eliot and could absorb Freudian theory (especially its structural categories such as id, ego, and superego) and approaches drawing on mythic patterns.

Surrealism yet another modern experiment in literature and art expresses the unconscious through vivid dreamlike imagery. Poetry by women and ethnic minorities too has flourished in these years. Though superficially distinct, surrealists, feminists, and minorities appear to share a sense of alienation from mainstream literature. Not until the 1960s did surrealism (along with existentialism) become domesticated in America under the stress of the Vietnam conflict. The more pervasive surrealist influence has been quieter and more contemplative.

1.7 EMERGENCE OF WOMEN WRITING

Literature in the United States, as in most other countries, was long evaluated on standards that often overlooked women's contributions. Yet there are many women poets of distinction in American writing. Not all are feminists, nor do their subjects invariably voice women's concerns. Also, regional, political, and racial differences have shaped their work.

Before the 1960s, most women poets had adhered to an androgynous ideal, believing that gender made no difference in artistic excellence. This gender-blind position was, in effect, an early form of feminism that allowed women to argue for equal rights. By the late l960s, American women many active in the civil rights struggle and protests against the Vietnam conflict or influenced by the counterculture had begun to recognize their own marginalization. In the l970s, a second wave of feminist criticism emerged following the founding of the National Organization for Women (NOW) in l966. Elaine Showalter's A Literature of Their Own (1977) identified a major tradition of British and American women authors. Feminist critics of the second wave challenged the accepted canon of great works on the basis that aesthetic standards were not timeless and universal but rather arbitrary, culture bound, and patriarchal. Feminism became in the 1970s a driving force for equal rights, not only in literature but in the larger culture as well.

1.8 POST MODERN SCENARIO

Writers in the United States were asking serious questions, many of them of a metaphysical nature. Writers became highly innovative and self-aware, or reflexive. Often they found traditional modes ineffective. American writers in the postwar decades developed a postmodern sensibility. The alienation and stress underlying the 1950s found outward expression in the 1960s in the United States in the civil rights movement, feminism, antiwar protests, minority activism, and the arrival of a counterculture whose effects are still being worked through American society. Soon the 1980s the "Me Decade" in Tom Wolfe's phrase ensued, in which individuals tended to focus more on personal concerns than on larger social issues. In literature, old currents remained, but the force behind pure experimentation dwindled.

Native-American fiction flowered. Most often the authors evoked the loss of traditional life based in nature, the stressful attempt to adapt to modern life, and their struggles with poverty, unemployment, and alcoholism. The Pulitzer Prize-winning House Made of Dawn (1968), by N. Scott Momaday (1934), and his poetic The Way to Rainy Mountain (1969) evoke the beauty and despair of Kiowa Indian life. Of mixed Pueblo descent, Leslie Marmon Silko wrote the critically esteemed novel Ceremony (1977), which the United States is, one of the most diverse nations in the world. Its dynamic population of about 300 million boasts more than 30 million foreign-born individuals who speak numerous languages and dialects. Some one million new immigrants arrive each year, many from Asia and Latin America. Literature in the United States today is like- wise dazzlingly diverse, exciting, and evolving. New voices have arisen from many quarters, challenging old ideas and adapting literary traditions to suit changing conditions of the national life. Social and economic advances have enabled previously underrepresented groups to express themselves more fully, while technological innovations have created a fast-moving public forum

Postmodernism suggests fragmentation: collage, hybridity, and the use of various voices, scenes, and identities. Postmodern authors question external structures, whether political, philosophical, or artistic. They tend to distrust the master-narratives of modernist thought, which they see as politically suspect. Instead, they mine popular culture genres, especially science fiction, spy, and detective stories, becoming, in effect, archaeologists of pop culture.

1.9 SUMMING UP

The lesson must have given you a bird's eye view of the origins and development of American Literature for the past 400 years. You also read the major periods in the history of American literature and the characteristic features that marked the society as well as writings of these periods. The lesson also presented the major important writers as well as the literary movements that have emerged through the literary history.

1.10 COMPREHENSION CHECK QUESTIONS

1. Write a short note on the American literature during colonization
2. What is the contribution of New England writers towards American Literature
3. How does realism represent the American spirit of the times?
4. Write briefly on Fugitives.
5. What are the characteristic features of Post modern era?

1.11 REFERENCES

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1.12 ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- http://www.britannica.com/art/American-literature
- http://public.wsu.edu/~campbelld/amlit/timefram.html
- http://www.online-literature.com/periods/

Dr. K. Padmaja

LESSON 2
AMERICAN PURITANISM AND THE RISE OF THE AMERICAN NOVEL

OBJECTIVE

By the end of the lesson you will know

- The emergence and traits of Puritanism
- Its influence on literature
- The birth of novel
- Its appearance in America
- The frontier experience and Its impact on American Novel

STRUCTURE

2.1 Introduction
2.2 The emergence of Puritanism
2.3 Traits of Puritanism
2.4 Influence of Puritanism on literature
2.5 Birth of novel in America
2.6 The growth of novel
2.7 The frontier experience and the American novel
2.8 Summing up
2.9 Comprehension Check questions
2.10 References

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The United States of America, colonies of the British for almost two centuries, has inherited many of the philosophical, literary and sociological characteristics of the European colonizers. However after attaining independence, as a free nation it has started evolving into a nation with unique identity. The early settling into colonies by the migrants resulted in severe puritanical philosophical outlook. Slowly the social and cultural outlook was an amalgamation of the inherited but transformed Puritanism and the multi cultural environment of the colonies that have endowed the states with its unique social, cultural and literary identity. The following sections of the lesson look at these aspects in detail.

2.2 THE EMERGENCE OF PURITANISM

Puritanism refers to a movement that arose within the Church of England in the latter part of the 16th century. It sought to purify, or reform the Church and establish a middle course between Roman Catholicism and the ideas of the Protestant reformers. Those who advocated Puritanism were called Puritans. In England of the 16th century, the Puritans were the more extreme Protestants within the Church. They wanted to purify their national church by eliminating every shred of Catholic influence. But the English government and the church hierarchy became increasingly repressive.Many Puritans were persecuted and had to emigrate

to Europe and the New World. Early in the 17th century Puritanism reached North America with English Puritans who were usually referred to as the English Pilgrims. In 1620 they founded Plymouth Colony. Afterwards more Puritans emigrated and they built more colonies, including Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Connecticut, Maine, Rhode Island, and New Haven. New England became their stronghold, where they sought to found a holy Commonwealth. Puritanism remained the dominant religious force in that area throughout the 17th and 18th centuries. During the whole colonial period Puritanism had direct impact on both religious thought and cultural patterns in America.

After the 17th century the Puritans as a political entity largely disappeared, but Puritan attitudes and ethics continued to exert an influence on American society. They made a virtue of qualities that made for economic success self-reliance, frugality, industry, and energy and through them influenced modern social and economic life. Their concern for education was important in the development of the United States, and the idea of congregational democratic church government was carried into the political life of the state as a source of modern democracy.

2.3 TRAITS OF PURITANISM

The Puritans were English Protestants, who followed the teachings of Martin Luther, but who were particularly influenced by the ideas formulated by John Calvin. The Puritans were more attracted by Calvin's furthering of the concept in his doctrine of "predestination" which became the cornerstone of their ontology. The doctrine of predestination held that at the beginning of time God had chosen some people for salvation, while others were headed for eternal damnation.

Godly people were sober, hardworking, and responsible. English society had been corrupted by foreign influences and by disorder and needed to be purified. Election & predestination God chooses who is saved and who is damned. No one can earn salvation through works. Yet the saints are responsible for their actions. Worship should be plain, lack mystery, and be focused on God. The central tenet of Puritanism was God's supreme authority over human affairs in the church, as expressed in the Bible. To the Puritans, a person by nature was inherently sinful and corrupt, and only by severe and unremitting discipline could they achieve good. Each person should be constantly reformed by the grace of God to combat the "indwelling sin" and do the right before God. Thus, they considered hard work a religious duty and laid emphasis on constant self-examination and self-discipline. They believed that man was duty-bound to do God's will, so he could understand best by studying the Bible and the universe which God had created and which he controlled.

What is essential for understanding Puritanism is the fact that this doctrine actually made the Puritans proud of being a part of God's extraordinary enterprise. Consequently, all members of Puritan communities strove to be the most pious, as well as the most prosperous of all. This is the source of Puritan ethics which have so deeply influenced the American moral code. The special significance of succeeding in life has come to characterize the American culture ever since, and the theme of success has been predominant in American literature even when it bore no other features of Puritanism.

2.4 INFLUENCE OF PURITANISM ON LITERATURE

The puritans made lasting contributions to American literature. Firstly they invested American with a mythology of its own. The international, adversary, visionary 'America' has its root in the phase of the New England.

The Puritans looked into the history with a special intensity and excitement; for the rule they had been chosen to play in the universal drama was all together exceptional. There were four representative figures William Bradford, John Winthrop, Cotton Mather, and Thomas Shepherd. They addressed themselves to questions of history and to a meditation on the unique nature of the present historical moment. In his history of Plymouth Plantation the story of the founding, the development and the decline of the colony between 1620 and 1650, William Bradford gave the first expression of the idea that America was a scene of a unique experiment. William Bradford was undoubtedly the key figure in the Plantation at Plymouth. John Winthrop was his counterpart in the Massachusetts colony. In his work A Model of Christian Charity, Winthrop says that, the puritans should be in a situation of visibility. Cotton Mather was a prolific writer, among his works; Magnolia Christi America is his best known production. Three writers Thomas Hooker, Mary Rowlandson, and Samuel Sewall reflected a habit of strenuous self-searching and the compelling reasons that lead to it.

One of the aspects of human activity that the Puritans were determined to purify was that of literary style. Puritanism was central to colonial American literature; its impact could find expression in almost in all respects concerning literature. The conviction that all religion progress centered in the individual led colonial writers to make records of his spiritual development in forms of diary and autobiography.

2.5 BIRTH OF NOVEL IN AMERICA

The novel did not truly emerge in the United States until the end of the eighteenth century. Critics and historians have offered several reasons for this delay, citing a continuing Puritan distrust of fictional representations, a relative lack of leisure time, and, relatedly, the lack of a large, concentrated group of middle-class readers with substantial enough wealth and time to pursue the genre. Most accounts of the development of the novel, such as Ian Watt's The Rise of the Novel, Michael McKeon's "The Origins of the English Novel" , M. M. Bakhtin's various writings, and George Lukasc's "Theory of the Novel" describe the genre as arising with a number of socio- economic, religious, cultural, and philosophical factors. In particular, they point to the birth of the middle-class, with its emphasis on social fluidity and individual self- determination; the Protestant Reformation and its appeal to individual interpretation of texts; and the development of scientific and philosophical empiricism with its focus on specific sensual details of life as the ultimate source of knowledge.

Among other things that set the novel apart from preceding literary forms was the fact that from its inception it was a commodity, a work produced for a literary marketplace. In the American context, we can see these connections through Benjamin Franklin's relationship to the novel. While Franklin never wrote a novel and sometimes derided the fine arts, he was the first American printer to publish a novel (Samuel Richardson's Pamela in 1742), and he offered one of the most succinct accounts of the novel's attraction in his Autobiography.

This disdain towards the genre lingered longer, perhaps, in the United States than in most of Western Europe. During a period when social and political hierarchies were in transition in the wake of the Revolution, the novel's emphasis on individual happiness, on an individual reader's sentiments, and on an individual reader's identification were seen as endangering the future of the young nation.

2.6 THE GROWTH OF THE EARLY NOVEL

In response, many early American novels actively positioned themselves against other, less morally upright novels. Brown's Power of Sympathy, considered to be one of the first of American novels exemplifies one of the major trends within the development of the early American novel the use of seduction plots to elicit readers' sympathy and warn them of the dangers of straying even the least bit from moral propriety. Perhaps the most popular novel of the era was Susanna Rowson's Charlotte Temple (1791). Although first published in England, the novel was immediately popular in the United States.

While sentimental works such as Charlotte Temple were perhaps the most popular fare among early American novel-readers, the most prominent novelist of the early period in the critical tradition is Charles Brockden Brown. Brockden Brown produced a series of four gothic novels between 1798 and 1800. Brown explores the dark side of the American nation and the human psyche. Often seen as prefiguring to later themes explored by later American writers, Brown's attention to the psychological, political, and economic influence of American society and nature of his characters marked a new development.

However, in recent decades, American literary historians have increasingly attended to the vast variety amongst the novels produced during this period. In particular, they have investigated more popular genres, including domestic sentimental literature and sensational gothic and urban fictions. Even more recently, scholars have begun to distinguish the work and popularity of religious novels, reform novels, and regional fictions that deployed sentimental, sensational, and symbolic modes to differing extents. At the time of the Civil War, the novel was still seen by most American critics as inferior to poetry, as a less significant artistic form. Similarly, while concerns about the morally enervating effects of the novel had largely dissipated, even such classic works as Hawthorne's The Scarlet Letter were still often judged in terms of their morality. American novelists still found themselves often disparaged or overlooked in favor of their British counterparts. At the same time, the novel had secured its place within American culture.

2.7 THE FRONTIER EXPERIENCE AND THE AMERICAN NOVEL

America provided a sense of limitless frontiers that Europe, so long settled, simply did not possess. Thus, the development of the American novel coincided with westward expansion, with the growth of a nationalist spirit, and with the rapid spread of cities. All these factors tended to reinforce the idealization of frontier life. Most Europeans had an image of the American as unsophisticated and uncivilized. But James Fenimore Cooper (1789–1851) and other Romantic novelists who followed him turned the insult on its head. Virtue, they implied, was in American innocence, not in European sophistication. Eternal truths were waiting to be discovered not in dusty libraries or crowded cities or glittering court life, but in the American wilderness that was unknown and unavailable to Europeans.

We can see how the novel developed in America by looking at Cooper's career. After writing two early novels based on British models, in his third novel Cooper finally broke free of European constraints. In this novel, The Pioneers (1823), Cooper explored uniquely American settings and characters: frontier communities, American Indians, backwoodsmen, and the wilderness of western New York and Pennsylvania. Most of all, he created the first American heroic figure: Natty Bumppo (also known variously as Hawkeye, Deer slayer, and Leather stocking), virtuous, skillful frontiersman whose simple morality and almost superhuman resourcefulness mark him as a true Romantic hero.

2.8 SUMMING UP

So far in this lesson you have read the way Puritanism took its birth in America and how it influenced the country for almost one and half centuries and the traits that have left a lasting impact on the American character. You also came to know about the influence of Puritanism on American literature. You have understood the roots of the novel in America and how the frontier experience has shaped a unique style in the writing of novels.

2.9 COMPREHENSION CHECK QUESTIONS

1. Give an account of the emergence of Puritanism in America
2. What are some of the puritanical ideals that affected American society?
3. Write a brief note on the influence of Puritanism on literature.
4. What was the initial reaction of American society to the genre novel?
5. How does the frontier experience shape the American novel?

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LESSON 3
AMERICAN RENAISSANCE - TRANSCENDENTALISM AND ROMANTICISM

OBJECTIVE

By the end of the lesson you will know

- How American renaissance is reflected in its philosophy
- Meaning and features of transcendentalism
- Major writers and their ideas on transcendentalism
- The romantic movement and its traits in America

STRUCTURE

3.1 Introduction
3.2 Origins of Transcendentalism
3.3 Chief characteristics of transcendentalism
3.4 Major transcendentalist writers
3.5 Birth of Romanticism
3.6 Impact of romantic spirit on American Society
3.7 American Romantic writers
3.8 Summing up
3.9 Comprehension Check questions
3.10 References
3.11 Additional sources

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Any literary or social movement in the history of a nation cannot be compartmentalized into strict chronological time periods since these philosophies emerge in a transcending time periods and thus run parallel at times too. The transcendentalist thinking of the American society especially that of the literary landscape influenced the romantic spirit of the nation and at the same time the romantic outlook has impacted the transcendentalist thinking. In the following sections of the lesson you will observe that how the characteristic features of these movements are mutually inclusive.

3.2 ORIGINS OF TRANSCENDENTALISM

The expression "the American Renaissance" was used by a very famous literary critic (F. O. Matthiessen) as the title for his 1941 study on the literature of the first half of the century . A new period, cultural rebirth has begun in the history of American literature with Emerson and his followers. This period started with the publication of R.W. Emerson's Nature, an essay, in 1836. This text had a tremendous influence on many thinkers of the time, and was considered as the manifesto of "Transcendentalism". It gave birth to many texts, essentially philosophical essays, which analyzed the intellectual, but also moral, social,

religious and political situation of the USA in the 1830s, 40s and 50s, and advocated a resolutely independent spirit.

Based in New England, Transcendentalism was closely associated with Harvard and Boston the very heart of Puritan New England. It was also closely associated with Unitarianism which had become the most common religious affiliation for Boston's elite. Many Transcendentalists were Unitarian clergymen. These were very intelligent people living in an age when religious beliefs required an intellectual defense rather than blind obedience. As their intellectual world expanded they also became aware of other religions, such as Buddhism and Hinduism.

Transcendentalists were attracted to its conception of the mind as creative, intuitive, and interpretive rather than merely reactive to external events. As the writer and political activist Orestes Brownson summed it up in 1840, Transcendentalism defended man's "capacity of knowing truth intuitively and attaining scientific knowledge of an order of existence transcending the reach of the senses, and of which we can have no sensible experience". Everyone, from birth, possesses a divine element, and the mind has "innate principles, including the religious sentiment". The intuitions of the Transcendentalists were decidedly egalitarian and universal. "Universal divine inspiration grace as the birthright of all was the bedrock of the Transcendentalist movement". In the context of the philosophical milieu of Transcendentalism, their intuitions were not intended to be open to empirical investigation.

3.3 CHIEF CHARACTERISTICS OF TRANSCENDENTALISM

Some of the traits of transcendentalism are that Nature is God. Humans should live close to nature, for it is our greatest teacher. Nature is emblematic, and understanding its "language" and "lessons" can bring us closer to God. They thought that God is omnipresent:

God is everywhere and in everything. The Transcendentalists did not believe in organized religion since Nature is divine, and we are literally creatures of Nature, we are also divine.

Therefore, we have a direct relationship with God. Since God is within us, every person has "intuition," an essential understanding of right and wrong (morality). Our intuition and natural instincts guide us to do the right things. In nature, we are uncorrupt. It is only when we let society influence us that we start to conform and hence, be corrupted. Idealism: Human beings are naturally good at their core. Again, it is society that corrupts us.

Transcendentalists lay emphasis on the here and now: The past is unimportant. Knowledge comes from experience. It is not derived from studying the past. Their knowledge was based on their experience, and ours should be too.

On the other hand, the Transcendentalists rejected materialism with its emphasis on "facts, history, the force of circumstance and the animal wants of man". Not surprisingly, this philosophy led many Transcendentalists to become deeply involved in social activism on behalf of the lower echelons of society the poor, prisoners, the insane, the developmentally disabled, and slaves in the South.

3.4 MAJOR TRANSCENDENTALIST WRITERS

Even if the Transcendentalists were essentially philosophers and thinkers, novelists such as Hawthorne or Melville, and poets such as Walt Whitman or Emily Dickinson also felt profoundly indebted towards Transcendentalism which deeply influenced them in many different ways. Apart from these writers who were influenced by transcendentalism and also before looking at the torchbearers of transcendentalism some prominent transcendentalist writers are also to be considered. They are Bronson Alcott (1799-1888), Louisa May Alcott, Margaret Fuller (1810-1850).

Ralph Waldo Emerson is truly the center of the American transcendental movement, setting out most of its ideas and values in a little book, Nature, published in 1836, that represented at least ten years of intense study in philosophy, religion, and literature. His undergraduate career at Harvard was not illustrious, and his studies at the Harvard Divinity School were truncated by vision problems, but he was ordained a minister of the Second Church in Boston, while he settled into his life of conversations, reading and writing, and lecturing, which furnished a comfortable income. Through a career of 40 years, he gave about 1500 public lectures, traveling as far as California and Canada but generally staying in Massachusetts. His audiences were captivated by his speaking style, even if they didn't always follow the subtleties of his arguments. He is one of the most prolific and quoted people in American history. Aside from his book entitled Nature, he is also famous for writing the inspirational essay 'self reliance'.

Henry David Thoreau was a complex man of many talents who worked hard to shape his craft and his life. At the age of 28 in 1845, wanting to write his first book, he went to Walden pond and built his cabin on land owned by Emerson. Thoreau lived in the woods for two years and two months and did an incredible amount of reading and writing, yet he also spent much time "sauntering" in nature. He recorded much of his thoughts in his famous book, Walden. After returning to Concord, he gave lectures about his experience and was imprisoned briefly for not paying his poll tax because he knew the tax money would be used to fund the Mexican-American War. While in jail, he wrote his famous essay, Resistance to Civil Government or Civil Disobedience. Over the years, Thoreau's reputation has been strong, although he is often cast into roles the hermit in the wilderness, the prophet of passive resistance, etc., he strongly inspired Mahatma Ghandi, Martin Luther King, and countless others.

3.5 BIRTH OF ROMANTICISM

Romanticism initially emerged as a response to the age of reason, characterized by an emphasis on individual freedom from social conventions or political restraints, on human imagination. In general, Romanticism is the name given to those schools of thought that value feeling and intuition over reason. The first rumblings of Romanticism were felt in Germany in the second half of the eighteenth century. Romanticism had a strong influence on literature, music, and painting in Europe and England well into the nineteenth century. But Romanticism came relatively late to America. Romanticism does not appear in the U.S. until Irving and Emerson are writing; so, the Romantic Period in the U.S. (1830-1860) overlaps with the period in which U.S. culture may also be said to be "Victorian" (1830-1880). One consequence of the latter: a writer such as Hawthorne is both Romantic and Victorian. Other works of the period such as Harriet Beecher Stowe's best-seller Uncle Tom's Cabin--are not

"Romantic," but are rather much closer to the realistic fiction of Victorian Britain's George Eliot.

3.6 IMPACT OF ROMANTIC SPIRIT ON AMERICAN SOCIETY

The Romantic Movement appeared in America at the beginning of the 19th century and greatly influenced American culture until the middle of the century. Romanticism fought against the inflexibility and uniformity demanded by the rationalism of the Enlightenment; it encouraged men to free themselves from these restrictions. Individual freedom was the most important thing for individuals to wander freely in nature, experiencing its richness and abundant emotions. This idea of individual freedom, of personal liberty, greatly fascinated Americans. They believed this was the centre of their society, because it had been the basis of the American struggle for independence.

Romanticism values feeling and intuition over reason; believes in inner experience and the power of the imagination; avoids the artificiality of civilization and seeks unspoiled nature; desires youthful innocence to educated sophistication; advocates individual freedom and the worth of the individual; considers nature's beauty as a path to spiritual and moral development; introspects on the wisdom of the past and distrusts progress; searches for beauty and truth in exotic locales, the supernatural realm, and the inner world of the imagination; regards poetry as the highest expression of the imagination; and finds inspiration in myth, legend, and folk culture.

3.7 AMERICAN ROMANTIC WRITERS

American Romantics tend to venerate Nature as a sanctum of non-artificiality, where the Self can fulfil its potential. They also champion spiritual intuition or self-reliant individualism. They illustrate the egotistic, futile, and destructive aspects of their questing heroes. They highlight how such self-reliance or intuitions conflict with conventional social and religious dogma. Socially, American Romantics are usually radically egalitarian and politically progressive. In terms of literary technique, the writers use symbols, myths, or fantastic elements (e.g., Walden Pond, the White Whale, and the House of Usher) as the focus and expression of the protagonist's mental processes or to convey deeper psychological or archetypal themes. Their style is often very original and not convention oriented. The primary feature of American Romanticism the obsession with and celebration of individualism takes on particular social relevance because U.S. culture has always prized individualism and egalitarianism. American Romantic writers like democracy and see the dignity of common folk. It is key to see that American Romantics can both celebrate the "common man" and their own, more spiritually/psychologically elite selves. Important American Romanticists are James Fennimore Cooper, Emily Dickinson, Frederick Douglass, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Margaret Fuller, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Washington Irving, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Herman Melville, Edgar Allen Poe, Henry David Thoreau and Walt Whitman.

3.8 SUMMING UP

So far in the lesson you have seen how the writers of these literary periods were romantic in their outlook but were great originators of transcendentalism. The importance rendered to 'self', 'freedom' and 'individualism' by these movements marked the nation's

spirit and it could be clearly seen in the qualities of these movements. You have also read about the major writers who contributed to these literary movements.

3.9 COMPREHENSION CHECK QUESTIONS

1. How can transcendentalism be considered the harbinger of Renaissance in America ?
2. Write a note on the major writers of Transcendentalism
3. Compare American romanticism with the counterpart in Europe
4. What are the common features between transcendentalism and romanticism in America

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3.11 ADDITIONAL SOURCES

- plato.stanford.edu/entries/transcendentalism transcendentalism.tamu.edu

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LESSON 4
WALT WHITMAN (1819-1892)
WHEN LILACS LAST IN THE DOORYARD BLOOMED

STRUCTURE

4.1. The Period
4.2. Walt Whitman – His Life and Works
  4. 2. 1. Formative Influences
4.3. The Poetry of Walt Whitman
  4.3.1. The Note of Democracy in his Poetry
  4.3.2. Symbolism in his poetry
  4.3.3. Treatment of Love and Sex
  4.3.4. The Mystic Element in Whitman's Poetry
  4.3.5. Use of Free Verse
4.4. The Text of the Poem
4.5 Central theme of the poem
  4.5.1. Analysis of the Poem
  4.5.2. Explication and Appreciation
4.6. Sample Questions
4.7. Suggested Readings

4. 1. THE PERIOD

American literature is greatly influenced by the physical, cultural, social, political, psychological, and literary background of the country, with the First Frontier of America being established during the seventeenth century, and enclosing a small area of land that remained comparatively undisturbed for around two centuries, leading to the emergence of a new civilization. This civilization, which was made up of various European elements, was responsible for America's first 'Renaissance' in the 1840s, which saw the emergence of renowned writers such as Emerson, Thoreau, Melville, Whitman, Hawthorne, and Poe.

However, it wasn't until the establishment of the Second Frontier of America in 1890, with the formation of the Continental Nation stretching from ocean to ocean and Canada to Mexico, that the roots of Modern America were truly planted. This new civilization was vastly different from the earlier one in many ways, producing a second Renaissance that brought forth a new generation of writers across various literary genres.

The Americans, although originating from Europe, developed into a distinct culture that was markedly different from their European counterparts. The combination of an old, sophisticated culture with a constantly receding wilderness gave rise to a unique group of people who became known as "typically American." This unique blend of cultures had a profound psychological impact on the American people, instilling a deep sense of self-reliance and independence.

From the very beginning of their history, Americans had to rely on their own instincts and wits to survive and thrive in the wilderness. With vast expanses of land and the constant dangers that came with it, they developed a strong sense of individualism and self-reliance.

They had to rely on themselves and their own skills, often with only a superficial understanding of the knowledge and culture they had inherited from Europe. This gave rise to a distinct American identity that prized individualism and self-determination, as well as a can-do attitude that remains a defining characteristic of American culture today. In essence, the American psyche was shaped by the harsh realities of frontier life, producing a resilient and self-reliant people who have made countless contributions to world culture and history.

The Americans were driven by democratic ideals, valuing merit over birth right due to the absence of traditional criteria. This ethos of freedom and potential fostered a positive and optimistic outlook towards life. However, this sense of liberty also bred a sense of insecurity, prompting some to seek refuge in religion,Puritanism, or old European traditions as a source of stability.

Nevertheless, this trend of conventionalism came to an end with the outbreak of the First World War, which shattered the ideals of many Americans and ushered in a period of cynicism and materialism known as the "lost generation". The cultural background of the time underwent a similar progression as the American psyche, with the pre-World War era being dubbed the "genteel age" due to its European refinement despite the emergence of realist art and the onset of industrialization.

In the post-war period between 1918 and 1929, there was an abundance of wealth and a relaxed attitude towards morality among the youth. This was a time of revolutionized values and an era of cynicism towards the old ways, which was a departure from the genteel refinement of the previous era.

The American social background underwent significant changes as well. In the 19th century, American society was a unique blend of "Frontier life, local folklore, and religious institutions." Although writers such as Melville, Hawthorne, Irving, Cooper, and poets like Poe and Whitman attempted to represent this distinctively American society, much of American literature until the time of Henry James remained derivative of European literature.

The first generation of American authors often felt lost and blamed their society's confused and crude values for the lack of a mature literary art. However, this sense of retardation was followed by the hope of producing literature of genuine merit. Emerson boldly declared that Americans have the fullest poetic nature of all nations and all times.

The works of Poe, Emerson, and Whitman were conscious attempts to break through the anti-poetic, define the idea of man, and transform the anti-poeticinto the poetic. Today, American writers have developed their own unique English language variety, which differs from

In terms of political background, America has always been a democratic nation that values individual rights and liberties, both in political and economic arenas. However, with the advent of Marxism and its influence in the 20th century, American thought was exposed to criticism of capitalism, leading to its Classical American literature had a profound impact on modern literature, particularly in its rejection of conventions and iconoclasm. Walden by Henry David Thoreau reflects the distinctively American attitude of rejecting the

sophisticated European civilization in favor of a simpler life in nature, where one can work with their own hands and live with simplicity, independence, magnanimity, and trust.

Similarly, Ralph Waldo Emerson preached against organized religion and instead advocated for intuitive spiritual experience, encouraging Americans to embrace their own landscape and culture and work with American materials.

The American literary background features a tendency towards rebellion against conventions and iconoclasm, which is exemplified by Henry David Thoreau's rejection of sophisticated European civilization in favor of a life of simplicity and independence. Ralph Waldo Emerson also advocated for a break from organized religion and a reliance on intuitive spiritual experience. American writers like Hawthorne and Poe changed the European "tale" into the American short story, while Herman Melville developed a writing stylethat continues to influence modern fiction writers. Additionally, Walt Whitman's use of free verse in Leaves of Grass has had a significant impact on modern poetry, inspiring writers such as Pound, Cummings, and Hart Crane.

4. 2. WALT WHITMAN: HIS LIFE AND WORKS

Born on May 31, 1819, in West Hills, Long Island, Walt Whitman's father, Walter, was a small farmer who later became a carpenter after moving to Brooklyn. His mother, Louisa Van Velsor, had a particular interest in Quakerism, which became the only religious influence on the young Whitman. As he grew older, Whitman came to idealize his mother and fondly reminisced his Quaker upbringing. During his early years, Whitman spent time on the farms of Long Island and in Brooklyn and was deeply impacted by both the natural world and the world of humans, and embraced both wholeheartedly. In his poem 'There was a Child Went Forth', Whitman provides a glimpse into his childhood. He was a curious and imaginative child, often plagued by doubts that made him restless. His formal education was brief. He left school at the age of eleven to take on various jobs such as an office boy, a printer, a school teacher, and even an editor for controversial political newspapers. Teaching did not stick for Whitman as he lacked the necessary academic background. His dreamy and speculative temperament led him to drift between different rural schools from the age of seventeen to twenty.

Whitman worked as a journalist for several years, writing propaganda and sentimental fiction, until he suddenly began writing the original poetry of “Leaves of Grass” in his thirties. He worked for various newspapers in and out of Brooklyn, including “The Long Islander”, “The New York Aurora”, and “The Brooklyn Evening Star”. At twenty-seven he became the editor of the “Brooklyn Daily Eagle”, an important position for someone his age.

However, he discontinued after two years due to his political involvement. Though his newspaper writings do not show signs of his poetic genius, Whitman was living a full life in the city as an editor, with a passion for the opera. The grand music and drama of the opera left a lasting impression on his imagination and helped shape his poetry. During his time working for a newspaper in NewOrleans, he had the opportunity to travel and see the diverse landscapes of America, which he later celebrated in his poetry. The beauty of his country freed his imagination from the provincialism of his Long Island upbringing and allowed him to embrace the variety of America. When he returned to Brooklyn in 1848, he resumed working as a journalist, but his political beliefs caused problems, and he eventually turned to his father's trade as a carpenter.

Walt Whitman self-published the first edition of his book "Leaves of Grass" in July 1855, when he was 36 years old. Unfortunately, the book did not sell well, and Whitman himself wrote three reviews of it for the public. In 1856, he published the second edition with several new poems, partly in response to a letter from Emerson, praising the original edition.

The third edition, with even more new poems, came out in 1860 and established Whitman as a practicing poet. As a poet and artist, Whitman found his true home in the society of Bohemian New York, where he had many literary friends. As he became more absorbed in poetry, his political interests began to decline. However, when the Civil War broke out, he acted as a nurse among the wounded of both sides in the vicinity of Washington. The sight of so many suffering soldiers affected him deeply, and he offered his services to the wounded with great empathy and fellow feeling. The Civil Warwas a turning point in Whitman's life, as he found new material for his poetry in his deep emotional involvement. Inspired by a new purpose and enthusiasm, he poured out many new poems, which were published in 1865 as "Drum-Taps." Shortly after the book's publication, President Abraham Lincoln was assassinated, and Whitman's sorrow and sense of loss found expression in two great poems: "O Captain! My Captain!" and "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloomed." While he celebrated his relationship and comradeship with Lincoln, he also had many close friends from the non-literary, even the illiterate, lower social classes.

In 1865, Whitman lost his job in a government department due to the allegedly obscene nature of his poetry. In 1873, he suffered a debilitating paralytic stroke that rendered him incapable of working. The death of his mother later that year sent another severe blow, leaving him in a state of depression. In this period ofhardship, he wrote the poem 'Prayer of Columbus,' which was a symbolic reflection of his own struggles.

Whitman received the best possible care in Camden, and he documented his experiences there in a series of journal entries that were later published as *Specimen Days* (1882). Through his powerful will, he gradually regained his health, and in 1879, he embarked on a long journey to the far West, which he had only imagined before. The rugged, raw landscapes he encountered inspired his imagination a new.

During his final years, Whitman's main creative endeavour was the final editing of his masterpiece, *Leaves of Grass*, which he restructured and expanded with major additions. He also published several other books during this time, including *Democratic Vistas* in 1871, *Specimen Days* in 1882-83, and *November Boughs* in 1888. When he died at the age of seventy-two in 1892, he was well-prepared for death, having portrayed it as a 'strong deliver' in his poem, 'When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloomed

4.2.1. Formative Influences

Whitman's parents had a profound impact on his early life. His father's radical democratic ideals and his mother's Quaker beliefs, which emphasized the importance of listening to one's inner light, influenced Whitman's own beliefs in equality, fraternity, and the value of the individual. Growing up on Long Island, Whitman was also deeply affected by the natural beauty of the seashore and the bustling cities of Brooklyn and New York. He was a unique figure among romantic poets, as he celebrated and absorbed both the city and the country, seeing them not as opposing forces but as complementary aspects of life. His poetry reflected this fusion, with its form reconciling the conflicting pulls of both environments. As James Miller has noted, Whitman was a "lover of both solitude and crowds," and his work

reflects this duality.

Whitman's early love for literature was heavily influenced by the works of Homer and Shakespeare, which he would read for hours on end. He also immersed himself in reading the classics, the Bible, and other religious texts. His exposure to Evangelism and Oratory as a boy further fueled his passion for language and storytelling. Whitman's love for the opera also had a significant impact on his work, evident in his masterful use of rhythm and cadence.

The mystical and transcendental philosophy of India and Emerson also played a role in shaping his poetic vision, and Emerson himself dreamed ofan American poet who could embody the spirit of the nation. Whitman's “Leaves of Grass” is widely regarded as the epic of modern America, capturing the essence of the country in all its complexity. Despite these influences, however, the unique quality and tone of Whitman's masterpiece remain elusive.

Some have suggested that a mystical experience or a romantic encounter might have inspired the mysticism that runs through the Leaves, but the true origin of his poetic vision remains a mystery.

4. 3. THE POETRY OF WHITMAN

Whitman's poetry was considered scandalous and did not receive much readership during his life, however, he is now regarded as a national poet and has been recognized as the quintessential representative of American poetry, embodying the spirit of America and democracy in his work.

4.3.1. The Note of Democracy in his Poetry

The democratic poet celebrates no individual hero, nor does he celebrate himself. In his great ‘Song of Myself’, he is everyman, like Joyce’s *Ulysses*. The longest poem in *Leaves of Grass* is named after his own name, but the self-celebration throughout is celebration of himself as a manand as an American. As James Miller has commented, “The ‘I’ in any/one Whitman poem is not so much a personal reference as a fusion of several characters, a composite character, who exists in no place other than in the poem.” In his own words, Whitman rationalizes his attentionon self in his poetry, “Other poets celebrate great events, personages, romances, wars, loves, passions, the victories and power of their country, or some real or imagined incident. This poet celebrates natural propensities in himself, and that is the way he celebrates all.” The ‘I’ in his poetry is ‘Everyman’, a creature of contradictory impulses and instincts, both good and bad.

Whitman’s poetry is not a ‘class’ poetry, but a poetry in which he celebrates common humanity. His sense of identity with the humanity at large is complete. Whitman’s democratic philosophy is not limited to humans, as he feels a sense of identity with all living creatures, revealing his belief in the unity of all existence. This pantheistic democracy goes beyond the political aspect of democracy and towards a transcendental view. His poetry is centered on the feeling of oneness with creation, as seen in the title of “Leaves of Grass”, with grass serving as a democratic symbol in nature. Whitmanis also proud of his American nationality and envisions modern America as the center of science and democracy, just as Europe was the center of Feudalism and Asia, of myth and fable in the past. The American nation is the hero of his poetry, representing the leader of humanity. Whitman's America is mostly a dream-like and internalized concept.

Whitman believed that democracy had spiritual dimensions, envisioning it as a means of achieving universal peace, tolerance, and brotherhood. He held that the human soul has vast potential for good, which is most fully realized within a democratic framework. For Whitman, democracy was not just a political system, but an experiment in the development of the individual. His poetry reflects this democratic spirit throughout, earning him the title of the "voice of democracy." He even dreamed of creating a global institution for the expression of fraternal love, an ideal embodied in Leaves of Grass.

4.3 2. Symbolism in his poetry

Symbolism is a powerful tool utilized by writers to convey abstract and metaphysical truths to their readers, which cannot be communicated directly through the ordinary use of language. Whitman was a strong proponent of this technique and believed that true art should be suggestive, requiring mental effort from the reader to truly appreciate it. His aim was to expresshis own understanding of (1) the inherent unity and identity of all beings, (2) the spiritual truth underlying the physical and material world, and (3) the fluid and ever-changing nature of what appears to be stable and concrete. In order to demonstrate the existence of the unseen world, Whitman employs natural objects as symbols of the spiritual realm.

James Miller has observed that in Whitman's poetry, the symbol of 'I' represents a fusion of multiple characters, a composite character that has no existence outside of the poem and can represent the modern American, modern man, or even everyman.

In Whitman's poetry, the symbol of the road represents more than just a physical path for the poet's travels, as it also signifies the way to spiritual enlightenment. Additionally, the act of journeying on this road symbolizes the soul's progress towards its ultimate union with the divine. Unlike a mere sightseeing trip, Whitman's journeys are metaphysical voyages.

Symbols of great significance recur throughout “Leaves of Grass”. One example is the title itself, whichholds symbolic meaning. The grass, which grows both individually and in clusters, serves as a symbol of democracy, representing the miracle and mystery of the universe found in the ordinary andfamiliar. Whitman finds contemplation in a blade of grass, seeing it as a key to the universe's mysteries. In the Calamus section, the Calamus plant serves as a symbol of intimate friendship, growing only in "paths untrodden" and representing the rarity of genuine companionship.

Whitman frequently employs water-related imagery, particularly that of the sea, in his poetry. He uses the symbol of the sea to represent the soul, while land represents the body. The seashore serves as a metaphorical meeting point between body and soul, signifying that spiritual enlightenment can only be achieved through physical existence. The sea is also used to represent emotional turbulence, and in "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking," it takes on the role of death in the poem's enactment ofa death scene. The sea is described as a "cradle endlessly rocking," which is associated with the word "death" whispered out of the sea. However, Whitman sees death as a beginning rather than an end, as it represents a rebirth into the spiritual world. In other poems, such as "Cabined Ship at Sea," the seashore symbolizes the marriage of body and soul, while the "mystic ocean" represents the realm of the spirit. Rivers, streams, and rivulets symbolize the passage of time, and once they have flowed intothe sea, they become one with eternity.

Whitman employs bird symbolism in his poetry as well, with the mocking bird, the thrush, and the hawk being the three recurring birds in Leaves of Grass. In his early poem "Starting from Paumanok," the mocking bird symbolizes love, the hawk symbolizes democracy, and the hermit thrush symbolizes religion, and this symbolism persists in the bird imagery throughout the collection.The bird imagery is used in various ways in several poems, with America herself becoming a hovering, "uncaught bird" in Song of the Universal. Whitman's bird symbols are notable for their vividness and complexity.

Whitman frequently employs heavenly bodies as symbols in his poetry, such as the earth, sun, moon, and stars. These celestial bodies revolving in their orbits represent order and balance amidst the chaos and disorder of the world, revealing the poet's faith in the divine governance of the universe. The star is a particularly recurrent image in the Leaves, often symbolizing the triumph of the eternal over death. In 'When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd', the passing cloud obscuring the star is identified with the funeral procession. This image receives climactic treatment in 'Whispers of Heavenly Death', which explores the rebirth inherent in death. The sun also appears in several poems, representing fertility, a fruitful life, and the poet's own creativity. The moon serves to reconcile the poet to death and tragedy, as seen in 'Out of the Cradle' where the moon is associated with death as it sags down and almost touches the face of the sea.

Whitman employs the images of trees and cities throughout Leaves of Grass. The tree is often used as a symbol of the generative power of life, and represents a spiritual love that transcends the physical. In contrast to the Romantics, Whitman doesn't hold a preference for the village over the city. Instead, he sees the city as a symbol of fellowship and the potential for social connections among the masses of people living there.

4.3.3. Treatment of Love and Sex

Whitman's poetry often explores the theme of love and sex, and he has even referred to his Leaves of Grass as "the song of sex." Unlike many contemporary poets, he approaches the topic with a frank and realistic perspective, free from prudery and inhibition. In fact, he sees himself as a poet who celebrates both the physical body and the soul, singing of "the body electric." While some readers may find his descriptions of passionate experiences of love and sex shockingly vulgar, his uninhibited treatment of sex has also been seen as a celebration of the body's natural appetites. One of his most revealing poems, "A Woman Waits for Me," glorifies sex as containing the essence of all things.

Critics have accused Whitman of being homosexual due to the Calamus poems that celebrate the love between men. While his poetry covers a range of love experiences, from physical to spiritual, his frank and uninhibited portrayal of love and sex has often overshadowed its deeper significance. In Whitman's view, sex is an energy that permeates all of nature, reflecting his belief in the interconnectedness of all things. In a time when Victorian society rejected discussions of human sexuality, Whitman celebrated the complexity and importanceof man's sexual instincts.

4.3.4. The Mystic Element in Whitman's Poetry

Whitman's poetry is infused with a strong sense of mysticism that is uniquely his own. His mystical beliefs are characterized by an amalgamation of various mystical doctrines that

seem to arise naturally from his own temperament. In fact, his poetry is a testament to his development of unique and often paradoxical mystic tenets that are even more striking than those of his predecessors. Whitman's mystical experiences are conveyed in his writing, where he expresses a profound sense of oneness and unity with both the grand and the minuscule. His poetry emphasizes the essential divinity of all created things, and he often uses mystical language and imagery to convey this idea.

Even though Whitman acknowledged the theory of evolution proposed by Darwin, he never abandoned his belief in a higher power that governed the material world. Despite his recognition of science and materialism, he delved deeper into the realm of the inexplicable and incorporated his mystical experiences into his poetry. While he extolled humanity's advancement in conquering the earth, he remained convinced that it needed to search for the divine by exploring the vastness of the Universe. Thus, Whitman incorporated science into his poetry from a deeply religious and mystical perspective.

Whitman employs symbols to effectively convey his perception of a higher reality. He believed that the physical world was evidence of the unseen and therefore utilized vivid and tangible imagery to express his view of the divine. What sets Whitman apart as a mystic is his acceptance of the physical realm, recognizing it as a necessary means of comprehending the spiritual. This approach distinguishes him from other mystics who may reject the physical world. Whitman considers himself a poet of both the body and the soul, recognizing the equal value and importance of both. This is why his poetry often includes sexual themes, which should not be interpreted as vulgar but rather as a reflection of his holistic view of human existence. Whitman created a unique mysticism for America, one that is democratic, inclusive of all, and embraces science and myth, life and death, and the material and the spiritual.

4.3.5. Use of Free Verse

Walt Whitman is widely regarded as one of the pioneers of free verse in American literature. Free verse relies on the natural rhythms of speech and language, allowing poets greater freedom and flexibility in their expression. Whitman’s use of free verse was revolutionary for its time, as most poets of his era still adhered to traditional poetic structures. Whitman’s poetry often reads like a conversation or a song, with lines that flow naturally and spontaneously. His use of repetition and parallelism also adds to the musical quality of his verse. By breaking free from the constraints of traditional poetic structures, he was able to express himself more fully and authentically. His poetry is known for its celebration of democracy, nature, and the human body, as well as its frank treatment of sexuality and sensuality. Whitman’s use of free verse also had a profound impact on future generations of poets. Many of the great American poets of the 20th century, such as Robert Frost, Langston Hughes, and Allen Ginsberg, were influenced by Whitman's experimentation with form andhis emphasis on personal expression. Walt Whitman's use of free verse was a ground-breaking development in American poetry. By breaking free from traditional poetic structures, he was able to create a new form of poetry that was more fluid, expressive, and authentic. His legacy continues to inspire poets today, and his contribution to the evolution of American literature cannot be overstated.

4. 4. THE TEXT OF THE POEM

(1)

When lilacs last in the dooryard bloom'd,
And the great star early droop'd in the
western sky in the night,I mourn'd, and yet
shall mourn with ever-returning spring.

Ever-returning spring, trinity sure to
me you bring, Lilac blooming
perennial and drooping star in the
west,And thought of him I love.

(2)

O powerful western fallen star!
O shades of night—O moody, tearful night!
O great star disappear'd—O the black murk
that hides the star!O cruel hands that hold
me powerless—O helpless soul of me! O
harsh surrounding cloud that will not free
my soul.

(3)

In the dooryard fronting an old farm-house near the white-
wash'd palings, Stands the lilac-bush tall-growing with
heart-shaped leaves of rich green, With many a pointed
blossom rising delicate, with the perfume strong I love,
With every leaf a miracle and from this bush in the
dooryard,
With delicate-color'd blossoms and heart-shaped
leaves of rich green,A sprig with its flower I break.

(4)

In the swamp in secluded recesses,
A shy and hidden bird is warbling a song.

Solitary the thrush,
The hermit withdrawn to himself, avoiding
the settlements,Sings by himself a song.

Song of the bleeding throat,
Death's outlet song of life, (for well dear brother I
know, If thou wast not granted to sing thou would'st
surely die.)

(5)

Over the breast of the spring, the land, amid cities,
Amid lanes and through old woods, where lately the
violets peep'd from the ground, spottingthe gray
debris,
Amid the grass in the fields each side of the lanes,
passing the endless grass,
Passing the yellow-spear'd wheat, every grain from its
shroud in the dark-brown fields uprisen,Passing the
apple-tree blows of white and pink in the orchards,
Carrying a corpse to where it shall
rest in the grave,Night and day
journeys a coffin.

(6)

Coffin that passes through lanes and streets,
Through day and night with the great cloud
darkening the land, With the pomp of the
inloop'd flags with the cities draped in black,

With the show of the States themselves as of crape-veil'd
women standing,With processions long and winding and
the flambeaus of the night,

With the countless torches lit, with the silent sea of
faces and the unbared heads,With the waiting depot,
the arriving coffin, and the sombre faces,

With dirges through the night, with the thousand voices rising
strong and solemn,With all the mournful voices of the dirges
pour'd around the coffin,

The dim-lit churches and the shuddering organs—where amid
these you journey,With the tolling tolling bells' perpetual clang,
Here, coffin that slowly passes,I give you my sprig of lilac.

(7)

(Nor for you, for one alone,
Blossoms and branches green to coffins all I bring,
For fresh as the morning, thus would I chant a song for
you O sane and sacred death.

All over bouquets of roses,
O death, I cover you over with
roses and early lilies,But mostly
and now the lilac that blooms the
first, Copious I break, I break the

sprigs from the bushes,With
loaded arms I come, pouring for
you,
For you and the coffins all of you O death.)

(8)
O western orb sailing the heaven,
Now I know what you must have meant as a
month since I walk'd,As I walk'd in silence the
transparent shadowy night,

As I saw you had something to tell as you bent to me night after night,
As you droop'd from the sky low down as if to my side, (while the other
stars all look'd on,)As we wander'd together the solemn night, (for
something I know not what kept me from sleep,)

As the night advanced, and I saw on the rim of the west how full
you were of woe,As I stood on the rising ground in the breeze in
the cool transparent night,

As I watch'd where you pass'd and was lost in the netherward
black of the night,As my soul in its trouble dissatisfied sank, as
where you sad orb,
Concluded, dropt in the night, and was gone.

(9)
Sing on there in the swamp,
O singer bashful and tender, I hear your
notes, I hear your call,I hear, I come
presently, I understand you,

But a moment I linger, for the lustrous star
has detain'd me,The star my departing
comrade holds and detains me.

(10)
O how shall I warble myself for the dead one there I loved?
And how shall I deck my song for the large sweet
soul that has gone?And what shall my perfume be for
the grave of him I love?

Sea-winds blown from east and west,
Blown from the Eastern sea and blown from the Western sea, till there on the
prairies meeting,These and with these and the breath of my chant,
I'll perfume the grave of him I love.

(11)
O what shall I hang on the chamber walls?
And what shall the pictures be that I
hang on the walls,To adorn the
burial-house of him I love?

Pictures of growing spring and farms and homes,
With the Fourth-month eve at sundown, and the gray smoke lucid and bright,

With floods of the yellow gold of the gorgeous, indolent, sinking sun, burning, expanding the air,With the fresh sweet herbage under foot, and the pale green leaves of the trees prolific,

In the distance the flowing glaze, the breast of the river, with a wind-dapple here and there,With ranging hills on the banks, with many a line against the sky, and shadows,

And the city at hand with dwellings so dense, and stacks of chimneys,
And all the scenes of life and the workshops, and the workmen homeward returning.

(12)
Lo, body and soul—this land,
My own Manhattan with spires, and the
sparkling and hurrying tides, and the ships,

The varied and ample land, the South and
the North in the light, Ohio's shores and flashingMissouri,
And ever the far-spreading prairies cover'd
with grass and corn.

Lo, the most excellent sun so
calm and haughty, The violet and
purple morn with just-felt
breezes,The gentle soft-born
measureless light,

The miracle spreading bathing all, the fulfill'd noon,
The coming eve delicious, the welcome night
and the stars,Over my cities shining all,
enveloping man and land.

(13)
Sing on, sing on you gray-brown bird,
Sing from the swamps, the recesses, pour your chant from
the bushes,Limitless out of the dusk, out of the cedars and
pines.

Sing on dearest brother,
warble your reedy song,Loud
human song, with voice of
uttermost woe.

O liquid and free and tender!
O wild and loose to my soul—O wondrous singer!
You only I hear—yet the star holds me, (but
will soon depart,)Yet the lilac with mastering
odor holds me.

(14)
Now while I sat in the day and look'd forth,
In the close of the day with its light and the
fields of spring, and the farmers preparing theircrops,

In the large unconscious scenery of my land
with its lakes and forests,
In the heavenly aerial beauty,
(after the perturb'd winds and the storms,)

Under the arching heavens of the afternoon
swift passing, and the voices of children andwomen,

The many-moving sea-tides, and I saw
the ships how they sail'd,
And the summer approaching with richness,
and the fields all busy with labor,

And the infinite separate houses,
how they all went on, each with its
meals and minutia of dailyusages,

And the streets how their throbbings throbb'd,
and the cities pent—lo, then and there,
Falling upon them all and among them all,
enveloping me with the rest,
Appear'd the cloud, appear'd the long black trail,
And I knew death, its thought, and the sacred knowledge of death.

Then with the knowledge of death as walking
one side of me,And the thought of death close-
walking the other side of me,

And I in the middle as with companions,
and as holding the hands of companions,
I fled forth to the hiding receiving night that talks not,

Down to the shores of the water, the path by the
swamp in the dimness,To the solemn shadowy cedars
and ghostly pines so still.

And the singer so shy to the rest receiv'd me,
The gray-brown bird I know receiv'd us
comrades three, And he sang the carol
of death, and a verse for him I love.

From deep secluded recesses,
From the fragrant cedars and the
ghostly pines so still,Came the carol of
the bird.

And the charm of the carol rapt me,
As I held as if by their hands my
comrades in the night,And the voice
of my spirit tallied the song of the
bird.

Come lovely and soothing death,
Undulate round the world, serenely
arriving, arriving,In the day, in the
night, to all, to each,
Sooner or later delicate death.

Prais'd be the fathomless universe,
For life and joy, and for objects and
knowledge curious,And for love,
sweet love—but praise! praise!
praise!
For the sure-enwinding arms of cool-enfolding death.

Dark mother always gliding near with soft feet,
Have none chanted for thee a chant
of fullest welcome?Then I chant it for
thee, I glorify thee above all,
I bring thee a song that when thou must indeed come, come unfalteringly.

Approach strong deliveress,
When it is so, when thou hast taken them I
joyously sing the dead,Lost in the loving

floating ocean of thee,
Laved in the flood of thy bliss O death.

From me to thee glad serenades,
Dances for thee I propose saluting thee, adornments and feastings for thee,And the sights of the open landscape and the high-spread sky are fitting, And life and the fields, and the huge and thoughtful night.

The night in silence under many a star,
The ocean shore and the husky whispering wave whose voice I know,And the soul turning to thee O vast and well-veil'd death,
And the body gratefully nestling close to thee.

Over the tree-tops I float thee a song,
Over the rising and sinking waves, over the myriad fields and the prairies wide,Over the dense-pack'd cities all and the teeming wharves and ways,
I float this carol with joy, with joy to thee O death.

(15)
To the tally of my soul,
Loud and strong kept up the gray-brown bird,
With pure deliberate notes spreading filling the night.

Loud in the pines and cedars dim,
Clear in the freshness moist and the swamp-perfume,And I with my comrades there in the night.

While my sight that was bound in my eyes unclosed,As to long panoramas of visions.

And I saw askant the armies,
I saw as in noiseless dreams hundreds of battle-flags,
Borne through the smoke of the battles and pierc'd with missiles I saw them,And carried hither and yon through the smoke, and torn and bloody,

And at last but a few shreds left on the staffs, (and all in silence,)And the staffs all splinter'd and broken.

I saw battle-corpses, myriads of them,

And the white skeletons of young men, I saw them,
I saw the debris and debris of all the slain
soldiers of the war,But I saw they were not as
was thought,

They themselves were fully at rest,
they suffer'd not,The living remain'd
and suffer'd, the mother suffer'd,
And the wife and the child and the musing
comrade suffer'd,And the armies that
remain'd suffer'd.

(16)
Passing the visions, passing the night,
Passing, unloosing the hold of my comrades' hands,
Passing the song of the hermit bird and the
tallying song of my soul,Victorious song, death's
outlet song, yet varying ever-altering song,

As low and wailing, yet clear the notes, rising and falling,
flooding the night,
Sadly sinking and fainting, as warning and
warning, and yet again bursting with joy,
Covering the earth and filling the spread of the heaven,

As that powerful psalm in the night I heard
from recesses,Passing, I leave the lilac with
heart-shaped leaves,
I leave thee there in the door-yard, blooming,
returning with spring.

I cease from my song for thee,
From my gaze on thee in the west, fronting the west,
communing with thee,O comrade lustrous with silver face
in the night.

Yet each to keep and all,
retrievements out of the night,The
song, the wondrous chant of the gray-
brown bird, And the tallying chant,
the echo arous'd in my soul,

With the lustrous and drooping star with the
countenance full of woe,With the holders holding my
hand nearing the call of the bird,
Comrades mine and I in the midst,
and their memory ever to keep, for the

dead I loved so well,For the sweetest,
wisest soul of all my days and lands—
and this for his dear sake,

Lilac and star and bird twined with the
chant of my soul,There in the fragrant
pines and the cedars dusk and dim.

4. 5. CENTRAL THEME OF THE POEM

The poem is a meditation on death and mourning, as Whitman grapples with the loss of Lincoln and the grief that he and the nation experience. He uses images of nature and the changing seasons to convey the sense of loss and the idea that life goes on, even in the face of death. Throughout the poem, Whitman invokes spiritual and religious themes, suggesting that there is a higher power at work in the world and that death is not the end. He also celebrates the role of the soul in transcending the physical world and finding meaning and purpose in life. Whitman uses the blooming of lilacs in the spring as a metaphor for the cycle of life and death, suggesting that even in the face of loss, new life and renewal are possible. He also celebrates the beauty and power of nature, using it to reflect on the larger forces at work in the world. The poem reflects Whitman's belief in the importance of unity and the shared experience of grief in the aftermath of Lincoln's death. He celebrates the resilience of the nation and the power of the people to come together in times of crisis. Whitman suggests that memory has the power to transcend time and space, allowing us to remember and honor those who have passed away. He uses images of the night sky and the stars to evoke a sense of continuity and connection across time and space.

4.5.1 Analysis of the poem

Section I-II

An expression of the poet’s unbearable pain at the death of Abraham Lincoln. The basic symbols as elegy shown in this poem are the lilacs, the drooping star and the spring are introduced.

Section III- IV

The hermit thrush is introduced as a symbol of the poet's inner self. The hermit thrush is a bird that is known for its beautiful song, and Whitman uses it to represent the voice of his own soul. The poet listens to the song of the hermit thrush and finds comfort in its music, which he interprets as a message of hope and transcendence.

Section V-VI

A description of the funeral procession with the dead hero’s coffin, across the country. We get the picture of a whole nation in mourning. As the procession moves through the different parts of the country, Whitman notes the different landscapes and the changing seasons, using them to underscore the idea of the cycle of life and death. He also emphasizes the unity of the nation in mourning, describing how people from all parts of the country come together to honor the dead hero. The funeral procession is a powerful symbol of the nation's grief and the shared sense of loss that it experiences in the wake of Lincoln's

assassination.

This song is not merely a song mourning the death of Lincoln, but it is also a celebration of death, "sane and sacred death." Whitman also suggests that Lincoln's legacy will endure long after his death, and that his influence will continue to shape the course of American history. He uses images ofnature and the changing seasons to convey the idea that even though Lincoln is gone, his spirit lives on, and his vision for the nation will continue to inspire generations to come.

Section VII

The premonition the poet had a month ago, foretelling some national calamity, the meaning of which he understands now. Whitman's understanding of the premonition after Lincoln's death is a poignant moment in the poem, as it underscores the power of intuition and the importance of paying attention to our innermost feelings and intuitions. It also adds to the sense of inevitability and destiny that permeates the poem, as if the events of history are already written and we are simply living out our roles in the great drama of life.

Section VIII – IX

Once again, he hears the call of the hermit thrush, but doesn't heed to listen, overwhelmed by sorrow.

Section X-XII

Whitman expresses a sense of inadequacy in his ability to pay homage to the great leader, who is widely believed to be President Lincoln. Despite his deep admiration for Lincoln and his belief in the power of poetry to capture the essence of human experience, Whitman feels that his words are inadequate to express the depth of his grief and the magnitude of the loss.

Section XIII

The hermit thrush appears repeatedly as a symbol of the poet's inner self, and as a voice of nature thatprovides comfort and solace in the face of grief and loss. In this section of the poem, the hermit thrush once again sings its mournful song, and Whitman finds solace in its music, which helps to calm his mind and soothe his spirit.

Section XIV

Whitman's experience of grief and consolation eventually leads him to a deeper understanding of death, and a sense of acceptance and peace. In this section of the poem, he comes to a realization that death is an inevitable part of life, and that even though it brings sorrow and pain, it can also be "lovely and soothing" in its own way.

Section XV

The poet has attained the mystical insight into the true nature of death through which he could riseabove his personal grief and accept death and realize that those who die heroic deaths are fully atrest, while it is those who survive that really suffer.

Section XVI

Whitman brings the elegy to a close on a note of reconciliation and acceptance. The symbols and images that have been woven throughout the poem are repeated, creating a cyclical structural pattern that reinforces the idea of the natural cycle of life and death.

4.5.2. Explication and Appreciation

When 'When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloomed' was published in 1865 in the Drum Taps, it served as a poignant tribute to the memory of Abraham Lincoln and represented a significant milestone in the tradition of elegiac poetry. Unlike other poems, such as Lycidas and Adonais, which were marred by sectarian and personal polemics, this poem is entirely free from such biases, and instead utilizes powerful symbols and imagery to evoke deep emotions of grief and loss. Moreover, the poem's underlying symbolic structure is both firm and well-integrated, creating a cyclical and symmetrical form that reinforces the natural cycle of life and death. In this way, the poem resonates with all readers, not just Americans, and captures the universal feeling of mourning that accompanies the death of a great leader.

In the aftermath of Abraham Lincoln's assassination in April 1865, Walt Whitman wrote a sixteen- section elegy entitled 'When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloomed'. Through this poem, Whitman expresses his profound admiration for Lincoln, who had championed the cause of the Negro slaves and freed them from the shackles of slavery. The poem follows the conventions of an elegy, starting with the poet's personal grief at the loss of a great leader, and then expanding into a universal expression of mourning as a funeral procession of mourners is described. Finally, the poem offers a sense of consolation for the death of Lincoln, who embodied the virtues of honesty, sympathy, courage, and determination.

In the first two sections of the poem, the poet expresses his grief over the death of Lincoln and introduces the fundamental symbols that are used throughout the elegy. Lincoln was assassinated in the springtime when lilacs were blooming in the dooryard and Venus was drooping in the western sky. The poet declares that every spring, for as long as he lives, he will mourn the loss of his beloved hero. The symbols of the blooming lilacs, the drooping star, and the spring season will always remind him of Lincoln. These symbols are powerful embodiments of the emotions of the elegy. The western star represents Lincoln, its fixed position in the sky suggests his steady leadership of the nation. The surrounding cloud symbolizes death and the tragic loss that it brings. The lilacs, returning every spring, represent the eternal memory of the President and the poet's strong love for him. The hermit thrush is the voice of spirituality and its song is "Death's outlet song of life".

The following two sections of the elegy focus on the symbol of the lilac, which is further developed. The poet desired to offer something to his hero, so he picked a spring of lilac with a flower from a lilac bush growing in the dooryard of a farmhouse, turning it into a symbol of love and sympathy. Additionally, the lilac is also a symbol of equality and brotherhood since it grows everywhere and is easily accessible to all. The hermit thrush, which represents the voice of spirituality and the poet's inner self, is a timid and concealed bird whose song is heard by the poet in secluded recesses in the swamp. It is "Death's outlet song of life" because it would have perished if it had not been allowed to sing. The bird is the poet's "dear brother," united by the bond of silent sympathy, and the poet himself sings his death's outlet song of life from his bleeding heart.

Sections five and six of the elegies vividly depict the funeral procession carrying the coffin of the departed leader across the country, with the entire nation grieving for their beloved hero. As the procession moved through cities, lanes, woods, and meadows, people draped their homes and themselves in black, flags were lowered, and bells tolled in churches.

The mourners' wails and dirges echoed through the night, rising strong and solemn, as the poet joined in the universal expression of grief by placing his lilac spring on the leader's coffin.

The poet, in section eight, reminisces about a premonition he had a month before the death of Lincoln, in which the western star, appearing to be full of woe, drooped from the sky, leading his soul to sink with it as it sank in the west. The poet now realizes that this premonition foretold the death of Lincoln, which was inevitable and could not be averted.

Section nine introduces the conflict in the poem, where the poet hears the call of the hermit thrush once again, but he is too absorbed in his grief symbolized by the star to pay attention to it. The hermit thrush is a symbol of spiritual insight and can explain the meaning of death to the poet, but he is conflicted between his overwhelming grief and the consolation that could come from understanding the true nature and significance of death.

In the following three sections, the poet expresses his feeling of inadequacy in how he should properly honour his beloved hero who has passed away. He grapples with how to properly convey his deep sense of love and respect. He ponders on what kind of song he should sing and what kind of fragrance he should spread on his grave.

The poet then goes on to describe the various pictures that he would like to decorate the burial house of Lincoln with. These pictures will include scenes of growing spring, farms, homes, sunlight, fresh sweet herbage, rivers, hills, and the city with its diverse scenes of life.

In Section twelve, the vast and expansive landscape of America is presented, which symbolizes Lincoln's breadth of vision and his immense soul. The "morn with just-felt breezes" and "the coming eve delicious, the welcome night and the stars" allude to the eternal nature of Lincoln's legacy.

The poet ultimately offers Lincoln the entire United States, as a way of conveying that he will always be alive in the hearts and minds of his fellow countrymen. This gesture highlights the enduring impact of Lincoln's life and deeds. It serves as a testament to the profound effect he had on the nation, and on the world.

In the following three sections, the poet grapples with the inadequacy of his own voice in paying tribute to his beloved departed leader. He expresses uncertainty about how to adequately honor his memory, even wondering what perfume would be fitting to sprinkle on his grave. Despite this uncertainty, he paints vivid pictures of the scenes and landscapes that will adorn the burial house ofhis hero. From the lush, growing spring to the farms and homes that dot the countryside, from the bright rays of sunlight to the fresh, sweet scent of the surrounding vegetation, from the winding rivers and rolling hills to the bustling city with its varied scenes of life, each image captures a different aspect of the beauty and complexity of the land Lincoln loved and served. In section twelve, the vast and open prairies evoke Lincoln's own boundless vision and generous spirit, while the mention of the "morn with just-felt breezes" and the "coming eve delicious, the welcome night and the stars" suggest his

enduring presence and immortality. In the end, the poet offers his hero the whole of America, signifying the enduring legacy he has left behind in the hearts and minds of his fellow citizens. Despite the poet's doubts about his ability to do justice to Lincoln's memory, hiswords ultimately offer a powerful testament to the enduring impact of this beloved leader.

In the thirteenth section of the poem, the poet once again turns his attention to the hermit thrush, which sings from swamps, prickly bushes, and cedars and pines. He sees the bird as a dear brother and its song as an expression of his own intense grief. The thrush's song brings him a sense of calm and comfort, and he wishes for it to continue singing.

However, the poet still cannot fully embrace the bird's message of understanding the true nature of death. He is still held back by his overwhelming grief and the symbols of mourning, such as the drooping western star and the lilac. The tension between his grief and the possibility of consolation through understanding death remains unresolved. The poet's journey towards acceptance and understanding is still ongoing, and thethrush's song serves as a reminder of the beauty and solace that can be found in nature.

The tension between the poet's overwhelming grief and the consolation that death has to offer is finally resolved in the next section. A dark cloud covered the nation, leaving the poet in deep anguish and sorrow as he faced the inevitability of death. As his thoughts were consumed by the reality of death, he gradually acquired an understanding of its true nature. With his newfound companions, "Thoughts of death" and "Knowledge of death", he retreated to the secret haven where the hermit thrush sang its song. As he listened, the bird's melody no longer represented a source of conflict, but rather, it charmed and soothed him.

The voice of the bird was in harmony with his own understanding of death, which he now viewed as a joyous and necessary occurrence. In the hermit thrush's song, death is glorified as a "dark mother" and a "strong deliveress", a universal and necessary force that arrives delicately, sooner or later, to all living beings. The poet now sings joyously of death, welcoming it as a "strong deliveress" and vindicating its goodness and necessity.

In section fifteen, the poet reaches a new level of understanding about death and its impact on the living. His mystical insight, gained through the song of the hermit thrush, allows him to transcend his own personal grief and recognize the vast extent of suffering caused by the Civil War. He acknowledges that the war has taken countless lives, leaving behind grieving family members, friends, and comrades. Even the surviving soldiers and citizens are suffering from the trauma of war. However, he also recognizes that those who have died in the war are now at peace, free from the struggles of life. The living are the ones left to bear the burden of grief and suffering. By acknowledging the impact of death on both the living and the dead, the poet offers a compassionate perspective that transcends personal grief and acknowledges the universal experience of loss

The final section of the poem brings a sense of closure and resolution to the themes explored throughout. The poet has reached a state of acceptance and reconciliation, having come to terms with the inevitability and universality of death. The symbols and images used earlier in the poem, such as the star, lilac, and hermit thrush, are brought together in a circular structure, symbolizing the cyclical nature of life and death. The poet remembers his beloved hero with fondness and admiration, but alsorecognizes the beauty and wisdom in the song of the hermit thrush, which has brought him solace and understanding. The poem ends on a peaceful and contemplative note, suggesting that the poet has found a sense of harmony and

balance between life and death, grief and acceptance.

Lilac and star and bird twined with the chant of my soul There in the fragrant pines and the cedars dusk and dim.

The three fundamental symbols in the elegy, namely the cloud, the star, and the lilac, play a crucial role in helping the poet reconcile with the inevitability of death. The star, combined with the bird's song, conveys the idea that death is an essential part of the cycle of life. The elegy concludes with the poet's acceptance of death, reminiscent of the themes found in resurrection myths. Overall, the poem ends on a hopeful and joyous note, celebrating the idea that death is not the end, but rather a necessary step in the eternal cycle of life.

4.6. SAMPLE QUESTIONS

1. Explain how symbols are used in the poem 'When Lilacs Last to the Dooryard Bloomed'.
1. Explore the theme of mysticism in Whitman's poetry, citing examples from the prescribed poems.
2. In what way does the poet in the prescribed poems move past his profound sorrow and achieve asense of harmony and acknowledgement
3. Can you elaborate on how Whitman addresses the theme of death in his poem 'When Lilacs Last tothe Dooryard Bloomed'?
4. How does Whitman's poetry reflect his American identity? Provide examples from the poems youhave studied.

4.7. SUGGESTED READINGS

1. James Miller, *Walt Whitman*
2. William E.Barton, *Abraham Lincoln and Walt Whitman*
3. Samuelson Fisher and Vaid Reniger, *American Literature of the Nineteenth Century*, New Delhi, 1983.
4. John C. Broderick (ed) *Whitman the Poet*
5. Gay Wilson Allen *Walt Whitman : as Man, Poet, and Legend*
6. James E. Miller, Jr. *A critical Guide to 'Leaves of Grass'*, university of Chicago Press, 1957.
7. Leon Edel, et.al (ed.) Whitman, "Death of Abraham Lincolon" in *Masters of American Literature,* Boston, 1959.

Prof. B. Karuna.

LESSON 5

OUT OF THE CRADLE ENDLESSLY ROCKING (DETAILED STUDY)

STRUCTURE

5.1. The Text – 'Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking
5.2. Central Theme of the Poem
5.2.1 Analysis of the poem
5.2.2. Explication & Critical Appreciation
5.2.3. Use of Figurative Language
5.3. Sample Questions
5.4. Suggested Readings

5.1 THE TEXT OF THE POEM

Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking

Out of the cradle endlessly rocking,
Out of the mocking-bird's throat, the musical shuttle,
Out of the Ninth-month midnight,
Over the sterile sands and the fields beyond, where the child leaving his bed wander'd alone, bareheaded, barefoot,
Down from the shower'd halo,
Up from the mystic play of shadows twining and twisting as if they were alive,
Out from the patches of briers and blackberries,
From the memories of the bird that chanted to me,
From your memories sad brother, from the fitful risings and fallings I heard,
From under that yellow half-moon late-risen and swollen as if with tears,
From those beginning notes of yearning and love there in the mist,
From the thousand responses of my heart never to cease,
From the myriad thence-arous'd words,
From the word stronger and more delicious than any,
From such as now they start the scene revisiting,
As a flock, twittering, rising, or overhead passing,
Borne hither, ere all eludes me, hurriedly,
A man, yet by these tears a little boy again,
Throwing myself on the sand, confronting the waves,
I, chanter of pains and joys, uniter of here and hereafter,
Taking all hints to use them, but swiftly leaping beyond them,
A reminiscence sing.

Once Paumanok,
When the lilac-scent was in the air and Fifth-month grass was growing,
Up this seashore in some briers,
Two feather'd guests from Alabama, two together,
And their nest, and four light-green eggs spotted with brown,
And every day the he-bird to and fro near at hand,
And every day the she-bird crouch'd on her nest, silent, with bright eyes,

And every day I, a curious boy, never too close, never disturbing them,
Cautiously peering, absorbing, translating.

Shine! shine! shine!
Pour down your warmth, great sun!
While we bask, we two together.

Two together!
Winds blow south, or winds blow north,
Day come white, or night come black,
Home, or rivers and mountains from home,
Singing all time, minding no time,
While we two keep together.

Till of a sudden,
May-be kill'd, unknown to her mate,
One forenoon the she-bird crouch'd not on the nest,
Nor return'd that afternoon, nor the next,
Nor ever appear'd again.

And thenceforward all summer in the sound of the sea,
And at night under the full of the moon in calmer weather,
Over the hoarse surging of the sea,
Or flitting from brier to brier by day,
I saw, I heard at intervals the remaining one, the he-bird,
The solitary guest from Alabama.

Blow! blow! blow!
Blow up sea-winds along Paumanok's shore;
I wait and I wait till you blow my mate to me.

Yes, when the stars glisten'd,
All night long on the prong of a moss-scallop'd stake,
Down almost amid the slapping waves,
Sat the lone singer wonderful causing tears.

He call'd on his mate,
He pour'd forth the meanings which I of all men know.

Yes my brother I know,
The rest might not, but I have treasur'd every note,
For more than once dimly down to the beach gliding,
Silent, avoiding the moonbeams, blending myself with the shadows,
Recalling now the obscure shapes, the echoes, the sounds and sights after their sorts,
The white arms out in the breakers tirelessly tossing,
I, with bare feet, a child, the wind wafting my hair,
Listen'd long and long.

Listen'd to keep, to sing, now translating the notes,
Following you my brother.

Soothe! soothe! soothe!
Close on its wave soothes the wave behind,
And again another behind embracing and lapping, every one close,
But my love soothes not me, not me.

Low hangs the moon, it rose late,
It is lagging—O I think it is heavy with love, with love.

O madly the sea pushes upon the land,
With love, with love.

O night! do I not see my love fluttering out among the breakers?
What is that little black thing I see there in the white?

Loud! loud! loud!
Loud I call to you, my love!

High and clear I shoot my voice over the waves,
Surely you must know who is here, is here,
You must know who I am, my love.

Low-hanging moon!
What is that dusky spot in your brown yellow?
O it is the shape, the shape of my mate!
O moon do not keep her from me any longer.

Land! land! O land!
Whichever way I turn, O I think you could give me my mate back again if you only would,
For I am almost sure I see her dimly whichever way I look.

O rising stars!
Perhaps the one I want so much will rise, will rise with some of you.

O throat! O trembling throat!
Sound clearer through the atmosphere!
Pierce the woods, the earth,
Somewhere listening to catch you must be the one I want.

Shake out carols!
Solitary here, the night's carols!
Carols of lonesome love! death's carols!
Carols under that lagging, yellow, waning moon!
O under that moon where she droops almost down into the sea!
O reckless despairing carols.

But soft! sink low!
Soft! let me just murmur,
And do you wait a moment you husky-nois'd sea,
For somewhere I believe I heard my mate responding to me,
So faint, I must be still, be still to listen,

But not altogether still, for then she might not come immediately to me.

Hither my love!
Here I am! here!
With this just-sustain'd note I announce myself to you,
This gentle call is for you my love, for you.

Do not be decoy'd elsewhere,
That is the whistle of the wind, it is not my voice,
That is the fluttering, the fluttering of the spray,
Those are the shadows of leaves.

O darkness! O in vain!
O I am very sick and sorrowful.

O brown halo in the sky near the moon, drooping upon the sea!
O troubled reflection in the sea!
O throat! O throbbing heart!
And I singing uselessly, uselessly all the night.

O past! O happy life! O songs of joy!
In the air, in the woods, over fields,
Loved! loved! loved! loved! loved!
But my mate no more, no more with me!
We two together no more.

The aria sinking,
All else continuing, the stars shining,
The winds blowing, the notes of the bird continuous echoing,
With angry moans the fierce old mother incessantly moaning,
On the sands of Paumanok's shore gray and rustling,
The yellow half-moon enlarged, sagging down, drooping, the face of the sea almost touching,
The boy ecstatic, with his bare feet the waves, with his hair the atmosphere dallying,
The love in the heart long pent, now loose, now at last tumultuously bursting,
The aria's meaning, the ears, the soul, swiftly depositing,
The strange tears down the cheeks coursing,
The colloquy there, the trio, each uttering,
The undertone, the savage old mother incessantly crying,
To the boy's soul's questions sullenly timing, some drown'd secret hissing,
To the outsetting bard.

Demon or bird! (said the boy's soul,)
Is it indeed toward your mate you sing? or is it really to me?
For I, that was a child, my tongue's use sleeping, now I have heard you,
Now in a moment I know what I am for, I awake,
And already a thousand singers, a thousand songs, clearer, louder and more sorrowful than yours,
A thousand warbling echoes have started to life within me, never to die.

O you singer solitary, singing by yourself, projecting me,
O solitary me listening, never more shall I cease perpetuating you,
Never more shall I escape, never more the reverberations,
Never more the cries of unsatisfied love be absent from me,
Never again leave me to be the peaceful child I was before what there in the night,
By the sea under the yellow and sagging moon,
The messenger there arous'd, the fire, the sweet hell within,
The unknown want, the destiny of me.

O give me the clew! (it lurks in the night here somewhere,)
O if I am to have so much, let me have more!

A word then, (for I will conquer it,)
The word final, superior to all,
Subtle, sent up—what is it?—I listen;
Are you whispering it, and have been all the time, you sea-waves?
Is that it from your liquid rims and wet sands?

Where to answering, the sea,
Delaying not, hurrying not,
Whisper'd me through the night, and very plainly before day-break,

Lisp'd to me the low and delicious word death,
And again death, death, death, death,
Hissing melodious, neither like the bird nor like my arous'd child's heart,
But edging near as privately for me rustling at my feet,
Creeping thence steadily up to my ears and leaving me softly all over,
Death, death, death, death, death.

Which I do not forget,
But fuse the song of my dusky demon and brother,
That he sang to me in the moonlight on Paumanok's gray beach,
With the thousand responsive songs at random,
My own songs awaked from that hour,
And with them the key, the word up from the waves,
The word of the sweetest song and all songs,
That strong and delicious word which, creeping to my feet,
(Or like some old crone rocking the cradle, swathed in sweet garments, bending aside,)
The sea whisper'd me.

5.2 CENTRAL THEME OF THE POEM

Whitman's poetry often explores the nature of the self and the individual's relationship to the wider world. He believed that each person was a microcosm of the universe, and that the self was both infinite and intimate. The poem is about the speaker's experience of losing a childhood friend, and his subsequent grief and longing for that friend. The poem is set in a natural setting, and the speaker's grief is intertwined with the rhythms of the natural world. It is a recollection of a formative experience in the speaker's past, and memory plays a significant role in shaping the poem's themes and imagery. The speaker's encounter with a pair of mating birds inspires him to create art, and he sees his art as a way to

transcend his grief and connect with something larger than himself and it is a coming-of-age story, in which the speaker movesfrom a state of innocence to a deeper understanding of the world and his place in it.

5.2.1 Analysis of the poem

Lines 1- 22 The first 22 lines forming one single sentence, introduces the sorrowful tone of the poem, written in a nostalgic mood of remembrance of things past, 'notes of yearning and love' but it also hints at the maturity he has attained through the experience of love, loss, and death.

Lines 23-31 Narrates briefly the love story of the two birds living together forgetting the world around them from Alabama who settled in Paumanok in spring.

Lines 32-40 Give us the account of the first aria or bird song, a song of limitless joy and happiness,expressive of their indestructible mood of love.

Lines 41-51 Narrates the sudden fatality that befalls them, the sudden disappearance of the she-bird,and the unquenchable pian of the lonely male.

Lines 52-54 Is the second aria, a request to the wind to send his beloved one back to him.

Lines 55-70 Describe the vain and futile waiting of the male bird for his mate is like the chasing of thewind which yielded no results and the boy listen to him.

Lines 71-129 Form the third aria, the despondent-hearted cry of the desperate he-bird at the sight of love in all nature, where finds no solace and he is rejected .

Lines 130-183 Depict the boy also who feels disappointed at the pain of the bird, but he gains wisdom from the sea the truth about death, the reason behind the bird's grief. The attainment of knowledge that death is actually only path to be borne into new life transforms him into a wise poet.

5.2.2 Explication and Critical Appreciation

"Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking" is one of Whitman's best poems which was first published under the title "A Child's Reminiscence" in the New York Saturday *Press* with the opening verse paragraph bearing the heading "Pre-Verse. "The Cincinnati Daily Commercial attacked the poem ruthlessly for which Whitman replied in the Saturday Press *o*f 7 January 1860 reprinted poem entitled "All About a Mocking-Bird." Whitman defended the poem and prophesies a new edition of *Leaves of Grass,* in 1860."Out of the Cradle" later appeared in that edition as "A Word Out of the Sea," with the heading "Reminiscence "which was published the first and second verse paragraphs. Whitman made several changes and used the title "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking" for the first time in the 1871 edition,and gave the poem the suitable title in its final form in the 1881.

"Out of the Cradle" shows its domination over the "Sea-Drift" grouping because the poem transforms Whitman's themes of love, death, sexuality, loss, and their relation into language and poetry into a single setting and situation. On the beach at night, a curious boy roams alone, witnessing the great love of two birds who couldn't live without each other.

Suddenly the female bird vanishes without informingthe male bird but the male bird searches for his loved one desperately but fails to find his beloved one. The boy questions the ocean about the essence of life and he gets reply from the ocean that the essenceof life is death.

Here is the poet who's awakening to death and his simultaneous projection into poesy. Out of this primal scene of *eros* and *thanatos,* of a "musical shuttle" made of "pains and joys," the poetderives an intense and somber lesson in mortality and inspiration.

However, "Out of the Cradle" is remarkable poem that reveals a masterful formal control of love for worldly material.

The opening of the poem is *a* tour de force *of* poetic suspense: a single sentence, twenty-two lines of sustained anaphora and parallelism arousing half-allusions culminating in the simple bardic verb "sing." This introduces the four voices in the poem bird, boy, man, sea. The bird calls "*those beginning notes of yearning and love,"* the boy listens and "translates" them in the poem, the man records the translation and comments on the boy's condition, and the sea taciturnly provides the final word on the matter, the *"word of the sweetest song and all songs are about death"* And out ofthe boy's observance of love and loss and his hearkening to the sea's "hissing" iteration, *"Death, death, death, death, death*," becomes the determined destiny for the boy who is to become a celestial being who is so much committed to the poetry. As the boy observes the he-bird's transformation from odes to unconditional love to lament over the sudden disappearance of the she-bird peels off the desperate hopethat his love may return to the piercing recognition of perpetual loss. The boy (as reflected upon by the man) turns to the sea for explanation, for some "clew" as to why such suffering comes about. The sea'spatient answers nothing. Instead, it lifts the question out of its local context, provoking a universalizationof the she-bird's departure, a conversion of individual pain into natural law where suffering is the ultimate destination of the human kind.

This inspired the poet to sing and to write the poetry. The poet makes us to believe that if death is not exactly the birth of language, it is the birth of song which is the mother of beauty. This poem raises theprospect of annihilation from the earthly possessions and gives us the command of doing nothing aboutanything except to sing it. In doing so, the poet takes us back to the ages where poetry rises out of the death. This poem dramatizes a traditional experience of loss and reaches a familiar outcome: verse which always tells us to do nothing about it instead tell the storis about it. How else can the bird recall his absent object of desire but by proclaiming its absence until his "song" becomes in Poet's rendition a worldwide annunciation? all of life is changed once the he-bird lost his beloved one.

"Out of the Cradle" is presented in a distorted fashion. That is, it begins with Whitman's Oedipal situationa complex one, especially considering his excessively adoring portraits of his mother and his virtual silence about his father and decodes the poem accordingly.

The story of ideal love and traumatic separation and the abandoned he-bird's all-encompassing lament actually reminds us the poet's own trauma of separation. In other words, Whitman's birth as a poet happens when he joins a procession of singers and listeners—mockingbird, boy, man, poet, reader— attending to the cries of lonesome love.

Upon losing his love, the he-bird remains frozen and disbelieving. The he-bird cries addressing solely *his* loss endlessly. But he waits for the return of his love. Even when he does begin to accept theloss, all he can do is repeat "*Loved*!" five times and say blankly, "

But my mate no more, no more with me! " His lament remains self-centered, eventually trailing off into self-torture and despair. His song cannot succeed the way the poet does because he has no awareness of joining in a procession of communications. Conceiving himself as an origin and end of song, the bird-poet can only insistently repeat his trauma.

The boy who sits in the bushes "translating" the "notes" seems free and natural, wholly devoid of irony or insincerity or narcissism. Perhaps the connection of innocence and interpretation contributes to the appeal of "Out of the Cradle." In any case, whether considered as a supreme instance of conventional elegy, a charged reflection of psychosexual tensions, or a complex meditation upon how to give words to trauma, "Out of the Cradle" remains a centerpiece of Whitman's poetry and poetics. In its poignant evocation of a lonely beach where a "curious boy" sits "peering, absorbing," hearing a mockingbird's natural cries of love and despair and feeling those notes turn to poems within him, "Out of the Cradle" embodies for many the Whitmanian poetic moment, the emotive origin and measure of his song.

5.2.3 Usage of figurative language

1. Metaphor: A comparison between two unlike things that does not use the words "like" or "as."

"Out of the cradle endlessly rocking, / Out of the mocking-bird's throat, the musical shuttle"

(lines 1-2) - The mockingbird's throat is compared to a musical shuttle, suggesting that the bird's singing is like the movement of a weaving shuttle.
Personification: Giving human qualities to non-human objects or ideas.

"The waves with their crests / Up-swell'd toward the heavens" (lines 32-33) - The waves are personified as if they are capable of rising up towards the sky like a living being.
"The black ship mail'd with iron, her mighty guns in her turrets" (line 69) - The ship is personified as if it is wearing armor and carrying weapons like a human soldier.

2. Imagery: The use of sensory details to create a vivid mental picture in the reader's mind.

"The beach is cut by the razory / Pits, and panther- like couches" (lines 14-15) - The use of "razory" and "panther-like" to describe the pits and couches creates a vivid image of the beachas both sharp and dangerous, but also comfortable and inviting.
"The hissing rustle of the liquid and sand" (line 21) - The use of "hissing rustle" to describe thesound of the waves creates a sensory image of the sound of the sea.

3. Symbolism: The use of objects or ideas to represent something larger or more abstract.

"The sea whisper'd me" (line 27) - The sea is a symbol for the unknown or mysterious, and itswhispering suggests that there are secrets or truths to be uncovered.
"The bird to the soul" (line 181) - The bird is a symbol for the power of art and music to touchthe soul and convey emotions that cannot be expressed through words.

4. Alliteration: is a poetic device used throughout the poem to create musicality and emphasizecertain words or phrases.

"And the beach gravel, / the quicksand, the bowlders" - The repetition of the "b" and "q" soundscreates a sense of texture and solidity.

"The sobbing of the beryl-throated? / The rushing of the sea- waves, stately and handsome" -The repetition of the "s" and "h" sounds creates a sense of fluidity and movement.

"And the fish suspending themselves so curiously below there--and the / beautiful curious liquid" - The repetition of the "c" and "l" sounds creates a sense of wonder and curiosity.

5.3 SAMPLE QUESTIONS

1. What is the significance of the title "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking"? How does it relate to thethemes of the poem?

2. What role does nature play in the poem? How does the speaker use imagery and language to convey the power and beauty of the natural world?

3. What is the significance of the boy's encounter with the nesting birds? How does it affect him and hisunderstanding of the world around him?

4. How does the poem explore the themes of life and death? What is the relationship between these themes and the natural world?

5. What is the role of memory in the poem? How does the speaker use memory to convey a sense of nostalgia and loss?

6. What is the significance of the poem's structure and form? How do these elements contribute to the overall meaning and effect of the poem?

7. What is the overall message or theme of the poem? How does it relate to larger ideas about nature, art, and the human experience ?

5.4 SUGGESTED READINGS

1. James Miller, *Walt Whitman*

2. John C. Broderick (ed.) *Whitman the Poet*

3. Leon Bazaleette *Walt Whitman, the Man and his Works*

4. Justin Kalpan “Walt Whitman : A Life

5. Michael Moon *Walt Whitman: Leaves of Grass and Other Writings*

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LESSON 6
INTRODUCTION TO THE LIFE AND WORKS OF EMILY DICKINSON

OBJECTIVES

- Introducing Emily Dickinson
- American Literature of the 90s
- Placing Emily Dickinson in this literary milieu
- Emily Dickinson's life and art
- Detailed Study of poem no. 258

STRUCTURE

6: 1 Introduction- American Literature
6:2 Life
6: 3 Literary Milieu
6:4 Possible Influences
6:5 Themes
6:6 Style
6:7 Poem
6:8 Summary
6:9 Glossary
6:10 Critical Analysis
6:11 Review Questions
6:12 Reference Works

6.1 AMERICAN LITERATURE

When Emily Dickinson picked up her pen to create a poetic universe of her own, American Literature was vibrantly young and new. The spirit of freedom and the revolutionary spirit marked the literature of this new independent nation, which came into being as late as 1781. This was also the age of new ideas and reason. This theme prevailed in the writing of the times. The major genre of writing in the late 18th and 19th century was public writing like pamphlets, essays and letters. Emily Dickinson was strikingly different from the spirit of the times, by choosing to write poetry and that too on domestic subject matter when America was reeling under civil wars and many other social and political upheavals. Emily Dickinson though very well aware about contemporary affairs, created a poetic genre that was totally private and refreshingly new and creative. She opted to live a completely secluded life and her prodigious outpouring of talent resulted in at least 2000 poems of sterling worth. But not even a dozen was published during her life, for Emily abhorred publicity. The ones that were published were either anonymous or under a pseudonym.

6.2 LIFE

Emily Elizabeth Dickinson was born in her home named Homestead in Amherst, Massachusetts on December 10, 1830. Emily comes from a lineage of the Great Puritanical migration. Her grandfather Samuel Dickinson was one of the founding members of the

Amherst College. Edward Dickinson, her father was a prominent lawyer. He also was the treasurer of Amherst College from whom , later her brother Austin took over. Emily Dickinson comes from a very prominent family very well known in Massachusetts. Her home was the centre of social activity. Edward Dickinson and Emily Norcross Dickinson had three children , William Austin, Emily Elizabeth, Lavinia Norcross. The children were brought up in a deep Christian faith. Her father attempted to protect his children from books that will corrupt their minds and draw them away from the faith. But Dickinson's strong individual thinking resisted this and she did not fall into the conventional pietistic Christian tradition of her family.

From 1840 Emily spent her early years in Amherst Academy studying Classical literature, English Literature, Arithmetic, Latin, botany, geology, mental philosophy and history. Then she studied for a short duration in Mount Holyoke Female Seminary. While studying Dickinson distinguished herself as an original thinker who, in her brother's words, dazzled her teachers. Emily made many friends both at Amherst Academy and in the Seminary. Her friends also included men who were her tutors, intellectual guides and advisors. Some of her prominent friends who were with Emily most of her life were the famous novelist Helen Hunt Jackson, Susan Gilbert who later became her sister-in-law and later edited Emily's poems after her death. Her men friends include Ben Newton who was a law student, her tutor Samuel Bowles editor of a newspaper, Rev. Charles Wadsworth and Rev Thomas Wentworth Higginson.

Her strong individuality set her apart from the domesticity and social duty which is expected of any young woman from that strict religious town of Amherst. She had a very clear sense of purpose which stemmed from her creative and independent intellect. Even when women were not allowed to decide for herself, Emily Dickinson was quite firm in her convictions and had decided never to set go out of her house and 'shut the door' to the society. She chose to wear only white and became a recluse. She spent the last twenty years of her life within the confines of her Homestead. Emily Dickinson had a very strong streak of feministic individuality much ahead of her times. Emily Dickinson has written more than 2000 poems and not even a dozen had been published during her life time. She shunned publicity and instructed her sister Lavinia to destroy all the letters she received. Her sister promptly destroyed the letters after Emily's death. She later stumbled on the packets of poems neatly stacked, called fascicles by Emily in a chestnut drawer. She took these poems and gave it to be published. There still are bitter custody battles over the poems of Emily Dickinson. Susan her sister-in-law had given the poems to Amherst College, which have published the entire archives on the website for open access.
(https://acdc.amherst.edu/browse/collection/collection:ed)

6.3 LITERARY MILIEU

American Literature during the 19th century was well on its way to become full fledged National Literature. Only a few decades after its independence, writers started consciously scripting a distinct American consciousness in their works. Hence this period was termed as American Renaissance. The noteworthy writers are James Fennimore Cooper, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Walt Whitman, Herman Melville, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Edgar Allen Poe, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau and so on. This literary period witnessed an upsurge of variegated themes ranging from the detective genre of Poe, Emerson's Trancendentalism, Thoreau's non confirmism, Whitman's infectious optimism, Hawthorne's brooding pessimism and guilt. There was a profusion of works in all genres.

Though Emily Dickinson read deeply and widely, she was not influenced either by the form and content of the spirit of the times, the zeitgeist, that characterized contemporary American Literature of the 19th century. Despite such overwhelming variety and new thought currents, Emily Dickinson charted an entire new oeuvre of poetry right from the style, theme and presentation of the poem.

6.4 POSSIBLE INFLUENCES

Emily Dickinson had a very fertile mind and she was an avid reader. During her schooling, many of her teachers were astounded by the bold spectrum of her independent thinking. She read all the periodicals and newspapers regularly. She was well aware of the contemporary political society of that time. Though Emily was not influenced by contemporary writers, she largely drew her inspiration from the Bible, Shakespeare's works, classical myths. She devoured the poetry of women poets like Elizabeth Barrett Browning, the Bronte sisters, George Eliot, Harriet Beecher Stowe and her friend Helen Hunt Jackson. Even though Emily shut herself away from society she was constantly writing to her friends and she spoke of her friends as her valued treasures. Her friends of different hues and shades were a real and ever present influence in her poems. One might even find an autobiographical slant in many of her poems.

6.5 THEMES

There is a very strong undercurrent of death and immortality in many of the poems of Emily Dickinson. She was deeply affected by the death of a school master Leonard Humphrey from Amherst Academy and her own nephew Benjamin Newton.

Though most of her other dominant themes are mostly from a very domestic or natural sphere like a flower, bee, bird, plants and so on, there is a rigorous complexity woven into them that has become the signature of Emily Dickinson. As she voluntarily retreats from the society into the confines of her home, her poems present a very deep sense of self, the self in isolation, loneliness and yet not abandoned to despair. There is hope in her poems the thing with feathers.

6.6 STYLE

Emily Dickinson meticulously crafted her poems with a delicacy and wit unbeknown to many. Though highly experimental in style she fits into no school or formula in arranging her poems. Her poems were not perfect finished products but deliberately sported half rhythm and had dissonant qualities. They did not fit into the prescriptive style of poetry written during her time. Egbert . S. Oliver comments thus

But withal she is Emily Dickinson, belonging to no school, fitting into no formula, associated with no master, followed by no disciples, friend of no literary coteries. She wrote her poems as she lived her life in extreme individuality, at the same time surrounded and partly bound by conventionality. That her poems are of very uneven quality is not surprising. The wonder is that she rose to such undoubted excellence in her poetic achievement as some of her poems indicate.

Emily's self exile only limited her physically but it gave an altitude of imagination unequalled by any outward experience. Just as she can imagine how the house on earth looks

as a swelling (Because I could not stop for Death), her imagination soared, even before the first aircraft was even invented. Her mastery over language and structure of the poems remain uniquely Emily Dickinsonian. One of her striking features of her style is her unconventional use of punctuation and capitalization of most of her lines. She used dashes where periods, commas, colons and semicolons should be used. The dashes also vary in length and some critics feel that she might have used the dash to stress certain words and phrases.

Most of her poems are written in quatrains, a four lined stanza in which most often the second and fourth lines rhyme. Most of her poetic lines are composed of iambic metre, where an unstressed syllable comes first followed by a stressed syllable. She used the common metre used in Christian hymns especially by Isaac Watts.

Rhyme is the repetition of similar sounds mostly at the end of sentences. She made little twists in rhymes, teasing the reader with seeming perfect rhymes . Emily Dickinson employed a variety of rhymes in her poems.

Perfect Rhyme
is when the repetitions of sounds are perfect
“Not any higher stands the Grave
For Heroes than for **men**
Not any nearer for the Child
Than numb Three Score and **Ten.**
In this stanza men and ten are said to perfect rhymes.

Partial or slant rhymes
A rhyme that is not perfect is called partial or slant or approximate rhyme.
This latest Leisure equal lulls
The Beggar and his **Queen**
Propitiate this Democrat
A Summer’s After**noon.**’
In this stanza Queen and noon, have a different vowel sound, but a similar end consonant.
That is why this is called partial or slant rhymes.

Eye Rhymes
She used eye rhymes, rhymes which look similar when seen but has a different pronunciation.
The Wealth might disappoint
Myself a poorer **prove**
Than this great Purchaser suspect
The Daily Own of **Love**
In this stanza the last syllable of the words prove and love seem identical, yet the vowels are not identical. Prove and love have quite different vowels. /u:/ and /^/ respectively.

6.7 POEM 258 : THERE’S A CERTAIN SLANT OF LIGHT

There's a certain Slant of light,
Winter Afternoons
That oppresses, like the Heft
Of Cathedral Tunes

Heavenly Hurt, it gives us

We can find no scar,
But internal difference,
Where the Meanings, are

None may teach it Any
'Tis the Seal Despair
An imperial affliction
Sent us of the air

When it comes, the Landscape listens
Shadows hold their breath
When it goes, 'tis like the Distance
On the look of Death

6.8 SUMMARY

It is one of the solemn poems which is so characteristic of Emily Dickinson. It is a reflection, an impression of the poet on a winter afternoon. During winter, the afternoons are quite short and darkness sets in quite early. So she sees the light slanting and then fading away.

Emily Dickinson in her very laconic style, captures the heaviness of winter afternoons. Though light is usually associated with joy, gladness and spring, Emily Dickinson by slanting the ray of the sun has painted a bleak and cold picture of the winter afternoon. The mood is made heavier by the "Heft of Cathedral tunes." She uses a rarely used verb Heft, meaning heavy to describe the heaviness of the afternoon.

The oppressive mood of the winter afternoons also makes a mark on the soul, where the hurt is felt deep within. The hurts of the past come back to the surface in such a quiet winter afternoon, when the sun comes in with a certain slant. Though there is no obvious wound or an external scar, the pain of the past lingers in the heart and in times like this comes out to haunt the poet's heart. The poet writes ". But internal differences Where meanings are." The hurt probably could have stemmed from words where meanings, good or bad reside.

From the external, the poet enters into the world of the internal, she enters into the labyrinth of the heart where there are heavenly hurts, hurts which can come from both extreme pleasure and pain, despair which is sealed deeper. This somehow seems to be the affliction of the imperial. Imperial means royal, perhaps the poet has in mind, a select few who are chosen for a heavenly suffering sent from above.

In the last stanza the poet abruptly exits from the internal world and peeps out at the landscape. The 'it, 'refers to the slant of the light, but it could also refer to "the internal meanings." When the light comes with a certain slant, it seems as the whole landscape stands still. Then slowly shadows elongate, the light fades away and darkness falls bringing with it the ominous remembrance of death.

6.9 GLOSSARY

1. Oppresses – weighs heavily on the mind
2. Heft – verb meaning heavy. It is a typically North American verb used very rarely.
3. Imperial – Royal is the literal meaning. The extended meaning would be the select few.

6.10 CRITICAL ANALYSIS

This poem is exquisitely beautiful filled with the sadness and heaviness of the filigreed slanting light of the winter afternoons. The poet brings the oppressive weight of the light and cold in one compressed sentence. The light which streams slanting into the house has a beauty of its own, where there is a play of light and shadows attenuating the mystery of the still afternoons.

The wafting of the heavy cathedral music adds intensity to the present situation. The tunes sit heavy in the heart, awakening the hurts which has lain buried beneath. The poet speaks about the 'heavenly hurt,' which although did not bear any physical scars, has a deeper throbbing pain where internal meanings are. The internal meanings are carried by words, probably the poet thinks of the many words that has hurt deep inside, that this afternoon slant of light brings it out to remember.

The heart despairs but the despair cannot be freely shared. It is sealed deep within the crevices of the heart. Only a chosen few are selected to pass through the baptism of fire, the heavenly hurt. The poet feels that she is imperial in the sense that she is the select few to suffer in sealed despair.

The poem effortlessly turns to the outer landscape yet still interiorizing the mind of the poet. The poet writes, 'when it comes,' and the question that arises in the mind of the reader is, 'when what comes?' The 'it' can mean both the Heavenly Hurt or the slant of the light. She plays on the word giving it an ambiguous twist.

The landscape seems to come alive, it listens, and the shadows are still, not still as death, but still when someone holds the breath. The whole landscape do not want to let go the slant of light for then the shadows will grow long and the death which seems to be in a distance will come more near than before. The poet through juxtaposing the seeming anxiety of the landscape seems to hope that the slant of light will not go away, allowing darkness and death to edge closer to her.

Form of the Poem

As is characteristic of all Emily Dickinson's poems the second line and the fourth line rhyme. The rhyme pairs are : afternoons/tunes, scar/are, Despair/air, breath/ death. The first pair afternoons/tunes are slant rhymes. The vowel though seems to rhyme is not identical. In the 'noons,' the vowel is /u:/ and whereas in the 'tunes,' the vowel is /ju:/. One has to have a heightened sensitivity to sound to distinguish the perfect rhymes and the partial rhymes.

In the first , second and fourth stanzas, the first and the third line rhyme only in the last sound like light/Heft, scar/are, listens/distance, which cannot typically taken as rhyming. For words to rhyme the final syllable, mostly a vowel and a consonant or a

consonant or a vowel should rhyme, but again Emily Dickinson creates her own sound patterns to attenuate the meaning and the poem, by creating urgency in making only the end sounds rhyme.

6.11 REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. When does the slant of light come in?
2. What does the slant of light do?
3. What images come to your mind with the expression, 'winter afternoons.'
4. How will you interpret Heavenly Hurt?
5. What could Seal Despair mean?
6. What goes away on the look of death?

Analytical Questions

1. Can weather conditions have an impact on your moods. If yes explain how.

6.12 REFERENCE WORKS

- Prentice Hall Literature : The American Experience, Eaglewood Cliffs, New Jersey. 1989
- Oliver, Egbert. S *An Anthology of American Literature 1890-1965* , Eurasia Publishing House : New Delhi, 1996
- http://www.poetryfoundation.org/bio/emily-dickinson
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LESSON 7
EMILY DICKINSON'S POETRY

OBJECTIVES

- to enable the students to appreciate Emily Dickinson's poetry
- do a critical analysis
- to analyse the form and content.

STRUCTURE

7.1 Text of Poem 303
7.2 Summary
7.3 Critical Analysis
7.4 Questions
7.5 Text of Poem 328
7.6 Summary
7.7 Style
7.8 Text of Poem 341
7.9 Summary
7.10 Critical Analysis
7.11 Questions
7.12 References

7.1 303 THE SOUL SELECTS HER OWN SOCIETY

Emily Dickinson's "The Soul Selects her own Society" is a strong statement about the power of the soul in establishing its choices. The soul reigns supreme within a space of its own and the external world is relegated to the outside.

The Soul selects her own Society—
Then—shuts the Door—
To her divine Majority—
Present no more—

Unmoved—she notes the Chariots—pausing—
At her low Gate—
Unmoved—an Emperor be kneeling
Upon her Mat—

I've known her—from an ample nation—
Choose One—
Then—close the Valves of her attention—
Like Stone—

7.2 SUMMARY

In the first stanza, the speaker describes that the Soul selects a society of its own will and after it has selected one, then nothing else matters anymore. Once this selection is complete, she "shuts the Door," or closes herself off even to the "Divine Majority" beseeching her grace. A closed door represents a block or barrier between the soul's internal and the external world.

In the second stanza, the speaker gives examples of the consequences of the Soul's choice to shut the world out and how it has rejected the symbols of the external world. She has turned away from all the proper customs of the world's society. Chariots pause at her gate; emperors come to visit, but she will not let them in. She is indifferent to these symbols of wealth, romance, and power.

The third stanza reiterates the rigour and the finality of the soul's choice and its denial of attention to everything except "One." Her broad ample spectrum of choices does not entice her into avarice, but rather she restricts her choice to just one. And having chosen, the soul closes the "valves" of its attention or desires. And this closure remains resolute like "stone".

7.3 CRITICAL ANALYSIS

Critics have stated that this poem was written in the year 1862, the year in which Emily Dickinson decided to withdraw from the larger world. So, this poem might be taken as her emphasis on her claim to live by her own choices.

In Stanza 1, the Soul might represent the self, the individual, or the mysterious essence of being.. She "selects," meaning that she picks out or chooses, "her own Society." This line can be interpreted in a number of ways. On one level, it might mean that she decides what company she will keep and which social rules she will obey. On a deeper level, it might mean that she chooses the company of her own self over the company of others. Dickinson's use of dashes between words and phrases leads to several possible explanations of these lines. The lines might mean that the Soul is shutting her "divine Majority" inside with her, behind the door. In this sense, "divine Majority" might represent her own holy or sacred self, which is now no longer present to those outside of her closed door. Another way to read the lines is that she is shutting her "divine Majority" out of her inner world. In this sense, "divine Majority" could mean the social or religious system to which she is no longer present.

The second stanza vouchsafes the power of the soul in establishing its choices. Worldly power or wealth cannot tyrannize the soul into submission. Chariots, perhaps containing potential suitors or wealthy men, stop before her gate. She notices them casually, but she is not interested. This is a reversed image, for it is usually the common individual who must defer to an emperor. These examples illustrate that the Soul's state of being is intensely private, personal, and unreachable. Though she remains unmoved, the soul is neither nihilistic nor solipsistic, but only strives to remain steadfast to the lone choice made.

Stanza three underscores the steely determination of the soul. "Ample nation" signifies the plethora of choices. Yet the nobility of the soul is revealed in humbly resigning itself to a unitary choice. The "stony" closure of the "valves" reinforces the cloistered renunciation of the soul, once its earnest choice or selection has been made. The poem

concludes by comparing the Soul's choice to "Stone," indicating that it is heavy, solid and irreversible. Once the Soul has closed herself off from the world, there is no turning back. Like many of Dickinson's poems, "The Soul Selects Her Own Society" comments on the Soul of the individual and its rejection of the conventions of the larger society.

This poem's profusion of hyperboles and metaphors serve to heighten the theme of devotion of the soul.

7.4 QUESTIONS

1. What is the message of the poem?
2.Comment on the use of punctuation in the poem.
3. How does the soul react to the Emperor and the chariots?
4.What can you infer about the attitude of the poet from the poem?

7.5 328 A BIRD CAME DOWN THE WALK

A BIRD came down the walk:
He did not know I saw;
He bit an angle-worm in halves
And ate the fellow, raw.

And then he drank a dew
From a convenient grass,
And then hopped sidewise to the wall
To let a beetle pass.

He glanced with rapid eyes
That hurried all abroad,
They looked like frightened Beads, I thought
He stirred his velvet head

Like one in danger; Cautious,
I offered him a crumb,
And he unrolled his feathers
And rowed him softer home

Than oars divide the ocean,
Too silver for a seam,
Or butterflies, off banks of noon,
Leap, plashless, as they swim.

7.6 SUMMARY

This short poem of Emily Dickinson was published in 1891. Emily Dickinson was a great observer of nature and she spent much of her time in the garden. In fact her father built a green house so that she can tend plants even during winter.

A momentary observation in the garden has been scripted into a masterpiece in the expert hands of the poet. This poem is written in first person and the poet spies the bird

without the bird being aware of the presence of the intruding human eyes. Emily Dickinson looks at a very routine act of a bird eating a worm with fascination and addresses the bird as the Bird and attributes a human pronoun. She saw the bird eating the worm raw and with relish.

Then he sips a drink from the dew in the grass. The meal had been so easy and the drink so available. The bird had a satisfying meal and then saw a beetle and gingerly stepped aside to let it pass. Had the beetle been spotted earlier it could have been the bird's repast, but now the beetle lives and the worm had a raw deal.

Now the bird looks around and probably would have seen the curious smiling eyes of the poet watching him. He glanced around with hurried eyes that means he was looking around quickly. The poet must have been watching him, in close proximity for she could see his eyes running all across his face like frightened beads. Then he looks up his velvet head and sees the poet.

The poet cautiously extends her hand to offer a crumb, but instantly the bird took to flight. The poet watches the feathers unroll from his back and the bird rises up, rowing to his home safe home. The entire scene has the effect of a slow motion picture, this mood created by the word "unrolled."

Emily Dickinson freezes the the flight of the bird tightly framed in words. It should have been a clear blue sky and the poet looks at the blue sky as the blue sea and this tiny bird as the boat that parts the water with its oars. The bird looks like a silver seam in the clear blue sky, rowing away but without a splash, without a noise but with as much majesty as a ship parting the waters.

7.7 STYLE

This is a short lyric which is beautifully structured and this is one of the best poems of Emily Dickinson. This poem has five rhyming quatrains.

She uses personification in this poem too. The word "A BIRD" in capital letters, and the word 'he' emphasizes her idea of treating the bird as a man.

The poem is written in a simple style by employing natural imagery. This poem explains a usual deed of a bird. But it is her writing which makes her poem special. The theme of nature is expressed in this poem. The third and the fourth line picturizes the characteristic feature of a bird.

The second stanza also expresses the natural imagery. The dew on a grass in the morning is a very superb scene and Emily has used this effectively. The first two stanzas portray the beauty and the action of the bird in a smooth way.

The third stanza gives a change from the above two stanzas. Here the poet shows the fear in the eyes of the bird through her words. She compares the eyes of the bird to "Beads".

The final stanzas of the poem describe the act of flying by the bird. The poet paints a clear word picture through her masterly use of words. Dickinson uses the very common

natural images and day to day activities in all her poems. Her poems are always short and witty.

As is the case with Emily Dickinson poems the second and fourth line rhyme in this poem too. The rhyme scheme is ABCB. These poems consist of eye rhymes and slant rhymes which are so characteristic of Emily Dickinson.

The first two stanzas have identical or perfect rhymes : saw/ raw and grass/pass
The rhymes in the rest of the stanzas are abroad / head, Crumb/Home, seam/swim. The last consonant is similar but the penultimate vowel is different. This is a clear example for slant or partial rhyme which is typical of Emily Dickinson's poetry.

7.8 341 AFTER GREAT PAIN, A FORMAL FEELING COMES

Emily Dickinson's "After Great Pain a Formal Feeling Comes" is an attempt to communicate the nature of the experience that comes after great pain. Dickinson poignantly recreates the agony and angst one undergoes after some terrible, excruciating event in their lives, probably the death of a loved one.

After great pain a formal feeling comes
The nerves sit ceremonious like tombs;
The stiff Heart questions was it He that bore?
And yesterday or centuries before?
The feet, mechanical, go round
A wooden way
Of ground, or air, or ought,
Regardless grown,
A quartz contentment, like a stone.
This is the hour of lead
Remembered if outlived,
As freezing persons recollect the snow
First chill, then stupor, then the letting go.

7.9 SUMMARY

Dickinson is an astute student of human psychology and responses. In this poem, she traces the numbness experienced after some terrible blow. This numbness is one way to protect oneself against the onrush of pain and against being overwhelmed by suffering. This psychological dynamic is analogous to an electrical circuit breaker. Just as a dangerous surge of electricity will trip a circuit breaker and cut off the electricity, so a surge of anguish will trip our emotional "circuit breaker" temporarily, so that we don't feel the pain.

The first stanza delineates the feeling of numbness that an individual experiences after having undergone a great pain or trauma. This numbness is similar to one at a funeral, as suggested by the mention of "tombs". This quixotic numbness makes one wonder if this indeed is reality and about the exact duration of the feeling of numbness. The synechdochic description of the individual in terms of nerves and heart, portrays the dehumanization which results when pain overwhelms an individual.

The second stanza elaborates the mechanical functioning of an individual overwhelmed by pain. Life becomes mechanical and purposeless and one merely exists with “quartz contentment”. People, who have experienced great pain, resemble zombies walking robotically though their everyday lives. After something terrible happens, the nerves get numb, the heart becomes confused and the feet too plod aimlessly.

The final stanza reveals how an individual feels after having experienced pain and numbness. It is portrayed as a period of necessity and dread; “the hour of lead”, when the stupefied individual drags himself like an inanimate entity. Only after a long time, can one remember the trauma and finally let go of it to continue one’s existence.

7.10 CRITICAL ANALYSIS

The whole poem is a kaleidoscope of contradictory images – numb nerves, confused heart, wooden feet. Dickinson has yoked together these images to portray the inner life of one who gets messed up after experiencing something traumatic. The nerves compared to “ceremonious tombs” portray the feeling of numbness. The sufferer is dehumanized, perhaps until the last two lines. The sufferer is an object in line 1; the formal feeling "comes" upon or acts on her or him; the sufferer is passive, submissive. Then the sufferer is described in terms of body parts nerves, heart, feet. The gender of the sufferer is not indicated. Perhaps, Dickinson might have used depersonalization as a technique for showing emotional deadness. The numbness or having no feelings is itself an agony. In numbness, time becomes distorted and one loses one’s sense of time and is unsure whether one’s numbness began only yesterday or centuries ago.

The feet (means of movement) represent going about daily routines ("ground, or air, or ought"). But we do this in a "mechanical" and a "wooden" way further dehumanization and deadness. "Ought" may be read as meaning ""nothing," like zero; or it may stand for obligations, that is, all the things we *ought* to do."Regardless grown" means having lost regard or concern for things or living. Finally, there is the irony of feeling an emotion which is "quartz contentment." Obviously, "quartz contentment" is an oxymoron. To emphasize the quartz-ness of the "contentment," Dickinson adds that it is "like a stone." This might allude to graves or to the feeling of numbness of the bereaved person.

The time of numbness has been shortened from the century of stanza one; its end is nearing. However, to the sufferer time hangs heavy ("lead") or drags slowly. So "hour of lead" is also an oxymoron. With line 2, the full force and danger of experiencing the agony are introduced "if outlived." The sufferer may not survive the pain. The poem closes with a simile, comparing the sufferer to "freezing persons." The sufferer has moved on to the next stage and is undergoing the freezing or releasing of the agonized feelings. The fracturing of the final line in the poem reflects the fractured consciousness of the person reeling from a great trauma.

7.11 QUESTIONS

1. What are the kinds of trauma that the speaker might have experienced?
2. Why has Dickinson used a lot of contradictions and ambiguity in this poem?
3. Discuss the symbols used in this poem.
4. What, do you think is the tone of the poem – optimistic or pessimistic?
5. Comment on the style of the poem.

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LESSON 8
CRITICAL APPRECIATION OF EMILY DICKINSON'S SELECT POEMS

Objectives

- to enable the students to appreciate Emily Dickinson's poetry
- do a critical analysis
- to analyse the form and content.

Structure

8.1 Text of Poem 511
8.2 Summary
8.3 Critical Analysis
8.4 Questions
8.5 Text of Poem 640
8.6 Summary
8.7 Style
8.8 Text of Poem 341
8.9 Summary
8.10 Style
8.11 Questions
8.12 References

8.1 POEM 511 "IF YOU WERE COMING IN THE FALL"

Emily Dickinson's "If You were coming in the Fall," poignantly portrays the pain and anxiety of a lover waiting to be united with his beloved. The plight of the lover lies in the uncertainty of the time and the consequence of his wait

If you were coming in the fall,
I'd brush the summer by
With half a smile and half a spurn,
As housewives do a fly.

If I could see you in a year,
I'd wind the months in balls,
And put them each in separate drawers,
Until their time befalls.

If only centuries delayed,
I'd count them on my hand,
Subtracting till my fingers dropped
Into Van Diemens land.

If certain, when this life was out,
That yours and mine should be,
I'd toss it yonder like a rind,
And taste eternity.

But now, all ignorant of the length
Of time's uncertain wing,
It goads me, like the goblin bee,
That will not state its sting.

8.2 SUMMARY

Two lovers have been separated one is eagerly awaiting her return. As usual Emily Dickinson in her characteristic ambiguous style does not mention who is waiting whether it is the man or the woman. He only longs for this reunion and he would gladly wait for aeons just for this. Just the assurance of her coming would strengthen him to effortlessly wade through the changing season as " housewives do a fly." The succession of smiles and spurns reflects the changing moods of the lover.

Then the lover says that he is prepared to wait even a year. He would compress the lengthy months and stack them away carefully, lest they fuse together and become endless. The next stanza heightens the patience fo the lover in willing to wait even for centuries, when he would still be hopefully counting the days of his wait till his fingers drop.

The fourth stanza takes his love to a higher plane, extending even beyond death, when he would borrow some time from eternity, if only he knew the time of her coming.

The plaintive last stanza portrays the angst of the lover. Being uncertain of the length of his wait he is hounded by anxiety just like the Goblin bee that hovers to sting him.

8.3 CRITICAL ANALYSIS

Summer is the period of warmth and sunshine, people wait eagerly for. But here the lover states that he would brush aside this blissful season ,in order to be united with his beloved- the real sunshine of his life. He has "half a smile" because he dreamily longs for his beloved; and "half a spurn" because he is irked by the drawling years. The simile "as housewives do a fly" suggests the irritation of the lover in driving away the pestering time of parting.

The next stanzas intensify the desperation of the lover for reunion with his beloved. He would willingly wait for years and centuries, if at the end he would be united with his beloved. This hyperbolical statement underscores the depth of the lover.

Not only is the lover willing to wait for a lifetime, but is also ready to extend his wait even to eternity, when he would throw away the bitter "rind" of his life to relish the sweet fruit of reunion. The word "if" used repetitively in every stanza emphasizes the uncertainty of waiting. The entire poem is full of certainties that the lover would do to realize the supposition of joining his beloved.

At first glance, this might seem like an ordinary love poem, but the last stanza epitomizes the platonic love of a lover plagued by the uncertainty of his love being reciprocated.

The poem concludes apathetically with the lover being goaded by the uncertainty of waiting. Absence makes the heart grow fonder, but if one does not know when one's friend or lover is coming back, then it can also make them very anxious. The lover wants nothing more than to be reunited with his loved one and would be willing to wait however long it took. Instead, being "uncertain of the length" of time needed to wait, it "goads" him unmercifully, as if a "Goblin Bee" were always hovering over him with a giant stinger.

8.4 QUESTIONS

1. Compare and contrast the hopes and fears of waiting in the poem.
2. Discuss the use of metaphors in the poem.
3. Elaborate on the change in tone from ecstasy to anguish in the poem.
4. Attempt a pen portrait of the lover.
5. Sum up the things the lover promises to do to join his beloved.

8.5 POEM 640: I CANNOT LIVE WITHOUT YOU

I cannot live with You —
It would be Life —
And Life is over there —
Behind the Shelf

The Sexton keeps the Key to —
Putting up
Our Life — His Porcelain —
Like a Cup —

Discarded of the Housewife —
Quaint — or Broke —
A newer Sevres pleases —
Old Ones crack —

I could not die — with You —
For One must wait
To shut the Other's Gaze down —
You — could not —

And I — Could I stand by
And see You — freeze —
Without my Right of Frost —
Death's privilege?

Nor could I rise — with You —
Because Your Face
Would put out Jesus' —
That New Grace

Glow plain — and foreign
On my homesick Eye —
Except that You than He
Shone closer by —

They'd judge Us — How —
For You — served Heaven — You know,
Or sought to —
I could not —

Because You saturated Sight —
And I had no more Eyes
For sordid excellence
As Paradise

And were You lost, I would be —
Though My Name
Rang loudest
On the Heavenly fame —

And were You — saved —
And I — condemned to be
Where You were not —
That self — were Hell to Me —

So We must meet apart —
You there — I — here —
With just the Door ajar
That Oceans are — and Prayer —
And that White Sustenance —
Despair —

8.6 SUMMARY

This is one of the longest lyric poems of Emily Dickinson. This might be addressed to a lover. The poem is in a form of argument. The poem can be divided into five parts. The first part explains why she cannot live without him; the second part is about why she cannot die with him. The third part explains why she cannot rise with him while the fourth clearly illustrates the reason for her not falling with him. The final part presents the impossibility.

The poem starts with the title itself. The poet makes it clear that she cannot live without her lover. Without him, she feels that life will be over behind the shelves.

The first three stanzas explain the reason why she cannot live without him. From these lines, it is evidently clear that the partner of the poet has died already and she laments for his death because she cannot live with him.

The second stanza explains that the poet is trapped or controlled by something like a cup. The Sexton has the key of life. Sexton here means the person whose duty is to maintain

the church properties, graves and ringing the church bells. She compares here the life with a cup which can be easily broken has its worth only till a new one arrives.

The second part tells that she cannot die with him because she has to perform certain ritual for his death. Death is a private act and death has parted them by death. She uses metaphors for death like “cold” and “freeze”.

The sixth and seventh stanza speaks about resurrection. But it would be impossible because it would urge the anger of God. She longs for death for she cannot experience the heaven unlike her partner.

In the fourth part the poem, the poet tells that she cannot view heaven and if she were saved, he will be in hell. If he is saved, both the lovers will be doomed to hell. So it would be impossible for them to live together.

The final stanza explains the post’s solution that both of them cannot live together because he has died already. It is finishing her argument and leaves a question to the reader

8.7 CRITICAL ANALYSIS

Unlike her other poems, this is one of the longest poems of Emily Dickinson. It deals with the theme of love. Emily Dickinson is greatly influenced by the Metaphysical poems of the Seventeenth Century. In all her poems, the readers can find the reflection of metaphysical sense. The looming personality of death is a continuing theme in many of her poems including this.

The poem consists of twelve stanzas, eleven quatrains and the final stanza has six lines.

The lines are also not in a same length. They are sometimes long and sometimes short. This gives the readers a pause and this can be seen as a device to arouse sympathy. The pause between each and every word, sentence allows the readers to associate themselves with the poet. The extensive use of dashes and seemingly incomplete sentences, portray the mental anguish of the poet. She could not fully write what is in her heart but leaves it dangling like in the sentence, “Our life - His Porcelain.”. “Quaint- or broke-.“ The use of dashes also reveals a sense of confusion and this itself explains they are not living together. “You there — I — here —”.

In this poem all the quatrains except one consist of an abcb rhyme scheme. In the final sestet the rhyme scheme is ababcb. The foot of the poem is sometimes tri meter and sometimes tetra meter.

Emily Dickinson carefully cultivates the formal style in her poems. At the same time rather than replacing an unrhyming apt and concise word, she dares to break the rhyme sequence in one stanza. Her scrupulous handling of the right word is more worth than a perfect rhyme scheme. The sense matters more than a style. But the poet’s fame is in that even in the bungling of the rhyme, there is a characteristic method and uniqueness which is so Dickinsonian.

She employs perfect rhymes, partial rhymes and eye rhymes in this poem. Life/Shelf, Up/Cup, Face/Grace, Eye/by, eyes/Paradise, Name/Fame, be/Me. The slant rhymes in the

poems are Broke/Crack, wait/not. Apart/ajar are examples for eye rhyme, for they look similar but have quite different sounds.

8. 8 BECAUSE I COULD NOT STOP FOR DEATH

Because I could not stop for Death –
He kindly stopped for me –
The Carriage held but just Ourselves –
And Immortality.

We slowly drove – He knew no haste
And I had put away
My labor and my leisure too,
For His Civility –

We passed the School, where Children strove
At Recess – in the Ring –
We passed the Fields of Gazing Grain –
We passed the Setting Sun –

Or rather – He passed us –
The Dews drew quivering and chill –
For only Gossamer, my Gown –
My Tippet – only Tulle –

We paused before a House that seemed
A Swelling of the Ground –
The Roof was scarcely visible –
The Cornice – in the Ground –

Since then – 'tis Centuries – and yet
Feels shorter than the Day
I first surmised the Horses' Heads
Were toward Eternity –

8.9 SUMMARY

This poem is one of the well known and most admired poems in English Literature. This poem is about death and the author boldly challenges the death that she could not wait for him. She begins her poem by introducing the characters in a metaphorical way. She describes Death as a polite valet who has come to take her to her heavenly Home.

The poet says since she was so caught up with life and could not wait or think about death, when death came calling he had to wait for her to cease from all her leisure and labours and step into chariot for her final journey. Death was kind enough and very polite and she had immortality as a companion in this journey.

In all of this there is no haste. The second stanza begins as the chariot begins to move. The carriage makes a slow detour over all that she has known and loved, the objects of her

leisure and labour probably the garden and the civil driver Death did not intrude in her retrospection.

But nevertheless she includes Death as a spectator along with her as she rises above little by little. The altitude gives a different perspective and something altogether different from the closed enclosures of Emily Dickinson's Homestead. The carriage then passes on the school, and they see children playing during leisure time and they see the "gazing grain" and they also watch the sun setting.

The frivolous mood of going for a long drive with Death changes and the chillness of death seems to grip the poet. Sitting close to death, she feels like the dew quickly gone as the sun comes up and like being clothed of gossamer or tulle. In places where the poet speaks about deeper emotions, she liberally uses dashes and pauses. The dress that the poet wears is a kind of bridal dress and the poet symbolizes that she is being taken for a celestial marriage with God and Death is like a friend to take her there.

Now the horse drawn chariot seems to rise and the poet has a downward glance at all the places she held dear. She seems her huge Homestead now a mere swelling in the ground and the huge roof tops are like small toys. The house referred as "a swelling of the ground," reminds one on the unknown grave without an epitaph.

Time from the Biblical perspective is very fleeting for the Bible says, " a thousand days are like one day." The poet must have this in mind when she says, "—Tis Centuries - and yet, / Feels shorter than day. In eternity mortality is wiped away. Away from the moment of a life time, the poet is now all set to gladly set foot into eternity.

8.10 CRITICAL ANALYSIS

This poem has rich evocative images and themes too complicated for a common grasp. Her altitude of vision is amazing. As a poet she could view her own life as an outsider as a spectator and imagining how she will respond to the call of Death in her life. She takes the sting and the ugliness of death, by personifying Death as a very polite suitor or a chaperone. She thinks of herself as the elect royal and Death waiting on her patiently so that she can settle her affairs and go with him.

She has employed slant rhymes in her poems. In this poem, for example, chill and tulle comes under slant rhyme.

In the following poem, the poet has skillfully handled the poetic devices and this is one of the reasons for this poem's success. The poem is full of personifications and paradoxes. To achieve the poetic effect, the poet has used many images of nature such as grain, sun, and so on. The poet uses the day to day, common images to convey her idea.

In the first stanza, the poet personifies the death as a carriage driver and there is also personified character in the carriage named immortality. She has used capital D for Death and this suggests that she considers death as a man.

Usually death is associated with fast and rude characteristics but here the poet contrasts the idea by telling that "he knew no haste" and "we slowly drove". She tells that Death, here, is polite and she has avoided all her duties to respect "His Civility".

In the third stanza, the poet uses the natural but common imagery like children playing in the school during the recess time, gazing grains in the field and the sun setting. These images are contrast to one another but the poet has used them in a coherent manner which adds beauty to the poem. The word "gazing" holds some special meaning. It refers to eternity. The sun setting refers the end of the day as well as the new beginning.

The poem shows the poet's influence of metaphysical poetry of the Seventeenth century and like a Romantic poet, she has used simple and effective lines to get a clear meaning. She has used paradoxes but juxtaposes them in a beautiful manner. The poem with its short and simple lines looks like a lyric.

The next stanza, the poet has described her dress as gossamer. She then describes the grave as a house which looks like "a swelling from the ground". She has used many personifications in this poem.

8.11 QUESTION

1. Attempt a critical appreciation of the poem.
2. What would your reaction be when death is waiting at the door?

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LESSON 9
THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR

OBJECTIVES

- To familiarize the students with the biography of Emerson
- To get the students acquainted with Emerson as an essayist
- To sensitize the students about the significance of the essay

STRUCTURE

9.1 Emerson's Biography
9.2 Emerson as an Essayist
9.3 The American Scholar: Introduction
9.4 The American Scholar: Full Text
9.5 Reference Books

9.1 EMERSON'S BIOGRAPHY

Ralph Waldo Emerson was born on May 25, 1803, to the Reverend William and Ruth Haskins Emerson. His father, pastor of the First Unitarian Church of Boston, chaplain of the Massachusetts Senate, and an editor of *Monthly Anthology*, a literary review, once described two-year-old son Waldo as "a rather dull scholar." (Emerson was called Waldo throughout his lifetime and even signed his checks as Waldo.) Following William's death from stomach cancer in 1811, the family was left in a state of near-poverty, and Emerson was raised by his mother and Mary Moody Emerson, an aunt whose acute, critical intelligence would have a lifelong influence on him. Through the persistence of these two women, he completed studies at the Boston Public Latin School.

Emerson entered Harvard College on a scholarship in 1817, and during collegiate holidays he taught school. An unremarkable student, he made no particular impression on his contemporaries. In 1821, he graduated thirteenth in his class of 1959, and he was elected class poet only after six other students declined the honor. It was at Harvard that he began keeping his celebrated journals.

After graduating from college, Emerson moved to Boston to teach at his brother William's School for Young Ladies and began to experiment with fiction and verse. In 1825, after quitting the ladies school, he entered Harvard Divinity School; one year later, he received his master's degree, which qualified him to preach. He began to suffer from symptoms of tuberculosis, and in the fall of 1827 he went to Georgia and Florida in hopes of improving his health. He returned in late December to Boston, where he preached occasionally. In Concord, New Hampshire, he met Ellen Tucker, a seventeen-year-old poet who also suffered from tuberculosis. The two were married in September 1829, just after Emerson had been ordained pastor of the Second Unitarian Church of Boston. They were very happy in the marriage, but, unfortunately, both were also quite ill with tuberculosis; in 1831, after less than two years of marriage, Ellen died.

By the end of the following year, Emerson had resigned his pastorate at Second Unitarian Church. Among his reasons for resigning were his refusal to administer the

sacrament of the Last Supper, which he believed to be an unnecessary theological rite, and his belief that the ministry was an "antiquated profession." On Christmas Day, 1832, he left for Europe even though he was so ill that many of his friends thought he would not survive the rigors of the winter voyage. While in Europe, he met many of the leading thinkers of his time, including the economist and philosopher John Stuart Mill; Samuel Taylor Coleridge, whose *Aids to Reflection* Emerson admired; the poet William Wordsworth; and Thomas Carlyle, the historian and social critic, with whom Emerson established a lifelong friendship.

After his return from Europe in the fall of 1833, Emerson began a career as a public lecturer with an address in Boston. One of his first lectures, "The Uses of Natural History," attempted to humanize science by explaining that "the whole of Nature is a metaphor or image of the human mind," an observation that he would often repeat. Other lectures followed on diverse subjects such as Italy, biography, English literature, the philosophy of history, and human culture. In September 1834, Emerson moved to Concord, Massachusetts, as a boarder in the home of his step-grandfather, Ezra Ripley. On September 14, 1835, he married Lydia Jackson of Plymouth, Massachusetts, and they moved into a house of their own in Concord, where they lived for the rest of their lives.

In 1841, Emerson published the first volume of his *Essays*, a carefully constructed collection of some of his best-remembered writings, including "Self-Reliance" and "The Over-Soul." A second series of *Essays* in 1844 would firmly establish his reputation as an authentic American voice. Tragedy struck the Emerson family in January 1842 when Emerson's son, Waldo, died of scarlet fever. Emerson would later write "Threnody," an elegy expressing his grief for Waldo; the poem was included in his collection *Poems* (1846). Ellen, Edith, and Edward Waldo, his other children, survived to adulthood. In 1847, Emerson again travelled abroad, lecturing in England with success. He renewed his friendship with Carlyle, met other notable English authors, and collected materials for *English Traits*, which was eventually published in 1856. A collection called *Addresses and Lectures* appeared in 1849, and *Representative Men* was published in 1850.

In 1866, Emerson was reconciled with Harvard, and a year later the college Emerson's later works were never so highly esteemed as his writings previous to 1850. However, he continued to lead an active intellectual and social life. He made many lecture appearances in all parts of the country, and he continued writing and publishing. During the 1850s, he vigorously supported the antislavery movement. When the American Civil War broke out, he supported the Northern cause, but the war troubled him: He was deeply appalled by the amount of violence, bloodshed, and destruction it engendered, invited him to give the Phi Beta Kappa address. *May-Day and Other Pieces*, published in 1867, was a second gathering of his poems, and his later essays were collected in *Society and Solitude* (1870).As he grew older, Emerson's health and mental acuity began to decline rapidly. In 1872, after his Concord home was badly damaged by fire, his friend Russell Lowell and others raised $17,000 to repair the house and send him on vacation. However, the trauma added to his intellectual decline.

In 1879, Emerson joined Amos Bronson Alcott and others in establishing the Concord School of Philosophy. He often lamented that he had "no new ideas" in his later years. He also had to quit the lecture circuit as his memory began to lapse.

Emerson died of pneumonia on April 27, 1882, and, announcing his death, Concord's church bells rang 79 times

9.2 EMERSON AS AN ESSAYIST

Autobiographical element: Emerson, like Montaigne, is almost always his own subject, though hardly in Montaigne's own mode. Emerson would not have said: "I am myself the matter of my book," yet Emerson on "History" is more Emerson than history. Though he is almost never overtly autobiographical, his best lesson nevertheless is that all true subjectivity is a difficult achievement, while supposed objectivity is merely the failure of having become an amalgam of other selves and their opinions. Though he is in the oral tradition, his true genre was no more the lecture than it had been the sermon, and certainly not the essay, though that is his only formal achievement, besides a double handful of strong poems. His journals are his authentic work, and seem tome poorly represented by all available selections.

Perhaps the journals simply ought not to be condensed, because Emerson's reader needs to be immersed in their flow and ebb, their own experience of the influx of insight followed by the perpetual falling back into skepticism. They move endlessly between a possible ecstasy and a probable shrewdness, while knowing always that neither daemonic intensity nor worldly irony by itself can constitute wisdom. The essential Emerson begins to emerge in the journals in the autumn of 1830, when he was twenty-seven, with his first entry on Self-Reliance, in which he refuses to be "a secondary man" imitating any other being. A year later (October 27, 1831) we hear the birth of Emerson's reader's Sublime, the notion that what moves us in the eloquence, written or oral, of another must be what is oldest in oneself, which is not part of the Creation, and indeed is God in oneself.

His Uniqueness: Emerson is one of the greatest American essayists of the nineteenth century. He is quite different form the English essayist like Addison, Lamb, Hazlitt, Arnold, or Stevenson . He was primarily a philosophical thinker. He was Transcendentalist. He believed that God pervades the whole universe. In his essay, Emerson's reasoning is called "a priori '. It is reasoning from cause to effect and vice - versa. There is no logical relation among his points. But in his Transcendentalism, they stand related to one another. In fact, Emerson's essay is not an essay in the conventional sense. It is the essay of the Transcendentalist.

Form in Emerson's Essays: The essays of the English are short. But Emerson's essays are very long. His essays are as a vast treaty of nature in which multitudes of argument and illustrations jostle one another for existence. On the basis of their form, his may be called Lectures. Some of them may be called treatises or orations. The body of his essay is vast. It contains various topics under the main title. The essay -- The American Scholars covers about fifteen pages. It talks about the major influence on the, it discuses the duties of a scholar, it is in a way American intellectual declaration of independence '.

Loose Construction: Emerson essays are loosely constructed. His paragraphs are not based any logical sequences. The points of his thought are not related to one another by virtue of logical discussion. In 'the American scholar ' he tells first his readers that Americans should how make R declaration of literary Independence. Then he tells then Heart the American scholar should be a 'Man - thinking ‘. Thereafter he describes the influence upon the mind of man. He was a great scholar. His vision was vast. As soon as he is in a position to complete a paragraph a new vision comes up and ideas from themselves into a circle.

Sublime Thought: Emerson's essays are steeped in sublime Thoughts. His essays 'The poet', 'The over soul' and 'self-reliance' contain sublime thoughts. Emerson, the transcendentalist is at his best in these essays.

His philosophical style: Emerson style for writing essays is philosophical. He unites ---- " The word of phenomena is lifted to the plane of principle " Further , " A Man should learn to detect and watch the gleam of light which flashes across his mind from within Emerson's vision draws philosophical conclusions for the readers . He writes "Every thought is potent rather than purely reflective ".

Philosophical or Artistic: A member of critics is of the view that Emerson, the essayist is not the artist. In the opinion of Spiller, Emerson is - "a writer who is artistic but not an artist". Emerson is said to have got no sense of composition. He is accused of writing loose sentences with no sense of syntax .when he starts elaborating his ideas his sense of form disappears and continuation becomes illogical, incoherence is the result of it all. Emerson's prose has something beautiful style, something daggling. A critic say about his essays that they are " a chaos full of shooting stars " To find his style , we may conclude him as a great scholar as a great Thinker . He united to give his reader the maxim to his readers in a shorter time.

His wisdom: His essays are replete with his wisdom. He was an intellectual, a deep Thinker and an eloquent speaker .His essays contain deep thoughts which runs to the readers for this personal rights. Thoreau, Emerson, Whitman they were all good citizens of the nineteenth century and of the west. In the back of their work, all three writers built on Native American material and embodied American attitudes, specially the concepts of individualism and self-reliance. Perhaps the most fitting commentary on their relationship to Indian literature was made by Gandhi after reading Emerson's essays: "The essays to my mind contain the teaching of Indian wisdom in a western 'genre'. It is interesting to see our own sometimes differently fashioned."

His essays: Emerson wrote essays and poetry over several decades, but most of his thoughts regarding Transcendentalism were laid out in his earliest works, including *Nature* and his lectures "The American Scholar" and "The Divinity School Address." The doctrines he formulated in these early works were later expanded and elaborated upon in *Essays* (1838) and *Essays: Second Series* (1844). From these collections, the essays "Self-Reliance," "The Over-Soul," and "The Poet" are among the best known. The philosophical and religious outlook of Emerson's works are traced to many sources, including the Unitarian religion, German Philosophical Idealism, the work of Swedish scientist and mystic Emmanuel Swedenborg, the poetry of Wordsworth and Coleridge, and the Hindu scriptures, all of which emphasize the unity of nature, humanity, and God. Much of Emerson's Transcendental philosophy is encapsulated in *Nature,* a work in which he argued that nature is a symbolic language that can reveal the mind of God, and that through the experience of oneness with nature, a communion with God is possible. In addition to his essays, Emerson was a prolific contributor of poetry to the *Dial* and later issued many of his poems in *Poems* (1847) and *May-Day, and Other Pieces* (1867). Well-known poems in these collections include "The Rhodora," "The Sphinx," "Brahma," "The Humble Bee," and one of his earliest works, the "Concord Hymn." Scholars have charted a steady decline in Emerson's idealism in his poetry and prose works following his contributions to the *Dial* and the publication of his *Essays: Second Series.* The most noted example of his humanistic acquiescence to the reality of circumstances surrounding mortal limitations is *The Conduct of Life* (1860). Other important works include *Representative Men* (1850), a series of essays on the men who most closely fit Emerson's ideal, and another collection titled *Society and Solitude* (1870). Emerson spent the

last years of his life in Concord, writing little, but enjoying national recognition throughout America as a central figure of the American Renaissance.

9.3 THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR: INTRODUCTION

Emerson's first book, *Nature*, was published anonymously in 1836. Although only a slim volume, it contains in brief the whole substance of his thought. It sold very poorly after twelve years, its first edition of 500 copies had not yet sold out. However, "The American Scholar," the Phi Beta Kappa address that Emerson presented at Harvard in 1837, was very popular and, when printed, sold well. A year after he made this speech, he was invited back to Harvard to speak to the graduating class of Harvard Divinity School. His address, which advocated intuitive, personal revelation, created such an uproar that he was not invited back to his alma mater for thirty years. Perhaps Amos Bronson Alcott best summarizes this phase of Emerson's life when he wrote: "Emerson's church consists of one member himself."

In 1836, Emerson joined the Transcendental Club, and in the ensuing years the group, which included Henry David Thoreau, Margaret Fuller, and Alcott, met often at his home. In 1840, he helped launch *The Dial*, a journal of literature, philosophy, and religion that focused on transcendentalist views. After the first two years, he succeeded Fuller as its editor. *The Dial* was recognized as the official voice of transcendentalism, and Emerson became intimately associated with the movement. Two years later, however, the journal ceased publication.

Originally titled "An Oration Delivered before the Phi Beta Kappa Society, at Cambridge, [Massachusetts,] August 31, 1837," Emerson delivered what is now referred to as "The American Scholar" essay as a speech to Harvard's Phi Beta Kappa Society, an honorary society of male college students with unusually high grade point averages. At the time, women were barred from higher education, and scholarship was reserved exclusively for men. Emerson published the speech under its original title as a pamphlet later that same year and republished it in 1838. In 1841, he included the essay in his book Essays, but changed its title to "The American Scholar" to enlarge his audience to all college students, as well as other individuals interested in American letters. Placed in his *Man Thinking: An Oration* (1841), the essay found its final home in *Nature; Addresses, and Lectures* (1849).

The text begins with an introduction (paragraphs 1-7) in which Emerson explains that his intent is to explore the scholar as one function of the whole human being: The scholar is "Man Thinking." The remainder of the essay is organized into four sections, the first three discussing the influence of nature (paragraphs 8 and 9), the influence of the past and books (paragraphs 10-20), and the influence of action (paragraphs 21-30) on the education of the thinking man. In the last section (paragraphs 31-45), Emerson considers the duties of the scholar and then discusses his views of America in his own time.

Emerson opens "The American Scholar" with greetings to the college president and members of the Phi Beta Kappa Society of Harvard College. Pointing out the differences between this gathering and the athletic and dramatic contests of ancient Greece, the poetry contests of the Middle Ages, and the scientific academies of nineteenth-century Europe, he voices a theme that draws the entire essay together: the notion of an independent American intelligentsia that will no longer depend for authority on its European past. He sounds what one critic contends is "the first clarion of an American literary renaissance," a call for

Americans to seek their creative inspirations using America as their source, much like Walt Whitman would do in *Leaves of Grass* eighteen years later.

9.4 THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR: FULL TEXT

This address was delivered at Cambridge in 1837, before the Harvard Chapter of the Phi Beta Kappa Society, a college fraternity composed of the first twenty-five men in each graduating class. The society has annual meetings, which have been the occasion for addresses from the most distinguished scholars and thinkers of the day.

MR. PRESIDENT AND GENTLEMEN

I greet you on the recommencement of our literary year. Our anniversary is one of hope, and, perhaps, not enough of labor. We do not meet for games of strength or skill, for the recitation of his stories, tragedies, and odes, like the ancient Greeks; for parliaments of love and poesy, like the Troubadours; nor for the advancement of science, like our co-temporaries in the British and European capitals. Thus far, our holiday has been simply a friendly sign of the survival of the love of letters amongst a people too busy to give to letters any more. As such it is precious as the sign of an indestructible instinct. Perhaps the time is already come when it ought to be, and will be, something else; when the sluggard intellect of this continent will look from under its iron lids and fill the postponed expectation of the world with something better than the exertions of mechanical skill. Our day of dependence, our long apprenticeship to the learning of other lands, draws to a close. The millions that around us are rushing into life cannot always be fed on the sere remains of foreign harvests. Events, actions arise that must be sung, that will sing themselves. Who can doubt that poetry will revive and lead in a new age, as the star in the constellation Harp, which now flames in our zenith, astronomers announce, shall one day be the pole-star for a thousand years?

In the light of this hope I accept the topic which not only usage but the nature of our association seem to prescribe to this day,--the AMERICAN SCHOLAR. Year by year we come up hither to read one more chapter of his biography. Let us inquire what new lights, new events, and more days have thrown on his character, his duties, and his hopes.

It is one of those fables which out of an unknown antiquity convey an unlooked-for wisdom, that the gods, in the beginning, divided Man into men, that he might be more helpful to himself; just as the hand was divided into fingers, the better to answer its end.

The old fable covers a doctrine ever new and sublime; that there is One Man,--present to all particular men only partially, or through one faculty; and that you must take the whole society to find the whole man. Man is not a farmer, or a professor, or an engineer, but he is all. Man is priest, and scholar, and statesman, and producer, and soldier. In the *divided* or social state these functions are parcelled out to individuals, each of whom aims to do his stint of the joint work, whilst each other performs his. The fable implies that the individual, to possess himself, must sometimes return from his own labor to embrace all the other laborers. But, unfortunately, this original unit, this fountain of power, has been so distributed to multitudes, has been so minutely subdivided and peddled out, that it is spilled into drops, and cannot be gathered. The state of society is one in which the members have suffered amputation from the trunk and strut about so many walking monsters,--a good finger, a neck, astomach, an elbow, but never a man.

Man is thus metamorphosed into a thing, into many things. The planter, who is Man sent out into the field to gather food, is seldom cheered by any idea of the true dignity of his ministry. He sees his busheland his cart, and nothing beyond, and sinks into the farmer, instead of Man on the farm. The tradesman scarcely ever gives an ideal worth to his work, but is ridden by the routine of his craft, and the soul is subject to dollars. The priest becomes a form; the attorney a statute-book; the mechanic a machine; the sailor a rope of the ship.

In this distribution of functions the scholar is the delegated intellect. In the right state he is Man Thinking. In the degenerate state, when the victim of society, he tends to become a mere thinker or still worse, the parrot of other men's thinking.

In this view of him, as Man Thinking, the whole theory of his office is contained. Him Nature solicits with all her placid, all her monitory pictures. Him the past instructs. Him the future invites. Is not indeed every man a student, and do not all things exist for the student's be hoof? And, finally, is not the true scholar the only true master? But as the old oracle said, "All things have two handles: Beware of the wrong one." In life, too often, the scholar errs with mankind and forfeits his privilege. Let us see him in his school, and consider him in reference to the main influences he receives.

I. The first in time and the first in importance of the influences upon the mind is that of nature. Every day, the sun; and, after sunset, Night and her stars. Ever the winds blow; ever the grass grows. Every day, men and women, conversing, beholding and beholden. The scholar must needs stand wistful and admiring before this great spectacle. He must settle its value in his mind. What is nature to him? There is never a beginning, there is never an end, to the inexplicable continuity of this web of God, but always circular power returning into itself. Therein it resembles his own spirit, whose beginning, whose ending, he never can find,--so entire, so boundless. Far too as her splendours shine, system on system shooting like rays, upward, downward, without center, without circumference,--in the mass and in the particle, Nature hastens to render account of herself to the mind. Classification begins.

To the young mind everything is individual, stands by itself. By and by it finds how to join two things and see in them one nature; then three, then three thousand; and so, tyrannized over by its own unifying instinct, it goes on tying things together, diminishing anomalies, discovering roots running underground whereby contrary and remote things cohere and flower out from one stem. It presently learns that since the dawn of history there has been a constant accumulation and classifying of facts. But what is classification but the perceiving that these objects are not chaotic, and are not foreign, but have a law which is also a law of the human mind? The astronomer discovers that geometry, a pure abstraction of the human mind, is the measure of planetary motion. The chemist finds proportions and intelligible method throughout matter; and science is nothing but the finding of analogy, identity, in the most remote parts. The ambitious soul sits down before each refractory fact; one after another reduces all strange constitutions, all new powers, to their class and their law, and goes on forever to animate the last fiber of organization, the outskirts of nature, by insight.

Thus to him, to this school-boy under the bending dome of day, is suggested that he and it proceed from one Root; one is leaf and one is flower; relation, sympathy, stirring in every vein. And what is that root? Is not that the soul of his soul? A thought too bold? A dream too wild? Yet when this spiritual light shall have revealed the law of more earthly natures, when he has learned to worship the soul, and to see that the natural philosophy that now is, is only the first gropings of its gigantic hand, he shall look forward to an ever-

expanding knowledge as to a becoming creator. He shall see that nature is the opposite of the soul, answering to it part for part. One is seal and one is print. Its beauty is the beauty of his own mind. Its laws are the laws of his own mind. Nature then becomes to him the measure of his attainments. So much of nature as he is ignorant of, so much of his own mind does he not yet possess. And, in fine, the ancient precept, "Know thyself," and the modern precept, "Study nature," become at last one maxim.

II. The next great influence into the spirit of the scholar is the mind of the Past, in whatever form, whether of literature, of art, of institutions, that mind is inscribed. Books are the best type of the influence of the past, and perhaps we shall get at the truth, learn the amount of this influence more conveniently, by considering their value alone.

The theory of books is noble. The scholar of the first age received into him the world around; brooded thereon; gave it the new arrangement of his own mind, and uttered it again. It came into him life; it went out from him truth. It came to him short-lived actions; it went out from him immortal thoughts. It came to him business; it went from him poetry. It was dead fact; now, it is quick thought. It can stand, and it can go. It now endures, it now flies, it now inspires. Precisely in proportion to the depth of mind from which it issued, so high does it soar, so long does it sing.

Or, I might say, it depends on how far the process had gone, of transmuting life into truth. In proportion to the completeness of the distillation, so will the purity and imperishableness of the product be. But none is quite perfect. As no air-pump can by any means make a perfect vacuum, so neither can any artist entirely exclude the conventional, the local, the perishable from his book, or write a book of pure thought, that shall be as efficient, in all respects, to a remote posterity, as to contemporaries, or rather to the second age. Each age, it is found, must write its own books; or rather, each generation for the next succeeding. The books of an older period will not fit this.

Yet hence arises a grave mischief. The sacredness which attaches to the act of creation, the act of thought, is instantly transferred to the record. The poet chanting was felt to be a divine man. Henceforth the chant is divine also. The writer was a just and wise spirit. Henceforward it is settled the book is perfect; as love of the corrupts into worship of his statue. Instantly the book becomes noxious. The guide is a tyrant. We sought a brother, and lo, a governor. The sluggish and perverted mind of the multitude, always slow to open to the incursions of Reason, having once so opened, having once received this book, stands upon it, and makes an outcry if it is disparaged. Colleges are built on it. Books are written on it by thinkers, not by Man Thinking, by men of talent, that is, who start wrong, who set out from accepted dogmas, not from their own sight of principles. Meek young men grow up in libraries, believing it their duty to accept the views which Cicero, which Locke, which Bacon, have given; forgetful that Cicero, Locke and Bacon were only young men in libraries when they wrote these books.

Hence, instead of Man Thinking, we have the bookworm. Hence the book-learned class, who value books, as such; not as related to nature and the human constitution, but as making a sort of Third Estate with the world and soul. Hence the restorers of readings, the emendators, the bibliomaniacs of all degrees. This is bad; this is worse than it seems.

Books are the best of things, well used; abused, among the worst. What is the right use? What is the one end which all means go to effect?

They are for nothing but to inspire. I had better never see a book than to be warped by its attraction clean out of my own orbit, and made a satellite instead of a system. The one thing in the world of value is the active soul, the soul, free, sovereign, active. This every man is entitled to; this every man contains within him, although in almost all men obstructed, and as yet unborn. The soul active sees absolute truth and utters truth, or creates. In this action it is genius; not the privilege of here and there a favorite, but the sound estate of every man. In its essence it is progressive. The book, the college, the school of art, the institution of any kind, stop with some past utterance of genius. This is good, say they, let us hold by this. They pin me down. They look backward and not forward. But genius always looks forward. The eyes of man are set in his forehead, not in his hind head. Man hopes. Genius creates. To create, to create, is the proof of a divine presence. Whatever talents may be, if the man create not, the pure efflux of the Deity is no this; cinders and smoke there may be, but not yet flame. There are creative manners, there are creative actions, and creative words; manners, actions, words, that is, indicative of no custom or authority, but springing spontaneous from the mind's own sense of good and fair.

On the other part, instead of being its own seer, let it receive always from another mind its truth, though it were in torrents of light, without periods of solitude, inquest, and self-recovery; and a fatal disservice is done. Genius is always sufficiently the enemy of genius by over-influence. The literature of every nation bear me witness. The English dramatic poets have Shakespearized now for two hundred years.

Undoubtedly there is a right way of reading, so it is sternly subordinated. Man Thinking must not be subdued by his instruments. Books are for the scholar's idle times. When he can read God directly, the hour is too precious to be wasted in other men's transcripts of their readings. But when the intervals of darkness come, as come they must, when the soul seeth not, when the sun is hid and the stars withdraw their shining, we repair to the lamps which were kindled by their ray, to guide our steps to the East again, where the dawn is. We hear, that we may speak. The Arabian proverb says, "Afig-tree, looking on a fig-tree, become the fruitful."

It is remarkable, the character of the pleasure we derive from the best books. They impress us ever with the conviction that one nature wrote and the same reads. We read the verses of one of the great English poets, of Chaucer, of Marvell, of Dryden, with the most modern joy, with a pleasure, I mean, which is in great part caused by the abstraction of all *time* from their verses. There is some awe mixed with the joy of our surprise, when this poet, who lived in some past world, two or three hundred years ago, says that which lies close to my own soul, that which I also had well-nigh thought and said. But for the evidence thence afforded to the philosophical doctrine of the identity of all minds, we should suppose some pre-established harmony, some foresight of souls that were to be, and some preparation of stores for their future wants, like the fact observed in insects, who lay up food before death for the young grub they shall never see.

I would not be hurried by any love of system, by any exaggeration of instincts, to underrate the Book. We all know that as the human body can be nourished on any food, though it were boiled grass and the broth of shoes, so the human mind can be fed by any knowledge. And great and heroic men have existed who had almost no other information than by the printed page. I only would say that it needs a strong head to bear that diet. One must be an inventor to read well. As the proverb says, "He that would bring home the wealth of the

Indies must carry out the wealth of the Indies." There is then creative reading as well as creative writing. When the mind is braced by labor and invention, the page of whatever book we read becomes luminous with manifold allusion. Every sentence is doubly significant, and the sense of our author is as broad as the world. We then see, what is always true, that as the seer's hour of vision is short and rare among heavy days and months, so is its record, perchance, the least part of his volume. The discerning will read, in his Plato or Shakespeare, only that least part, only the authentic utterances of the oracle; all the rest he rejects, were it never so many times Plato's and Shakespeare's.

Of course there is a portion of reading quite indispensable to a wise man. History and exact science he must learn by laborious reading. Colleges, in like manner, have their indispensable office, to teach elements. But they can only highly serve us when they aim not to drill, but to create; when they gather from far every ray of various genius to their hospitable halls, and by the concentrated fires set the hearts of their youth on flame. Thought and knowledge are natures in which apparatus and pretension avail nothing. Gowns and pecuniary foundations, though of towns of gold, can never countervail the least sentence or syllable of wit. Forget this, and our American colleges will recede in their public importance, whilst they grow richer every year.

III. There goes in the world a notion that the scholar should be a recluse, a valetudinarian, as unfit for any handiwork or public labor as a penknife for an axe. The so called "practical men" sneer at speculative men, as if, because they speculate or *see*, they could do nothing. I have heard it said that the clergy who are always, more universally than any other class, the scholars of their day are addressed as women; that the rough, spontaneous conversation of men they do not hear, but only a mincing and diluted speech. They are often virtually disfranchised; and indeed there are advocates for their celibacy. As far as this is true of the studious classes, it is not just and wise. Action is with the scholar subordinate, but it is essential. Without it he is not yet man. Without it thought can never ripen into truth. Whilst the world hangs before the eye as a cloud of beauty, we cannot even see its beauty. Inaction is cowardice, but there can be no scholar without the heroic mind. The preamble of thought, the transition through which it passes from the unconscious to the conscious, is action. Only so much do I know, as I have lived. Instantly we know whose words are loaded with life, and whose not.

The world this shadow of the soul, or other me lies wide around. Its attractions are the keys which unlock my thoughts and make me acquainted with myself. I launch eagerly into this resounding tumult. I grasp the hands of those next me, and take my place in the ring to suffer and to work, taught by an instinct that so shall the dumbabys be vocal with speech. I pierce its order; I dissipate its fear; I dispose of it within the circuit of my expanding life. So much only of life as I know by experience, so much of the wilderness have I vanquished and planted, or so far have I extended my being, my dominion. I do not see how any man can afford, for the sake of his nerves and his nap, to spare any action in which he can partake. It is pearls and rubies to his discourse. Drudgery, calamity, exasperation, want, are instructors in eloquence and wisdom. The true scholarrudges every opportunity of action passed by, as a loss of power.

It is the raw material out of which the intellect molds her splendid products. A strange process too, this by which experience is converted into thought, as a mulberry-leaf is converted into satin. The manufacture goes forward at all hours.

The actions and events of our childhood and youth are now matters of calmest observation. They lie like fair pictures in the air. Not so with our recent actions, with the business which we now have in hand. On this we are quite unable to speculate. Our affections as yet circulate through it. We no more feel or know it than we feel the feet, or the hand, or the brain of our body. The new deed is yet apart of life, remains for a time immersed in our unconscious life. In some contemplative hour it detaches itself from the life like a ripe fruit, to become a thought of the mind. Instantly it is raised, transfigured; the corruptible has put on in corruption. Hence for this is an object of beauty, however base its origin and neighbourhood. Observe, too, the impossibility of antedating this act. In its grub state it cannot fly, it cannot shine, it is a dull grub. But suddenly, without observation, the selfsame thing unfurls beautiful wings, and is an angel of wisdom. So is there no fact, no event, in our private history, which shall not, sooner or later, lose its adhesive, inert form, and astonish us by soaring from our body into the empyrean. Cradle and infancy, school and playground, the fear of boys, and dogs, and ferules, the love of little maids and berries, and many another fact that once filled the whole sky, are gone already; friend and relative, profession and party, town and country, nation and world, must also soar and sing.

Of course, he who has put forth his total strength in fit actions has the richest return of wisdom. I will not shut myself out of this globe of action, and transplant an oak into a flower-pot, there to hunger and pine; nor trust the revenue of some single faculty, and exhaust one vein of thought, much like those Savoyards, who, getting their livelihood by carving shepherds, shepherdesses, and smoking Dutchmen, for all Europe, went out one day to the mountain to find stock, and discovered that they had whittled up the last of their pine-trees. Authors we have, in numbers, who have written out their vein, and who, moved by a commendable prudence, sail for Greece or Palestine, follow the trapper into the prairie, or ramble round Algiers, to replenish their merchantable stock.

If it were only for a vocabulary, the scholar would be covetous of action. Life is our dictionary. Years are well spent in country labors; in town; in the insight into trades and manufactures; in frank intercourse with many men and women; in science; in art; to the one end of mastering in all their facts a language by which to illustrate and embody our perceptions. I learn immediately from any speaker how much he has already lived, through the poverty or the splendor of his speech. Life lies behind us as the quarry from whence we get tiles and copestones for the masonry of to-day. This is the way to learn grammar. Colleges and books only copy the language which the field and the work-yard made.

But the final value of action, like that of books, and better than books, is that it is a resource. That great principle of Undulation in nature, that shows itself in the inspiring and expiring of the breath; in desire and satiety; in the ebb and flow of the sea; in day and night; in heat and cold; and, as yet more deeply ingrained in every atom and every fluid, is known to us under the name of Polarity, these "fits of easy transmission and reflection," as Newton called them, are the law of nature because they are the law of spirit.

The mind now thinks, now acts, and each fit reproduces the other. When the artist has exhausted his materials, when the fancy no longer paints, when thoughts are no longer apprehended and books are awareness, he has always the resource *to live*. Character is higher than intellect. Thinking is the function. Living is the functionary. The stream retreats to its source. A great soul will be strong to live, as well as strong to think. Does he lack organ or medium to impart his truth? He can still fall back on this elemental force of living them. This is a total act. Thinking is a partial act. Let the grandeur of justice shine in his affairs. Let the

beauty of affection cheer his lowly roof. Those "far from fame," who dwell and act with him, will feel the force of his constitution in the doings and passages of the day better than it can be measured by any public and designed display. Time shall teach him that the scholar loses no hour which the man lives. Herein he unfolds the sacred germ of his instinct, screened from influence. What is lost in seemliness is gained in strength. Not out of those on whom systems of education have exhausted their culture comes the helpful giant to destroy the old or to build the new, but out of unhandselled savage nature; out of terrible Druids and Berserkers come at last Alfred and Shakespeare. I hear therefore with joy whatever is beginning to be said of the dignity and necessity of labor to every citizen. There is virtue yet in the hoe and the spade, for learned as well as forum earned hands. And labor is everywhere welcome; always we are invited to work; only be this limitation observed, that a man shall not for the sake of wider activity sacrifice any opinion to the popular judgments and modes of action.

I have now spoken of the education of the scholar by nature, by books, and by action. It remains to say somewhat of his duties.

They are such as become Man Thinking. They may all be comprised in self-trust. The office of the scholar is to cheer, to raise, and to guide men by showing them facts amidst appearances. He plies the slow, unhonored, and unpaid task of observation. Flam steed and Herschel, in their glazed observatories, may catalogue the stars with the praise of all men, and, the results being splendid and useful, honor is sure. But he, in his private observatory, cataloguing obscure and nebulous stars of the human mind, which as yet no man has thought of as such, watching days and months sometimes for a few facts; correcting still his old records, must relinquish display and immediate fame. In the long period of his preparation he must betray often an ignorance and shiftlessness in popular arts, incurring the disdain of the able who shoulder him aside. Long he must stammer in his speech; often forego the living for the dead. Worse yet, he must accept how often! poverty and solitude. For the ease and pleasure of treading the old road, accepting the fashions, the education, the religion of society, he takes the cross of making his own, and, of course, the self-accusation, the faint heart, the frequent uncertainty and loss of time, which are the nettles and tangling vines in the way of the self-relying and self-directed; and the state of virtual hostility in which he seems to stand to society, and especially to educated society. For all this loss and scorn, what offset?

He is to find consolation in exercising the highest functions of human nature. He is one who raises himself from private considerations and breathes and lives on public and illustrious thoughts. He is the world's eye. He is the world's heart. He is to resist the vulgar prosperity that retro grades ever to barbarism, by preserving and communicating heroic sentiments, noble biographies, melodious verse, and the conclusions of history. Whatsoever oracles the human heart, in all emergencies, in all solemn hours, has uttered as its commentary on the world of actions, these he shall receive and impart. And whatsoever new verdict Reason from her inviolable seat pronounces on the passing men and events of to-day,- this he shall hear and promulgate.

These being his functions, it becomes him to feel all confidence in himself, and to defer never to the popular cry. He and he only knows the world. The world of any moment is the merest appearance. Some great decorum, some fetich of a government, some ephemeral trade, or war, or man, is cried up by half mankind and cried down by the other half, as if all depended on this particular up or down. The odds are that the whole question is not worth the poorest thought which the scholar has lost in listening to the controversy. Let him not quit his belief that a popgun is a popgun, though the ancient and honourable of the earth affirm it to

be the crack of doom. In silence, insteadness, in severe abstraction, let him hold by himself; add observation to observation, patient of neglect, patient of reproach, and bide his own time,happy enough if he can satisfy himself alone that this day he has seen something truly. Success treads on every right step. For the instinct is sure that prompts him to tell his brother what he thinks. He then learns that in going down into the secrets of his own mind he has descended into the secrets of all minds. He learns that he who has mastered any law in his private thoughts is master to that extent of all men whose language he speaks, and of all into whose language his own can be translated. The poet, in utter solitude remembering his spontaneous thoughts and recording them, is found to have recorded that which men in cities vast find true for them also. The orator distrusts at first the fitness of his frank confessions, his want of knowledge of the persons he addresses, until he finds that he is the complement of his hearers;--that they drink his words because he fulfills for them their own nature; the deeper he dives into his privatest, secretest presentiment, to his wonder he finds this is the most acceptable, most public and universally true. The people delight in it; the better part of everyman feels--This is my music; this is myself.

In self-trust all the virtues are comprehended. Free should the scholar be, free and brave. Free even to the definition of freedom, "without any hindrance that does not arise out of his own constitution." Brave; for fear is a thing which a scholar by his very function puts behind him. Fear always springs from ignorance. It is a shame to him if his tranquility, amid dangerous times, arise from the presumption that like children and women his is a protected class; or if he seek a temporary peace by the diversion of his thoughts from politics or vexed questions, hiding his head like an ostrich in the flowering bushes, peeping into microscopes, and turning rhymes, as a boy whistles to keep his courage up. So is the danger a danger still; so is the fear worse. Manlike let him turn and face it. Let him look into its eye and search its nature, inspect its origin, see the whelping of this lion, which lies no great way back; he will then find in himself a perfect comprehension of its nature and extent; he will have made his hands meet on the other side, and can hence forth defy it and pass on superior. The world is his who can see through its pretension. What deafness, what stone-blind custom, what over grown error you behold is there only by sufferance, by your sufferance. See it to be a lie, and you have already dealt it its mortal blow.

Yes, we are the cowed, we the trust less. It is a mischievous notion that we are come late into nature; that the world was finished a long time ago. As the world was plastic and fluid in the hands of God, so it is ever to so much of his attributes as we bring to it. To ignorance and sin it is flint. They adapt themselves to it as they may; but in proportion as a man has anything in him divine, the firmament flows before him and takes his signet and form. Not he is great who can alter matter, but he who can alter my state of mind. They are the kings of the world who give the color of their present thought to all nature and all art, and persuade men, by the cheerful serenity of their carrying the matter, that this thing which they do is the apple which the ages have desired to pluck, now at last ripe, and inviting nations to the harvest. The great man makes the great thing. Wherever Macdonald sits, there is the head of the table. Linnæus makes botany the most alluring of studies, and wins it from the farmer and the herb-woman: Davy, chemistry; and Cuvier, fossils. The day is always his who works in it with serenity and great aims. The unstable estimates of men crowd to him whose mind is filled with a truth, as the heaped waves of the Atlantic follow the moon.

For this self-trust, the reason is deeper than can be fathomed, darker than can be enlightened. I might not carry with me the feeling of my audience in stating my own belief. But I have already shown the ground of my hope, in adverting to the doctrine that man is one.

I believe man has been wronged; he has wronged himself. He has almost lost the light that can lead him back to his prerogatives. Men are become of no account. Men in history, men in the world of to-day, are bugs, are spawn, and are called "the mass" and "the herd." In a century, in a millennium, one or two men; that is to say, one or two approximations to the right state of every man. All the rest behold in the hero or the poet their own green and crude being, ripened; yes, and are content to be less, so *that* may attain to its full stature. What a testimony, full of grandeur, full of pity, is borne to the demands of his own nature, by the poor clansman, the poor partisan, who rejoices in the glory of his chief! The poor and the low find some amends to their immense moral capacity, for their acquiescence in a political and social inferiority. They are content to be brushed like flies from the path of a great person, so that justice shall be done by him to that common nature which it is the dearest desire of all to see enlarged and glorified. They sun themselves in the great man's light, and feel it to be their own element. They cast the dignity of man from their down trodden selves upon the shoulders of a hero, and will perish to add one drop of blood to make that great heart beat, those giant sinews combat and conquer. He lives for us, and we live in him.

Men such as they are very naturally seek money or power; and power because it is as good as money, the "spoils," so called, "of office."And why not? For they aspire to the highest, and this, in their sleep-walking, they dream is highest. Wake them and they shall quit the false good and leap to the true, and leave governments to clerks and desks. This revolution is to be wrought by the gradual domestication of the idea of Culture. The main enterprise of the world for splendor, for extent, is the up building of a man. Here are the materials strewn along the ground. The private life of one man shall be a more illustrious monarchy, more formidable to its enemy, more sweet and serene in its influence to its friend, than any kingdom in history. For a man, rightly viewed, comprehended the particular natures of all men. Each philosopher, each bard, each actor has only done for me, as by a delegate, what one day I can do for myself. The books which once we valued more than the apple of the eye, we have quite exhausted. What is that but saying that we have come up with the point of view which the universal mind took through the eyes of one scribe; we have been that man, and have passed on. First, one, then another, we drain all cisterns, and waxing greater by all these supplies, we crave a better and a more abundant food. The man has never lived that can feed us ever. The human mind cannot be enshrined in a person who shall set a barrier on any one side to this unbounded, unboundable empire. It is one central fire, which, flaming now out of the lips of Etna, lightens the capes of Sicily, and now out of the throat of Vesuvius, illuminates the towers and vineyards of Naples. It is one light which beams out of a thousand stars. It is one soul which animates all men.

But I have dwelt perhaps tediously upon this abstraction of the Scholar. I ought not to delay longer to add what I have to say of nearer reference to the time and to this country.

Historically, there is thought to be a difference in the ideas which predominate over successive epochs, and there are data for marking the genius of the Classic, of the Romantic, and now of the Reflective or Philosophical age. With the views I have intimated of the oneness or the identity of the mind through all individuals, I do not much dwell on these differences. In fact, I believe each individual passes through all three. The boy is a Greek; the youth, romantic; the adult, reflective. I deny not, however, that a revolution in the leading idea may be distinctly enough traced.

Our age is bewailed as the age of Introversion. Must that needs be evil? We, it seems, are critical. We are embarrassed with second thoughts. We cannot enjoy anything for

hankering to know where of the pleasure consists. We are lined with eyes. We see with our feet. The time is infected with Hamlet's unhappiness,"Sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought."

Is it so bad then? Sight is the last thing to be pitied. Would we be blind? Do we fear lest we should out see nature and God, and drink truth dry? I look upon the discontent of the literary class as a mere announcement of the fact that they find themselves not in the state of mind of their fathers, and regret the coming state as untried; as a boy dreads the water before he has learned that he can swim. If there is any period one would desire to be born in, is it not the age of Revolution; when the old and the new stand side by side and admit of being compared; when the energies of all men are searched by fear and by hope; when the historic glories of the old can be compensated by the rich possibilities of the new era? This time, like all times, is a very good one, if we but know what to do with it.

I read with some joy of the auspicious signs of the coming days, as they glimmer already through poetry and art, through philosophy and science, through church and state.

One of these signs is the fact that the same movement which effected the elevation of what was called the lowest class in the state assumed in literature a very marked and as benign an aspect.

Instead of the sublime and beautiful, the near, the low, the common, was explored and poetized. That which had been negligently trodden under foot by those who were harnessing and provisioning themselves for long journeys into far countries, is suddenly found to be richer than all foreign parts. The literature of the poor, the feelings of the child, the philosophy of the street, the meaning of house hold life, are the topics of the time. It is a great stride. It is a sign is it not? Of new vigor when the extremities are made active, when currents of warm life run into the hands and the feet. I ask not for the great, the remote, the romantic; what is doing in Italy or Arabia; what is Greek art, or Provencal minstrelsy; I embrace the common, I explore and sit at the feet of the familiar, the low. Give me insight into today, and you may have the antique and future worlds. What would we really know the meaning of ? The meal in the firkin; the milk in the pan; the ballad in the street; the news of the boat; the glance of the eye; the form and the gait of the body; show me the ultimate reason of these matters; show me the sublime presence of the highest spiritual cause lurking, as always it does lurk, in these suburbs and extremities of nature; let me see every trifle bristling with the polarity that ranges it instantly on an eternal law; and the shop, the plow, and the ledger referred to the like cause by which light undulates and poets sing; and the world lies no longer a dull miscellany and lumber-room, but has form and order: there is no trifle, there is no puzzle, but one design unites and animates the farthest pinnacle and the lowest trench.

This idea has inspired the genius of Goldsmith, Burns, Cowper, and, in a newer time, of Goethe, Wordsworth, and Carlyle. This idea they have differently followed and with various success. In contrast with their writing, the style of Pope, of Johnson, of Gibbon, looks cold and pedantic. This writing is blood-warm. Man is surprised to find that things near are not less beautiful and wondrous than things remote. The near explains the far. The drop is a small ocean. A man is related to all nature. This perception of the worth of the vulgar is fruitful in discoveries. Goethe, in this very thing the most modern of the moderns, has shown us, as none ever did, the genius of the ancients.

There is one man of genius who has done much for this philosophy of life, whose literary value has never yet been rightly estimated: I mean Emanuel Swedenborg. The most imaginative of men, yet writing with the precision of a mathematician, he endeavored to engraft a purely philosophical Ethics on the popular Christianity of his time. Such an attempt of course must have difficulty which no genius could surmount. But he saw and showed the connexion between nature and the affections of the soul. He pierced the emblematic or spiritual character of the visible, audible, tangible world. Especially did his shade-loving muse hover over and interpret the lower parts of nature; he showed the mysterious bond that allies moral evil to the foul material forms, and has given in epical parables a theory of insanity, of beasts, of unclean and fearful things.

Another sign of our times, also marked by an analogous political movement, is the new importance given to the single person. Everything that tends to insulate the individual to surround him with barriers of natural respect, so that each man shall feel the world is his, and man shall treat with man as a sovereign state with a sovereign state tends to true union as well as greatness. "I learned," said the melancholy Pestalozzi, "that no man in God's wide earth is either willing or able to help any other man." Help must come from the bosom alone. The scholar is that man who must take up into himself all the ability of the time, all the contributions of the past, all the hopes of the future. He must be a university of knowledges.

If there be one lesson more than another that should pierce his ear, it is The world is nothing, the man is all; in yourself is the law of all nature, and you know not yet how a globule of sap ascends; in yourself slumbers the whole of Reason; it is for you to know all; it is for you to dare all. Mr. President and Gentlemen, this confidence in the unsearched might of man belongs, by all motives, by all prophecy, by all preparation, to the American Scholar.

We have listened too long to the courtly muses of Europe. The spirit of the American freeman is already suspected to be timid, imitative, and tame. Public and private avarice make the air we breathe thick and fat. The scholar is decent, indolent, and complaisant. See already the tragic consequence. The mind of this country, taught to aim at low objects, eats upon itself.

There is no work for anyone but the decorous and the complaisant. Young men of the fairest promise, who begin life upon our shores, inflated by the mountain winds, shined upon by all the stars of God, find the earth below not in unison with these, but are hindered from action by the disgust which the principles on which business is managed inspire, and turn drudges, or die of disgust, some of them suicides. What is the remedy? They did not yet see, and thousands of young men as hopeful now crowding to the barriers for the career do not yet see, that if the single man plant himself indomitably on his instincts, and there abide, the huge world will come round to him. Patience, with the shades of all the good and great for company; and for solace the perspective of your own infinite life; and for work the study and the communication of principles, the making those instincts prevalent, the conversion of the world. Is it not the chief disgrace in the world, not to be an unit; not to be reckoned one character; not to yield that peculiar fruit which each man was created to bear, but to be reckoned in the gross, in the hundred, or the thousand, of the party, the section, to which we belong; and our opinion predicted geographically, as the north, or the south? Not so, brothers and friends, please God, ours shall not be so. We will walk on our own feet; we will work with our own hands; we will speak our own minds. Then shall man be no longer a name for pity, for doubt, and for sensual indulgence. The dread of man and the love of man shall be a

wall of defense and a wreath of joy around all. A nation of men will for the first time exist, because each believes himself inspired by the Divine Soul which also inspires all men.

9.5 REFERENCE BOOKS

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DR. E. DILEEP

LESSON 10
THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR- A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

OBJECTIVES

- To enable the students to understand the essay
- To make the students appreciate the various concerns of the essay
- To encourage the students' critical analysis and evaluation of the essay

STRUCTURE

10.1 Summary of the Essay "The American Scholar"
10.2 Critical Commentary
10.3 Notes
10.4 Self-assessment Questions
10.5 Reference Books

10.1 SUMMARY OF THE ESSAY "THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR"

Emerson makes his point here referring to a fable according to which, there was once only "One Man," who then was divided into many men so that society could work more efficiently. Ideally, society labors together each person doing his or her task so that it can function properly. However, society has now subdivided to so great an extent that it no longer serves the good of its citizens. And the scholar, being a part of society, has degenerated also.

Formerly a "Man Thinking," the scholar is now "a mere thinker," a problem that Emerson hopes to correct successfully by re-familiarizing his audience with how the true scholar is educated and what the duties of this scholar are.

In these two paragraphs comprising the first section on how a scholar should be educated, Emerson envisions nature as a teacher that instructs individuals who observe the natural world to see eventually how similar their minds and nature are. The first similarity he discusses concerns the notion of circular power a theme familiar to readers of the *Nature* essay found in nature and in the scholar's spirit. Both nature and the scholar's spirit, "whose beginning, whose ending he never can find so entire, so boundless," are eternal.

Order is another similarity as it is in *Nature* between the scholar and nature. At first, the mind views a chaotic and infinite reality of individual facts, but then it begins to classify these facts into categories, to make comparisons and distinctions. A person discovers nature's laws and can understand them because they are similar to the operations of the intellect.

Eventually, we realize that nature and the soul both proceeding from what Emerson terms "one root" are parallel structures that mirror each other (Emerson's term for "parallel" may be misleading; he says that nature is the "opposite" of the soul). So, a greater knowledge of nature results in a greater understanding of the self, and vice versa. The maxims "Know thyself" and "Study nature" are equivalent: They are two ways of saying the same thing.

Emerson devotes much of his discussion to the second influence on the mind, past learning or, as he expresses it, the influence of books. In the first three paragraphs of this section, he emphasizes that books contain the learning of the past; however, he also says that these books pose a great danger. While it is true that books transform mere facts ("short-lived actions") into vital truths ("immortal thoughts"), every book is inevitably a partial truth, biased by society's standards when it was written. Each age must create its own books and find its own truths for itself.

Following this call for each age's creating truth, Emerson dwells on other dangers in books. They are dangerous, he says, because they tempt the scholar away from original thought. Excessive respect for the brilliance of past thinkers can discourage us from exploring new ideas and seeking individualized truths.

The worst example of slavish deference to past thinkers is the bookworm, a pedant who focuses all thought on trivial matters of scholarship and ignores large, universal ideas.

This type of person becomes passive and uncreative, and is the antithesis of Emerson's ideal of the creative imagination: "Man hopes. Genius creates. To create, to create, is the proof of a divine presence." The non-creative bookworm is more spiritually distanced from God and, therefore, from nature than is the thinker of original thoughts.

But the genius, too, can suffer from the undue influence of books. Emerson's example of this kind of sufferer are the English dramatic poets, who, he says, have been "Shakespearized" for two hundred years: Rather than producing new, original texts and thoughts, they mimic Shakespeare's writings. Citing an Arabic proverb that says that one fig tree fertilizes another just like one author can inspire another Emerson suggests that true scholars should resort to books only when their own creative genius dries up or is blocked.

The last three paragraphs of this section refer to the pleasures and benefits of reading, provided it is done correctly. There is a unique pleasure in reading. Because ancient authors thought and felt as people do today, books defeat time, a phenomenon that Emerson argues is evidence of the transcendental oneness of human minds. Qualifying his previous insistence on individual creation, he says that he never underestimates the written word: Great thinkers are nourished by any knowledge, even that in books, although it takes a remarkably independent mind to read critically at all times. This kind of reading mines the essential vein of truth in an author while discarding the trivial or biased.

Emerson concedes that there are certain kinds of reading that are essential to an educated person: History, science, and similar subjects, which must be acquired by laborious reading and study. Foremost, schools must foster creativity rather than rely on rote memorization of texts:"schools can only highly serve us, when they aim not to drill, but to create."

In this third section, Emerson comments on the scholar's need for action, for physical labor. He rejects the notion that the scholar should not engage in practical action. Action, while secondary to thought, is still necessary: "Action is with the scholar subordinate, but it is essential." Furthermore, not to act declining to put principle into practice is cowardly. The transcendental concept of the world as an expression of ourselves makes action the natural duty of a thinking person.

Emerson observes the difference between recent actions and past actions. Over time, he says, a person's past deeds are transformed into thought, but recent acts are too entangled with present feelings to undergo this transformation. He compares "the recent act" to an insect larva, which eventually metamorphoses into a butterfly symbolic of action becoming thought.

Finally, he praises labor as valuable in and of it, for such action is the material creatively used by the scholar. An active person has a richer existence than a scholar who merely undergoes a second-hand existence through the words and thoughts of others. The ideal life has "undulation" a rhythm that balances, or alternates, thought and action, labor and contemplation: "A great soul will be strong to live, as well as strong to think." This cycle creates a person's character that is far superior to the fame or the honor too easily expected by a mere display of higher learning.

After Emerson has discussed how nature, books, and action educate the scholar, he now addresses the scholar's obligations to society. First, he considers these obligations in general, abstract terms; then he relates them to the particular situation of the American scholar.

The scholar's first and most important duty is to develop unflinching self-trust and a mind that will be a repository of wisdom for other people. This is a difficult task, Emerson says, because the scholar must endure poverty, hardship, tedium, solitude, and other privations while following the path of knowledge. Self-sacrifice is often called for, as demonstrated in Emerson's examples of two astronomers who spent many hours in tedious and solitary observation of space in order to make discoveries that benefited mankind. Many readers will wonder just how satisfying the reward really is when Emerson acknowledges that the scholar "is to find consolation in exercising the highest functions of human nature."

The true scholar is dedicated to preserving the wisdom of the past and is obligated to communicating the noblest thoughts and feelings to the public. This last duty means that the scholar "who raises himself from private considerations, and breathes and lives on public illustrious thoughts" must always remain independent in thinking and judgment, regardless of popular opinion, fad, notoriety, or expediency. Because the scholar discovers universal ideas, those held by the universal human mind, he can communicate with people of all classes and ages: "He is the world's eye. He is the world's heart."

Although he appears to lead a reclusive and benign life, the scholar must be brave because he deals in ideas, a dangerous currency. Self-trust is the source of courage and can be traced to the transcendental conviction that the true thinker sees all thought as one; universal truth is present in all people, although not all people are aware of it. Instead of thinking individually, we live vicariously through our heroes; we seek self-worth through others when we should search for it in ourselves. The noblest ambition is to improve human nature by fulfilling our individual natures.

Emerson concludes the essay by observing that different ages in Western civilization, which he terms the Classic, the Romantic, and the Reflective (or the Philosophical) periods, have been characterized by different dominant ideas, and he acknowledges that he has neglected speaking about the importance of differences between ages while speaking perhaps too fervently about the transcendental unity of all human thought.

Emerson now proposes an evolutionary development of civilization, comparable to the development of a person from childhood to adulthood. The present age the first half of the 1800s is an age of criticism, especially self-criticism. Although some people find such criticism to be an inferior philosophy, Emerson believes that it is valid and important.

Initiating a series of questions, he asks whether discontent with the quality of current thought and literature is such a bad thing; he answers that it is not. Dissatisfaction, he says, marks a transitional period of growth and evolution into new knowledge: "If there is any period one would desire to be born in, is it not the age of Revolution; when the old and the new stand side by side, and admit of being compared; This [present] time, like all times, is a very good one, if we but know what to do with it."

Emerson applauds the views of English and German romantic poets like Wordsworth and Goethe, who find inspiration and nobility in the lives and work of common people. Instead of regarding only royal and aristocratic subjects as appropriate for great and philosophical literature, the Romantic writers reveal the poetry and sublimit in the lives of lower-class and working people. Their writing is full of life and vitality, and it exemplifies the transcendental doctrine of the unity of all people. Ironically, we should remember that at the beginning of the essay, Emerson advocated Americans' throwing off the European mantle that cloaks their own culture. Here, he distinguishes between a European tradition that celebrates the lives of common people, and one that celebrates only the monarchical rule of nations: "We have listened too long to the courtly muses of Europe."

Making special reference to the Swedish philosopher and mystic Emanuel Swedenborg, Emerson contends that although Swedenborg has not received his due recognition, he revealed the essential connection between the human mind and the natural world, the fundamental oneness of humans and nature. Emerson finds much inspiration for his own thinking and writing in the doctrines of Swedenborg.

In his long, concluding paragraph, Emerson dwells on the romantic ideal of the individual. This fundamentally American concept, which he develops at much greater length in the essay "Self-Reliance," is America's major contribution to the world of ideas. The scholar must be independent, courageous, and original; in thinking and acting, the scholar must demonstrate that America is not the timid society it is assumed to be. We must refuse to be mere purveyors of the past's wisdom: ".. this confidence in the unsearched might of man, belongs by all motives, by all prophecy, by all preparation, to the American Scholar," who will create a native, truly American culture.

10.2 CRITICAL COMMENTARY

Emerson’s main theme, or purpose, in *The American Scholar* is to call on American scholars to create their own independent American literature and academia separate from old European ties of the past. His speech served as the inspiration for many future American writers, artists, and philosophers to create their own ideas, without regard to Europe and its antiquated traditions. To this end, Emerson uses literary devices to make various points in support of his overall theme.

Emerson makes frequent use of metaphor throughout his oration. One of the most powerful metaphors he used was the description of American society in 1837. According to Emerson, society used to be united and whole but it became divided and

"compartmentalized" as men began to serve narrower and more specific purposes in their work lives. The farmer farms. The salesman sells. The preacher preaches. And so on.

"But unfortunately, this original unit, this fountain of power which is society, has been so distributed to multitudes, has been so minutely subdivided and peddled out, that it is spilled into drops, and cannot be gathered. The state of society is one in which the members have suffered amputation from the trunk, and strut about so many walking monsters, a good finger, a neck, a stomach, an elbow, but never a man."

Emerson paints a powerful image in this passage, with the use of multiple metaphors. First, he compares society to a fountain of power which has become nothing more than spilt drops of water making clear his views on the negative effects of job specialization on society.

Second, he compares the members in society to "walking monsters" individual body parts trying to function on their own, but never succeeding.

By demonstrating the fragmentation of society, Emerson draws attention to American scholars' own place within this fragmented society. Like everyone else, scholars have also become too narrowly specialized. Scholars who were once thinking men (what Emerson likes to call the "Man Thinking") have become "mere thinkers," lacking the ability to act upon their thoughts. In making clear the scholars' current status in society, Emerson hopes to influence them to act upon their duties as scholars. Through these metaphors, Emerson is telling all people who call themselves scholars that in order to become real men real human beings they need to confirm their existence through action. In other words, they need to take an idea from its initial form as a mere abstraction and turn it into something real and concrete. In doing so, these scholars have proven themselves to be complete men, adept at investigating, understanding, studying, and acting.

Another example of an essential comparison in Emerson's speech is the simile which compares the future of poetry to a burning star in the sky. Emerson wishes to eradicate the notion that only antiquated literature from Europe has literary merit. "Who can doubt, that poetry will revive and lead in a new age, as the star in the constellation Harp, which now flames in our zenith, astronomers announce, shall one day be the pole-star for a thousand years?" In this passage, Emerson uses simile to demonstrate his firm believe in the positive future of intellectualism (more specifically, poetry) in American life. Emerson believes that despite the public's frequent talk about the reduced quality of the contemporary poetry, the poetry will be brought back to life when American scholars realize the power of their words to effect change in society. Emerson wanted American authors to feel empowered by his speech, like the power and energy of the star, light years away.

Emerson also uses repetition to emphasize his belief that truly complete men are not tied to any one job or profession. Rather, enlightened men are every profession at the same time. "A complete Man is not a farmer, or a professor, or an engineer, but he is all. Man is priest, and scholar, and statesman, and producer, and soldier". The parallel structure of the last sentence in the quote conveys a sense of importance about the content of the quote. Emerson uses repetition to draw attention to the fact that a man is capable of being every profession at once and it is only when he pursues an understanding in a multiplicity of fields that he can call himself a man.

Emerson’s final message to his listeners was that the literature of the past is not worthy of worship and reverence in today’s world. According to Emerson, every generation must write its own literature, because older literature from previous will never have the same powerful effect on today’s audience that it had on its original audience. “Each age, it is found, must write its own books; or rather, each generation for the next succeeding. The books of an older period will not fit this”. Emerson uses a metaphor to make this point even clearer. Literature only suits the era in which it was written. “As no air-pump can by any means make a perfect vacuum, so neither can any artist entirely exclude the conventional, the local, the perishable from his book or write a book of pure thought, that shall be as efficient, in all respects, to a remote posterity, as to cotemporaries, or rather to the second age”.

Emerson compares artists to air pumps in order to prove his point that all artists will include some “perishable” elements in their books that will cause their books to be less valuable to the next generation, just as all vacuums will leave some air in a container.

According to Emerson, this is a reason to rejoice! He seeks to encourage the current generation of scholars to write their own great literature and forget about the old European classics.

Using literary devices like metaphor, simile, and repetition, Emerson conveys special meaning to the reader on numerous occasions throughout his oration. His skilled use of these devises emphasizes his main points and often creates vivid imagery in the reader’s mind. No doubt, The American Scholar is a powerful piece of literature with an essential message. It calls out to American scholars to change their current lifestyles and create lives of worth and matter. Emerson’s arguments against the idolization of classic literature help to spark a revolution in American literature that had a profound effect on American culture and academia for hundreds of years.

Emerson applauds the views of English and German romantic poets like Wordsworth and Goethe, who find inspiration and nobility in the lives and work of common people. Instead of regarding only royal and aristocratic subjects as appropriate for great and philosophical literature, the Romantic writers reveal the poetry and sublimity in the lives of lower-class and working people. Their writing is full of life and vitality, and it exemplifies the transcendental doctrine of the unity of all people. Ironically, we should remember that at the beginning of the essay, Emerson advocated Americans' throwing off the European mantle that cloaks their own culture. Here, he distinguishes between a European tradition that celebrates the lives of common people, and one that celebrates only the monarchical rule of nations: "We have listened too long to the courtly muses of Europe."

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be mere purveyors of the past's wisdom: ". this confidence in the unsearched might of man, belongs by all motives, by all prophecy, by all preparation, to the American Scholar," who will create a native, truly American culture.

10.3 NOTES

1: Games of strength. The public games of Greece were athletic and intellectual contests of various kinds. There were four of importance: the Olympic, held every four years; the Pythian, held every third Olympic year; and the Nemean and Isthmian, held alternate years between the Olympic periods. These great national festivals exercised a strong influence in Greece. They were a secure bond of union between the numerous independent states and did much to help the nation to repel its foreign invaders. In Greece the accomplished athlete was reverenced almost as a god, and cases have been recorded where altars were erected and sacrifices made in his honor. The extreme care and cultivation of the body induced by this national spirit is one of the most significant features of Greek culture, and one which might wisely be imitated in the modern world.

2: Troubadours. In southern France during the eleventh century, wandering poets went from castle to castle reciting or singing love-songs, composed in the old Provencal dialect, a sort of vulgarized Latin. The life in the great feudal chateaux was so dull that the lords and ladies seized with avidity any amusement which promised to while away an idle hour. The troubadours were made much of and became a strong element in the development of the Southern spirit. So-called Courts of Love were formed where questions of an amorous nature were discussed in all their bearings; learned opinions were expressed on the most trivial matters, and offenses were tried. Some of the Provencal poetry is of the highest artistic significance, though the mass of it is worthless high-flown trash.

3: At the time this oration was delivered (1837), many of the authors who have since given America a place in the world's literature were young men writing their first books. "We were," says James Russell Lowell, "still socially and intellectually moored to English thought, till Emerson cut the cable and gave us a chance at the dangers and glories of blue water."

4: Pole-star. Polaris is now the nearest conspicuous star to the north pole of the celestial equator. Owing to the motion of the pole of the celestial equator around that of the ecliptic, this star will in course of time recede from its proud position, and the brilliant star Vega in the constellation Harp will become the pole-star.

5: It is now a well-recognized fact in the development of animal life that as any part of the body falls into disuse it in time disappears. Good examples of this are the disappearance of powerful fangs from the mouth of man, the loss of power in the wings of barnyard fowls; and, *vice versa*, as new uses for a member arise, its structure changes to meet the new needs.

An example of this is the transformation from the hoof of a horse through the cloven hoofs of the cow to the eventual development of highly expert fingers in the monkey and man.

Emerson assumed the doctrine of evolution to be sufficiently established by the anatomical evidence of gradual development. In his own words: "Man is no up-start in the creation. His limbs are only a more exquisite organization say rather the finish of the

rudimental forms that have been already sweeping the sea and creeping in the mud. The brother of his hand is even now cleaving the arctic sea in the fin of the whale, and innumerable ages since was pawing the marsh in the flipper of the saurian." A view afterwards condensed into his memorable couplet:

"Striving to be man, the worm
Mounts through all the spires of form."

6: Stint. A prescribed or allotted task, a share of labor.

7: Ridden. Here used in the sense of dominated.

8: Monitory pictures. Instructive warning pictures.

9: The Greek stoic philosopher Epictetus is the author of this saying, not "the old oracle." It occurs in the Encheiridion, or manual, a work put together by a pupil of Epictetus. The original saying of Epictetus is as follows: "Every thing has two handles, the one by which it may be borne, the other by which it may not. If your brother acts unjustly, do not lay hold of the act by that handle wherein he acts unjustly, for this is the handle which cannot be borne: but lay hold of the other, that he is your brother, that he was nurtured with you, and you will lay hold of the thing by that handle by which it can be borne."

10: Every day, the sun (shines).

11: Beholden. Emerson here uses this past participle with its original meaning instead of in its present sense of "indebted."

12: Here we have a reminder of Emerson's pantheism. He means the inexplicable continuity "of what I call God, and fools nature," as Browning expressed it.

13: His expanding knowledge will become a creator.

14: Know thyself. Plutarch ascribes this saying to Plato. It is also ascribed to Pythagoras, Chilo, Thales, Cleobulus, Bias, and Socrates; also to Peonies, a mythical Greek poetess of the ante-Homeric period. Juvenal (Satire XI. 27) says that this precept descended from heaven.

"Know thyself" and "Nothing too much" were inscribed upon the Delphic oracle.
"Know then thyself, presume not God to scan;
The proper study of mankind is man."

15: Observe the brisk movement of these sentences. How they catch and hold the attention, giving a new impulse to the reader's interest!

16: Nature abhors a vacuum.

17: Noxious. Harmful.

18: John Locke (1632-1704), an English philosopher whose work was of especial significance in the development of modern philosophy. The work he is best known by is the exhaustive "Essay on the Human Understanding," in which he combated the theory of

Descartes, that every man has certain "innate ideas." The innate-idea theory was first proved by the philosopher Descartes in this way. Descartes began his speculations from a standpoint of absolute doubt. Then he said, "I think, therefore I am," and from this formula he built up a number of ideas innate to the human mind, ideas which we cannot but hold. Locke's "Essay on the Human Understanding" did much to discredit Descartes' innate ideas, which had been very generally accepted in Europe before.

19: Francis Bacon, Baron Verulam, Viscount Saint Alban's(1561-1626), a famous English statesman and philosopher. He occupied high public offices, but in 1621 was convicted of taking bribes in his office of Lord Chancellor. He pleaded guilty and was sentenced to imprisonment and a fine of forty thousand pounds. Both these sentences were remitted, however. In the seventeenth century, judicial corruption was so common that Bacon's offence was not considered so gross as it would now be. As a philosopher Bacon's rank has been much disputed. While some claim that to his improved method of studying nature are chiefly to be attributed the prodigious strides taken by modern science, others deny him all merit in this respect. His best known works are: "The Novum Organum," a philosophical treatise; "The Advancement of Learning," a remarkable argument in favor of scholarship; and the short essays on subjects of common interest, usually printed under the simple title "Bacon's Essays."

20: Third Estate. The thirteenth century was the age when the national assemblies of most European countries were putting on their definite shape. In most of them the system of estates prevailed. These in most countries were three nobles, clergy, and commons, the commons being the third estate. During the French Revolution the Third Estate, or Tiers Etat, asserted its rights and became a powerful factor in French politics, choosing its own leaders and effecting the downfall of its oppressors.

21: Restorers of readings. Men who spend their lives trying to improve and correct the texts of classical authors, by comparing the old editions with each other and picking out the version which seem most in accordance with the authors' original work.

22: Emendators. The same as restorers of readings.

23: Bibliomaniacs. Men with a mania for collecting rare and beautiful books. Not a bad sort of mania, though Emerson never had any sympathy for it.

24: To many readers Emerson's own works richly fulfill this obligation. He himself lived continually in such a lofty mental atmosphere that no one can come within the circle of his influence without being stimulated and elevated.

25: Genius, the possession of a thoroughly active soul, ought not to be the special privilege of favorites of fortune, but the right of every sound man.

26: They stunt my mental growth. A man should not accept another man's conclusions, but merely use them as steps on his upward path.

27: If you do not employ such talent as you have in original labor, in bearing the mental fruit of which you are capable, then you do not vindicate your claim to a share in the divine nature.

28: Disservice. Injury.

29: In original composition of any sort our efforts naturally flow in the channels worn for us by the first dominating streams of early genius. The conventional is the continual foe of all true art.

30: Emerson is continually stimulating us to look at things in new ways. Here, for instance, at once the thought comes: "Is it not perhaps possible that the transcendent genius of Shakespeare has been rather noxious than beneficent in its influence on the mind of the world? Has not the all-pervading Shakespearian influence flooded and drowned out a great deal of original genius?"

31: That is,--when in his clear, seeing moments he can distil some drops of truth from the world about him, let him not waste his time in studying other men's records of what they have seen.

32: While Emerson's verse is frequently unmusical, in his prose we often find passages like this instinct with the fairest poetry.

33: Geoffrey Chaucer (1340-1400). The father of English poetry. Chaucer's chief work is the "Canterbury Tales," a series of stories told by pilgrims traveling in company to Canterbury.

Coleridge, the poet, wrote of Chaucer: "I take unceasing delight in Chaucer; his manly cheerfulness is especially delicious to me in my old age. How exquisitely tender he is, yet how free from the least touch of sickly melancholy or morbid drooping." Chaucer's poetry is above all things fresh. It breathes of the morning of literature. Like Homer he had at his command all the riches of a new language undefiled by usage from which to choose.

"Dan Chaucer, well of English undefyled, On Fame's eternal beadroll worthie to be fyled."

34: Andrew Marvell (1620-1678). An eminent English patriot and satirist. As a writer he is chiefly known by his "Rehearsal Transposed," written in answer to a fanatical defender of absolute power. When a young man he was assistant to the poet Milton, who wasthen Latin secretary to Oliver Cromwell. Marvell's wit and distinguished abilities rendered him formidable to the corrupt administration of Charles II., who attempted without success to buy his friendship. Emerson's literary perspective is a bit unusual when he speaks of Marvell as "one of the great English poets." Marvell hardly ranks with Chaucer, Shakespeare, and Milton.

35: John Dryden (1631-1700). A celebrated English poet. Early in life he wrote almost entirely for the stage and achieved great success. In the latter part of his life, however, according to Macaulay, he "turned his powers in a new direction with success the most splendid and decisive. The first rank in poetry was beyond his reach, but he secured the most honorable place in the second.... With him died the secret of the old poetical diction of England, the art of producing rich effects by familiar words."

36: Plato (429-347 B.C.). One of the most illustrious philosophers of all time. Probably no other philosopher has contributed so much as Plato to the moral and intellectual training of the human race. This pre-eminence is due not solely to his transcendent intellect, but also in no small measure to his poetic power and to that unrivaled grace of style which led the ancients to say that if Jove should speak Greek he would speak like Plato. He was a

remarkable example of that universal culture of body and mind which characterized the last period of ancient Greece. He was proficient in every branch of art and learning and was such a brilliant athlete that the contended in the Isthmian and Pythian games.

37: Gowns. The black gown worn occasionally in America and always in England at the universities; the distinctive academic dress is a cap and gown.

38: Pecuniary foundations. Gifts of money for the support of institutions of learning.

39: Wit is here used in its early sense of intellect, good understanding.

40: Valetudinarian. A person of a weak, sickly constitution.

41: Mincing. Affected.

42: Preamble. A preface or introduction.

43: Dumb abyss. That vast immensity of the universe about us which we can never understand.

44: I comprehend its laws; I lose my fear of it.

45: Silkworms feed on mulberry-leaves. Emerson describes what science calls "unconscious cerebration."

46: Ripe fruit. Emerson's ripe fruit found its way into his diary, where it lay until he needed it in the preparation of some lecture or essay.

47: I. Corinthians xv. 53.

48: Empyrean. The region of pure light and fire; the ninth heaven of ancient astronomy.
"The deep-domed empyrean Rings to the roar of an angel onset."

49: Ferules. According to the methods of education fifty years ago, it was quite customary for the teacher to punish as chool-child with his ferule or ruler.

50: Oliver Wendell Holmes cites this last sentence as the most extreme development of the distinctively Emersonian style. Such things must be read not too literally but rapidly, with alert attention to what the previous train of thought has been.

51: Savoyards. The people of Savoy, south of Lake Geneva in Switzerland.

52: Emerson's style is characterized by the frequent use of pithy epigrams like this.

53: Sir Isaac Newton (1642-1727). A great English philosopher and mathematician. He is famous as having discovered the law of gravitation.

54: Unhand selled. Uncultivated, without natural advantages. A handsel is a gift.

55: Druids. The ancient priesthood of the Britons in Cæsar's time. They had immense power among these primitive peoples. They were the judges as well as the priests and decided all questions. It is believed that they made human sacrifices to their gods in the depths of the primeval forest, but not much is known of their rites.

56: Berserkers. Berserker was a redoubtable hero in Scandinavian mythology, the grandson of the eight-handed Stark odder and the beautiful Alfhilde. He had twelve sons who inherited the wild-battle frenzy, or berserker rage. The sagas, the great Scandinavian epics, are full of stories of heroes who are seized with this fierce longing for battle, murder, and sudden death.

The name means bear-shirt and has been connected with the old *were-wolf* tradition, the myth that certain people were able to change into man-devouring wolves with a wolfish mad desire to rend and kill.

57: Alfred, surnamed the Great (848-901), king of the West Saxons in England. When he ascended the throne his country was in a deplorable condition from the repeated inroads of northern invaders. He eventually drove them out and established a secure government.

England owes much to the efforts of Alfred. He not only fought his country's battles, but also founded schools, translated Latin books into his native tongue, and did much for the intellectual improvement of his people.

58: The hoe and the spade. "In spite of Emerson's habit of introducing the names of agricultural objects into his writing ('Hay, corn, roots, hemp, flax, apples, wool, and wood' is a line from one of his poems), his familiarity therewith is evidently not so great as he would lead one to imagine. 'Take care, papa,' cried his little son, seeing him at work with a spade, 'you will dig your leg.'"

59: John Flam steed (1646-1719). An eminent English astronomer. He appears to have been the first to understand the theory of the equation of time. He passed his life in patient observation and determined the position of 2884 stars.

60: Sir William Herschel (1738-1822). One of the greatest astronomers that any age or nation has produced. Brought up to the profession of music, it was not until he was thirty years old that he turned his attention to astronomy. By rigid economy he obtained a telescope, and in 1781 discovered the planet Uranus. This great discovery gave him great fame and other substantial advantages. He was made private astronomer to the king and received a pension.

His discoveries were so far in advance of his time, they had so little relation with those of his predecessors, that he may almost be said to have created a new science by revealing the immensity of the scale on which the universe is constructed.

61: Nebulous. In astronomy a nebula is a luminous patch in the heavens far beyond the solar system, composed of a mass of stars or condensed gases.

62: Fetich. The word seems to have been applied by Portuguese sailors and traders on the west coast of Africa to objects worshiped by the natives, which were regarded as charms or talismans. Of course the word here means an object of blind admiration and devotion.

63: Cry up, to praise, extol.

64: Ancient and honorable. Isaiah ix. 15.

65: Complement. What is needed to complete or fill up some quantity or thing.

66: Signet. Seal. Emerson is not always felicitous in his choice of metaphors.

67: Macdonald. In Cervantes' "Don Quixote," Sancho Panza, the squire to the "knight of the metaphysical countenance," tells a story of a gentleman who had asked a countryman to dine with him. The farmer was pressed to take his seat at the head of the table, and when he refused out of politeness to his host, the latter became impatient and cried: "Sit there, clod-pate, for let me sit wherever I will, that will still be the upper end, and the place of worship to thee." This saying is commonly attributed to Rob Roy, but Emerson with his usual inaccuracy in such matters places it in the mouth of Macdonald, which Macdonald is uncertain.

68: Carolus Linnæus (1707-1778). A great Swedish botanist. He did much to make botany the orderly science it now is.

69: Sir Humphry Davy (1778-1829). The most famous of English chemists. The most important to mankind of his many discoveries was the safety-lamp to be used in mines where there is danger of explosion from fire-damp.

70: Baron George Cuvier (1769-1832). An illustrious French philosopher, statesman, and writer who made many discoveries in the realm of natural history, geology and philosophy.

71: The moon. The tides are caused by the attraction of the moon and the sun. The attraction of the moon for the water nearest the moon is somewhat greater than the attraction of the earth's center. This causes a slight bulging of the water toward the moon and a consequent high tide.

72: Emerson frequently omits the principal verb of his sentences as here: "In a century there *may exist* one or two men."

73: This obscurely constructed sentence means: "For their acquiescence in a political and social inferiority the poor and low find some compensation in the immense moral capacity thereby gained."

74: "They" refers to the hero or poet mentioned some twenty lines back.

75: Comprehendeth. Here used in the original sense *to include*. The perfect man should be so thoroughly developed at every point that he will possess a share in the nature of every man.

76: By the Classic age is generally meant the age of Greece and Rome; and by the Romantic is meant the middle ages.

77: Introversion. Introspection is the more usual word to express the analytic self-searching so common in these days.

78: Second thoughts. Emerson uses the word here in the same sense as the French *arrière-pensée*, a mental reservation.

79: "And thus the native hue of resolution Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought." “Hamlet”, Act III, Sc. 1.

80: Movement. The French Revolution.

81: Let every common object be credited with the diviner at tributes which will class it among others of the same importance.

82: Oliver Goldsmith (1728-1774). An eminent English poet and writer. He is best known by the comedy "She Stoops to Conquer, "the poem "The Deserted Village," and the "Vicar of Wakefield." "Of all romances in miniature," says Schlegel, the great German critic, "the 'Vicar of Wakefield' is the most exquisite." It is probably the most popular English work of fiction in Germany.

83: Robert Burns (1759-1796). A celebrated Scottish poet. The most striking characteristics of Burns' poetry are simplicity and intensity, in which he is scarcely, if at all, inferior to any of the greatest poets that have ever lived.

84: William Cowper (1731-1800). One of the most popular of English poets. His poem "The Task" was probably more read in his day than any poem of equal length in the language. Cowper also made an excellent translation of Homer.

85: Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832). The most illustrious name in German literature; a great poet, dramatist, novelist, philosopher, and critic. The Germans regard Goethe with the same veneration we accord to Shakespeare. The colossal drama "Faust "is the most splendid product of his genius, though he wrote a large number of other plays and poems.

86: William Wordsworth (1770-1850). By many considered the greatest of modern English poets. His descriptions of the ever-varying moods of nature are the most exquisite in the language. Matthew Arnold in his essay on Emerson says: "As Wordsworth's poetry is, in my judgment, the most important work done in verse in our language during the present century, so Emerson's 'Essays' are, I think, the most important work done in prose."

87: Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881). A famous English essayist, historian, and speculative philosopher. It is scarcely too much to say that no other author of this century has exerted a greater influence not merely upon the literature but upon the mind of the English nation than Carlyle. Emerson was an intimate friend of Carlyle, and during the greater part of his life maintained a correspondence with the great Englishman. An interesting description of their meeting will be found among the "Critical Opinions" at the beginning of the work.

88: Alexander Pope (1688-1744). The author of the "Essay on Criticism," "Rape of the Lock," the "Essay on Man," and other famous poems. Pope possessed little originality or creative imagination, but he had a vivid sense of the beautiful and an exquisite taste. He owed much of his popularity to the easy harmony of his verse and the keenness of his satire.

89: Samuel Johnson (1709-1784). One of the eminent writers of the eighteenth century. He wrote "Lives of the Poets," poems, and probably the most remarkable work of the kind ever produced by a single person, an English dictionary.

90: Edward Gibbon (1737-1794). One of the most distinguished of English historians. His great work is the "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire." Carlyle called Gibbon, "the splendid bridge from the old world to the new."

91: Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772). A great Swedish theologian, naturalist, and mathematician, and the founder of are ligious sect which has since his death become prominent among the philosophical schools of Christianity.

92: Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746-1827). A Swiss teacher and educational reformer of great influence in his time.

10.4 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. Consider Emerson's essay "The American Scholar", as the declaration of intellectual independence.
2. What are the influences on the scholar, according to Emerson?
3. What is Emerson's opinion about the significance of books?
4. How, do you think, is the essay relevant for the contemporary society?
5. What does Emerson say about man as doer, and man as thinker?

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LESSON 11
SELF-RELIANCE

OBJECTIVES

- To familiarize the students with Transcendentalism
- To underscore Emerson's relation with Transcendentalism
- To introduce the thematic concerns of the essay

STRUCTURE

11.1 Transcendentalism in American Literature
11.2 Emerson and Transcendentalism
11.3 Self-Reliance: Introduction
11.4 Self-Reliance: Full Text

11.1 TRANSCENDENTALISM IN AMERICAN LITERATURE

In the early to mid-nineteenth century, a philosophical movement known as Transcendentalism took root in America and evolved into a predominantly literary expression. The adherents to Transcendentalism believed that knowledge could be arrived at not just through the senses, but through intuition and contemplation of the internal spirit. As such, they professed skepticism of all established religions, believing that Divinity resided in the individual, and the mediation of a church was cumbersome to achieving enlightenment.

The genesis of the movement can be accurately traced to 1836 and the first gathering of the Transcendental Club in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The father of the movement, an appellation he probably did not relish, was Ralph Waldo Emerson. Other prominent contributors included Henry David Thoreau, Margaret Fuller, William Henry Channing, and George Ripley. In the grand scheme, the Transcendentalist's moment on the literary stage was decidedly brief. With Fuller's death in 1850, one of the movement's great advocates was silenced. Emerson lacked the vitality and desire to follow in her path.

Though their hold on the public imagination was short-lived, the long-lasting influence that the Transcendentalists had on American literature cannot be denied. Even the philosophy's critics were forced to acknowledge the effects that the Transcendental Movement had on the world, particularly the American experience of the world. For Transcendentalism was a distinctly American expression, with concerns and ideals that perhaps did not fully translate in England or Continental Europe. The philosophy was inexorably bound together with American's expansionist impulse, as well as the troubling question of slavery and women's place in society. A philosophical-literary movement cannot solve such problems, but it can provide the vocabulary to discuss them reasonably.

On the most basic level, Transcendentalism represented a new way of understanding truth and knowledge. The roots of the philosophy go back to Germany, specifically the writings and theories of Immanuel Kant. In contrast to the scientific revolutions which were daily adding to the store of facts, Kant concerned himself with the abstractions of existence those things which cannot be known for sure. He argued that individuals have it in their

power to reason for themselves whether a thing be true or not, and how to fit their reasoning into an overall view of the world. Kant set himself apart from those who believed the senses to be perfect measures of reality. He encouraged a healthy level of doubt and skepticism, but not to the point of nihilistic despair. Kant asserted that humans must embrace the fact that some things cannot be known with certainty, no matter how advanced science and technology become. Together with the spiritualism of Emanuel Swedenborg, a religious mystic gathering a large following in Western Europe, American intellectuals had the ingredients for a philosophical mélange that blended a powerful idealism with Puritanical humility and work ethic.

In addition to their heady philosophical forebears, the Transcendentalists owed a great debt to the English Romantics of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Many distinctly Romantic tropes echo through the pages of Transcendental literature. Obviously, the predilection to turn to the natural world for intimations of truth was a recurrent theme for the Romantics. In Transcendental philosophy, the grind of ordinary life and society are seen as barriers between the self and the spirit. Thus, Nature presents a way to free the mind of its typical distractions. The very word "transcend" connotes moving beyond some stultifying condition of mind or body. Another strongly Romantic concept that the Transcendentalists embraced was the renewed potency and potentiality of the individual. Specifically, the imagination was glorified as one of the defining, almost divine characteristics of consciousness. Through imagination, the human mind could extend itself in ways that had never been considered. Transcendentalists differed somewhat from the Romantics in that they ultimately wanted to effect change, both personally and globally. Romanticism, generally speaking, was too much preoccupied with the ego and aesthetics to work for change in the real world. This newly enlightened, transcendent individual could go into the world and work to make it a better place. The Transcendental Movement was nothing if not idealist.

Not surprisingly, the conflation of German philosophy and English Romanticism transplanted on American soil produced something quite original. The fact that the United States was still such a young nation, still seeking out her borders, had a powerful impact on the literature being produced. Emerson and his contemporaries saw a nation on the brink of discovering its own voice. Until that time, American literature had merely replicated the fashions of Europe. There was precious little originality or innovation. Furthermore, the cultural hub of the new nation was firmly rooted New England. The remainder of the continent was still rather a wild place, where surviving was a more pressing concern than producing high art or pondering the day's big questions. The Transcendentalists saw an opportunity to make a break with England and forge a new literature for a new continent. That literature would be bold and expressive, and a bit wild, like the land itself.

If the Transcendental Movement had a founding father, then he was most certainly Ralph Waldo Emerson. However, he only reluctantly adopted the role of figurehead. He mostly preferred to remain behind the scenes, observing the action but not participating. Emerson was a man of deep faith, though in his personal life he was struck down more than once by tragedy. His first wife Ellen Tucker died of tuberculosis after just two years of marriage. The loss was deeply felt by Emerson. He later remarried, only to lose the first child of that marriage to illness as well. Such tragedies naturally came to inform Emerson's way of seeing the world. Despite such ample experience of the dark side of life, Emerson managed to carry forward with a sort of resolute stoicism, if not optimism. At Harvard Divinity School's 1836 Commencement, he delivered an oration that would become the foundational document of New England Transcendentalism. In "The American Scholar," Emerson beckoned for a

new kind of spirit to take root in humanity, a spirit fueled by individualism, creativity, and a tireless work ethic. That Emerson's idealized scholar was "American" is not by accident. The belief that the young nation was fertile ground for a new and more enlightened kind of citizen was quite popular at the time. The Puritan forebears planted the seed of American exceptionalism, which grew fast and strong in the intellectual atmosphere of nineteenth century New England.

In sharp contrast to the sober calculation of Ralph Waldo Emerson is the life and work of Henry David Thoreau. Not content to simply muse and write about the new way of thinking, Thoreau sought to live the Transcendental life to its fullest potential. He spent two years living in a self-built cabin on Walden Pond on land that belonged to Emerson. His goal was to simplify his existence, get back in tune with the natural world, and have more freedom to write and meditate. Thoreau would later recount his experience in Walden, or Life in the Woods. By far his most famous work, Walden is part autobiography and part rambling essay.

He anticipates stream of consciousness narratives, while laying the foundation for later forms of social activism and naturalistic living. While living on Walden Pond, Thoreau was arrested and spent a night in jail for tax evasion. He argued that his political beliefs forbade him from supporting the government through taxes. The experience of his arrest served as the inspiration for an essay which would later be known as Civil Disobedience. In the essay, Thoreau outlines the justification and even the responsibility of citizens to peacefully resist the government's power whenever that power reached too far.

The individualist politics of Henry David Thoreau sometimes earned him the label of anarchist. He was vehemently anti-slavery his whole life, though he also opposed warfare as a kind of barbarity. Though no one can know for certain, it is probable that Thoreau was chaste his entire life. From many corners, he was decried as cowardly in his retreat from the normal flow of life. For Thoreau, retreating to the isolation of Walden was absolutely necessary for his creative impulses to flourish. He was firm in his beliefs, which he arrived at through steady and careful reasoning. More than any other intellectual, Thoreau put into practice many of the basic assumptions of the Transcendentalist way of thinking. At Walden Pond, he lived almost entirely on what the land would provide for him. He communicated little with the outside world, despite the fact that he was only a few miles from civilization. It is a fair criticism that Thoreau's expression of Transcendentalist philosophy was impractical.

Not everyone can retreat into solitude for years at a time. Society would grind to a halt were the whole world to go on leave. However, the literary output that Walden Pond allowed for is a landmark in American philosophy.

Ralph Waldo Emerson may have been the father of the Transcendental Movement, but Margaret Fuller had arguably as much influence on its development as anyone else.

Emerson was somewhat reluctant to attach his name to progressive political initiatives. He reportedly turned down invitations to speak at abolitionist meetings. It was not that Emerson disagreed with such political and social ends; rather, he simply lacked the necessary egotism to take the lead of those movements. Fuller, on the other hand, was unabashed in her support of abolition, women's rights, and overall social equality. Easily the most important contribution Fuller made for the Transcendental Movement was in her publishing ventures.

With some support from Emerson, Fuller was the main publisher behind The Dial, which ran from 1840 to 1844. A journal devoted to printing the work of prominent Transcendentalists, The Dial holds a place of high esteem in the history of American letters. Despite its short run, Fuller and Emerson's joint venture was influential and formative for an entire generation of up and coming writers. More than any other collection of documents, the publication history of The Dial reveals the heart, soul, and mind of the Transcendental Movement.

The Transcendentalists were not without their critics. Edgar Allen Poe referred to them as "Frogpondians" and repeatedly mocked their writing. Nathaniel Hawthorne, who was marginally associated with the movement, eventually developed distaste for their utopian idealism. He wrote a satirical novel, The Blithedale Romance, based largely on his experience at Brook Farm, a Transcendentalist utopian commune. On the political front, Transcendentalists were frequently the targets of ridicule for their abolitionist beliefs and generally pacifist stance on national affairs. More than anything, they were accused of lacking concrete ideas, instead dwelling in a foggy abstract world of their own creation. This criticism is not without merit. However, the lasting impact of the Transcendentalist philosophy testifies to the influence of the philosophy. Emerson's essays alone represent a broad slice of the intellectual climate of 1830s New England. With his grandiose themes and national idealism, Emerson extended the limit of the essay form. Henry David Thoreau contributed his own wit and clarity to the body of Transcendental literature.

The death of Margaret Fuller took much of the steam from the Transcendental Movement. Coupled with the growing unease over slavery and the economy, the intellectual climate simply no longer supported the high-minded idealism of the Transcendentalists.

Everyone sensed that the nation was headed towards a cataclysm that a quasi-philosophical literary movement was in no position to avert. Emerson's oratorical prowess could not resolve the slavery question, nor could Thoreau's primitivism supply an antidote to the heedless western expansion of the frontier. Writers growing up in the shadow of Transcendentalism largely reacted against its unbridled optimism. Nathaniel Hawthorne in particular saw the world through a very different lens. Where Emerson saw limitless potential and a growing confidence, Hawthorne saw doubt, mistakes, and the darker side of human nature struggling towards the surface. Of course, Hawthorne would not have produced the literature that he did without the influence of the Transcendental Movement. It is often those ideas and philosophies that an author most vehemently discards that come to inform their work most strongly.

Although Transcendentalism in its proper sense did not last much into the 1850s, American literature as a whole saw a revival that may not have been possible without the inspiration of Emerson, Thoreau, and their ilk. The decade or so before the Civil War has in the last century come to be known as the American Renaissance. The literary productions of Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, and Walt Whitman shifted the balance of power in English literature away from the British Isles and towards the United States. The new American literature was bold, fresh, and young. It encompassed the sweep of the prairies and the energies of the explorers. Not everything was glory and progress, however. Social historians look back today and see that other cultures suffered at the hands of American settlers and American industry. For their time, the Transcendentalists were remarkably attuned to the needs and interests of non-white persons, namely Native Americans and African Americans. They spoke in favor of women's rights and abolition, and encouraged

protest against the government when its actions disagreed with the common good. In the realm of art, Transcendentalism was the intellectual fuel that stoked the fires of American literature for years to come.

11.2 EMERSON AND TRANSCENDENTALISM

Waldo Emerson is truly the centre of the American transcendental movement, setting out most of its ideas and values in a little book, Nature, published in 1836, that represented at least ten years of intense study in philosophy, religion, and literature, and in his First Series of essays.

Born in 1803 to a conservative Unitarian minister, from a long line of ministers, and a quietly devout mother, Waldo who dropped the "Ralph" in college was a middle son of whom relatively little was expected. His father died when he was eight, the first of many premature deaths which would shape his life all three brothers, his first wife at 20, and his older son at 5.

Perhaps the most powerful personal influence on him for years was his intellectual, eccentric, and death-obsessed Puritanical aunt, Mary Moody Emerson. Yet Emerson often confessed to an innate optimism, even occasional "silliness."

German philosophy and literature was also championed by Thomas Carlyle, whom Emerson met on his first trip to Europe in 1831. Carlyle's philosophy of action in such works as *Sartor Resartus* resonates with Emerson's idea in “The American Scholar” that action along with nature and “the mind of the Past” is essential to human education. Along with his countrymen Coleridge and Wordsworth, Carlyle embraced a “natural supernaturalism,” the view that nature, including human beings, has the power and authority traditionally attributed to an independent deity.

His undergraduate career at Harvard was not illustrious, and his studies at the Harvard Divinity School were truncated by vision problems, but he was ordained a minister of the Second Church in Boston, shortly before marrying Ellen Tucker in 1829. He resigned in 1832 after her death from tuberculosis, troubled by theological doctrines such as the Lord's Supper, and traveled extensively in Europe, returning to begin a career of lecturing. In 1835 he married Lydia Jackson; they lived in Concord and had four children while he settled into his life of conversations, reading and writing, and lecturing, which furnished a comfortable income.

The Emerson house was a busy one, with friends like Elizabeth Hoar, Margaret Fuller, and Henry Thoreau staying for months to help out and talk. He, Bronson Alcott, and George Ripley decided to begin a magazine, The Dial, with Margaret Fuller editing, in 1840; Emerson would edit the final two years, ending in 1844, and he wrote essays for many issues. His Essays (first series) were published in 1841.

Meanwhile, tragedy struck with the sudden death of his five-year old son Waldo in 1842, soon after the death of John Thoreau from lockjaw, and a darker, tougher strain appears in Emerson's writing, beginning with his memorializing poem, "Threnody." But Emerson pulled himself together to give a series of lectures in New York and in 1844 he had a new volume of essays prepared. He began planning a series of lectures on great men and publication of his poems in 1846, while speaking out against the annexation of Texas and reading deeply in texts of Persian and Indic wisdom.

In 1845 he began extensive lecturing on "the uses of great men," a series that culminated with the 1850 publication of *Representative Men*; by that year he was giving as many as 80 lectures a year. Through a career of 40 years, he gave about 1500 public lectures, traveling as far as California and Canada but generally staying in Massachusetts. His audiences were captivated by his speaking style, even if they didn't always follow the subtleties of his arguments.

In 1847 Emerson travelled to England, noticing in particular the industrialization and the chasm between upper and lower classes. When he returned to Concord nine months later, he had a new approach to English culture, which he expressed in his lectures on the "Natural History of Intellect" and his 1856 book, *English Traits*.

In 1851 he began a series of lecture which would become *The Conduct of Life*, published in 1860. He was vigorous in middle age, traveling frequently, but was increasingly aware of his limits and failing energy. He had become quite famous, a major figure in the American literary landscape, a celebrity which brought both adultation and satire. He had been a profound inspiration for many writers, especially Henry Thoreau and Walt Whitman.

He continued his speeches against slavery, but never with the fire of Theodore Parker. In 1857 he wrote an essay on "Memory" but ironically, in his later years, his own memory would falter, especially after his beloved house burned in 1872. He died quietly of pneumonia in 1882.

11.3 SELF-RELIANCE: INTRODUCTION

Published first in 1841 in *Essays* and then in the 1847 revised edition of *Essays*, "Self-Reliance" took shape over a long period of time. Throughout his life, Emerson kept detailed journals of his thoughts and actions, and he returned to them as a source for many of his essays. Such is the case with "Self-Reliance," which includes materials from journal entries dating as far back as 1832. In addition to his journals, Emerson drew on various lectures he delivered between 1836 and 1839.

Frequent references to historical figures and famous contemporaries are a hallmark of Emerson's essays, and the technique is prominent in "Self-Reliance." Emerson mentions scores of well-known men from a wide range of cultures, eras, and disciplines. Most of the men are named as positive examples of the traits Emerson associates with self-reliance. For example, in a single sentence Emerson names Pythagoras, Socrates, Jesus, Luther, Copernicus, Galileo, and Newton as great men who were unaffected by society's disapproval. A few are given as examples of men who, through no fault of their own, are too much revered men whose recorded thoughts and passed-down to posterity.

The essay, for which Emerson is perhaps the most well known, contains the most thorough statement of Emerson's emphasis on the need for individuals to avoid conformity and false consistency, and instead follow their own instincts and ideas. The essay illustrates Emerson's finesse for synthesizing and translating classical philosophy (e.g., self-rule in Stoicism, the *Bildung* of Goethe, and the revolution of Kant) into accessible language, and for demonstrating its relevance to everyday life.

The first edition of the essay bore three epigraphs: a Latin line, meaning "Do not seek outside yourself"; a six-line stanza from Beaumont and Fletcher's *Honest Man's Fortune*; and

a four-line stanza that Emerson himself wrote. Emerson dropped his stanza from the revised edition of the essay, but modern editors have since restored it. All three epigraphs stress the necessity of relying on oneself for knowledge and guidance.

The essay has three major divisions: the importance of self-reliance (paragraphs 1-17), self-reliance and the individual (paragraphs 18-32), and self-reliance and society (paragraphs 33-50). As a whole, it promotes self-reliance as an ideal, even a virtue, and contrasts it with various modes of dependence or conformity.

Because the essay does not have internally marked divisions delineating its three major sections, readers should number each paragraph in pencil as this discussion will make reference to them.

11.4 SELF-RELIANCE: FULL TEXT

SELF-RELIANCE

"Ne tequæsiveris extra."

"Man is his own star; and the soul that can
Render an honest and a perfect man,
Commands all light, all influence, all fate;
Nothing to him falls early or too late.
Our acts our angels are, or good or ill,
Our fatal shadows that walk by us still."

Cast the bantling on the rocks,
Suckle him with the she-wolf's teat;
Wintered with the hawk and fox,
Power and speed be hands and feet.

I read the other day some verses written by an eminent painter which were original and not conventional. The soul always hears an admonition in such lines, let the subject be what it may. The sentiment they in still is of more value than any thought they may contain.

To believe your own thought, to believe that what is true for you in your private heart is true for all men,--that is genius. Speak your latent conviction, and it shall be the universal sense; for the inmost in due time becomes the outmost,--and our first thought is rendered back to us by the trumpets of the Last Judgment. Familiar as the voice of the mind is to each, the highest merit we ascribe to Moses, Plato, and Milton is, that they set at naught books and traditions, and spoke not what men, but what they thought. A man should learn to detect and watch that gleam of light which flashes across his mind from within, more than the luster of the firmament of bards and sages. Yet he dismisses without notice is thought, because it is his. In every work of genius we recognize our own rejected thoughts: they come back to us with a certain alienated majesty. Great works of art have no more affecting lesson for us than this. They teach us to abide by our spontaneous impression with good-humored inflexibility then most when the whole cry of voices is on the other side. Else, to-morrow a stranger will say with masterly good sense precisely what we have thought and felt all the time, and we shall be forced to take with shame our own opinion from another.

There is a time in every man's education when he arrives at the conviction that envy is ignorance; that imitation is suicide; that he must take himself for better, for worse, as his portion; that though the wide universe is full of good, no kernel of nourishing corn can come to him but through his toil bestowed on that plot of ground which is given to him to till. The power which resides in him is new in nature, and none but he knows what that is which he can do, nor does he know until he has tried. Not for nothing one face, one character, one fact, makes much impression on him, and another none. This sculpture in the memory is not without pre established harmony. The eye was placed where one ray should fall, that it might testify of that particular ray. We but half express ourselves, and are ashamed of that divine idea which each of us represents. It may be safely trusted as proportionate and of good issues, so it be faithfully imparted, but God will not have his work made manifest by cowards. A man is relieved and gay when he has put his heart into his work and done his best; but what he has said or done otherwise shall give him no peace. It is a deliverance which does not deliver. In the attempt his genius deserts him; no muse befriends; no invention, no hope.

Trust thyself: every heart vibrates to that iron string. Accept the place the divine providence has found for you, the society of your contemporaries, the connection of events.

Great men have always done so, and confided themselves child like to the genius of their age, betraying their perception that the absolutely trustworthy was seated at their heart, working through their hands, predominating in all their being. And we are now men, and must accept in the highest mind the same transcendent destiny; and not minors and invalids in a protected corner, not cowards fleeing before a revolution, but guides, redeemers, and benefactors, obeying the Almighty effort, and advancing on Chaos and the Dark.

What pretty oracles nature yields us on this text, in the face and behavior of children, babes, and even brutes! That divided and rebel mind, that distrust of a sentiment because our arithmetic has computed the strength and means opposed to our purpose, these have not.

Their mind being whole, their eye is as yet unconquered, and when we look in their faces we are disconcerted. Infancy conforms to nobody: all conform to it, so that one babe commonly makes four or five out of the adults who prattle and play to it. So God has armed youth and puberty and manhood no less with its own piquancy and charm, and made it enviable and gracious and its claims not to be put by, if it will stand by itself. Do not think the youth has no force, because he cannot speak to you and me. Hark! in the next room his voice is sufficiently clear and emphatic. It seems he knows how to speak to his contemporaries. Bashful or bold, then, he will know how to make us seniors very unnecessary.

The nonchalance of boys who are sure of a dinner, and would disdain as much as a lord to do or say aught to conciliate one, is the healthy attitude of human nature. A boy is in the parlor what the pitis in the playhouse; independent, irresponsible, looking out from his corner on such people and facts as pass by, he tries and sentences them on their merits, in the swift, summary way of boys, as good, bad, interesting, silly, eloquent, troublesome. He cumbers himself never about consequences about interests; he gives an independent, genuine verdict. You must court him: he does not court you. But the man is, as it were, clapped into jail by his consciousness. As soon as he has once acted or spoken with *éclat* he is a committed person, watched by the sympathy or the hatred of hundreds, whose affections must now enter into his account. There is no Lethe for this. Ah, that he could pass again into his neutrality! Who can thus avoid all pledges, and having observed, observe again from the same unaffected, unbiased, unbribable, un affrighted innocence, must always be formidable.

He would utter opinions on all passing affairs, which being seen to be not private, but necessary, would sink like darts into the ear of men, and put them in fear.

These are the voices which we hear in solitude, but they grow faint and inaudible as we enter into the world. Society everywhere is in conspiracy against the manhood of every one of its members. Society is a joint-stock company, in which the members agree, for the better securing of his bread to each shareholder, to surrender the liberty and culture of the eater. The virtue in most request is conformity. Self-reliance is its aversion. It loves not realities and creators, but names and customs.

Whoso would be a man must be a nonconformist. He who would gather immortal palms must not be hindered by the name of goodness, but must explore if it be goodness.

Nothing is at last sacred but the integrity of your own mind. Absolve you to yourself, and you shall have the suffrage of the world. I remember an answer which when quite young I was prompted to make to a valued adviser, who was wont to importune me with the dear old doctrines of the church. On my saying, What have I to do with the sacredness of traditions, if I live wholly from within? my friend suggested: "But these impulses may be from below, not from above." I replied: "They do not seem to me to be such; but if I am the Devil's child, I will live then from the Devil."No law can be sacred to me but that of my nature. Good and bad are but names very readily transferable to that or this; the only right is what is after my constitution, the only wrong what is against it. A man is to carry himself in the presence of all opposition, as if everything were titular and ephemeral but he. I am ashamed to think how easily we capitulate to badges and names, to large societies and dead institutions. Every decent and well-spoken individual affects ands ways me more than is right. I ought to go upright and vital, and peak the rude truth in all ways. If malice and vanity wear the coat of philanthropy, shall that pass? If an angry bigot assumes this bountiful cause of Abolition, and comes to me with his last news from Barba does, why should I not say to him: "Go love thy infant; lovethy wood-chopper: be good-natured and modest: have that grace; and never varnish your hard, uncharitable ambition with this incredible tenderness for black folk a thousand miles off. Thy love afar is spite at home." Rough and graceless would be such greeting, but truth is handsomer than the affectation of love. Your goodness must have some edge to it, else it is none. The doctrine of hatred must be preached as the counteraction of the doctrine of love when that pules and whines. I shun father and mother and wife and brother, when my genius calls me. I would write on the lintels of the door-post, *Whim*. I hope it is somewhat better than whim at last, but we cannot spend the day in explanation. Expect me not to show cause why seek or why I exclude company. Then, again, do not tell me, as a good man did to-day, of my obligation to put all poor men in good situations. Are they *my* poor? I tell thee, thou foolish philanthropist, that I grudge the dollar, the dime, the cent, I give to such men as do not belong to me and to whom I do not belong. There is a class of persons to whom by all spiritual affinity I am bought and sold; for them I will go to prison, if need be; but your miscellaneous popular charities; the education at college of fools; the building of meeting-houses to the vain end to which many now stand; alms to sots; and the thousand-fold Relief Societies; though Icon fess with shame I sometimes succumb and give the dollar, it is a wicked dollar which by and by I shall have the manhood to withhold.

Virtues are, in the popular estimate, rather the exception than the rule. There is the man *and* his virtues. Men do what is called a good action, as some piece of courage or charity, much as they would pay a fine in expiation of daily non-appearance on parade. Their works are done as an apology or extenuation of their living in the world, as invalids and the

insane pay a high board. Their virtues are penances. I do not wish to expiate, but to live. My life is for itself and not for a spectacle. I much prefer that it should be of a lower strain, so it be genuine and equal, than that it should be glittering and unsteady. I wish it to be sound and sweet, and not to need diet and bleeding. I ask primary evidence that you are a man, and refuse this appeal from the man to his actions. I know that for myself it makes no difference whether I do or forbear those actions which are reckoned excellent. I cannot consent to pay for a privilege where I have intrinsic right. Few and mean as my gifts may be, I actually am, and do not need for my own assurance or the assurance of my fellows any secondary testimony.

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.

The objection to conforming to usages that have become dead to you is, that it scatters your force. It loses your time and blurs the impression of your character. If you maintain a dead church, contribute to a dead Bible-society, vote with a great party either for the government or against it, spread your table like base house keepers, under all these screens I have difficulty to detect the precise man you are. And, of course, so much force is withdrawn from your proper life. But do your work, and I shall know you. Do your work, and you shall reinforce yourself. A man must consider what a blind man's- buff is this game of conformity.

If I know your sect, I anticipate your argument. I hear a preacher announce for his text and topic the expediency of one of the institutions of his church. Do In to know beforehand that not possibly can he say a new and spontaneous word? Do I not know that, with all this ostentation of examining the grounds of the institution, he will do no such thing? Do I not know that he is pledged to himself not to look but at one side, the permitted side, not as a man, but as a parish minister? He is a retained attorney, and these airs of the bench are the emptiest affectation. Well, most men have bound their eyes with one or another handkerchief, and attached themselves to some one of these communities of opinion. This conformity makes them not false in a few particulars, authors of a few lies, but false in all particulars.

Their every truth is not quite true. Their two is not the real two, their four not the real four; so that every word they say chagrins us, and we know not where to begin to set them right.

Meantime nature is not slow to equip us in the prison-uniform of the party to which wead here. We come to wear one cut of face and figure, and acquire by degrees the gentlest asinine expression. There is a mortifying experience in particular which does not fail to wreak itself also in the general history; I mean "the foolish face of praise," the forced smile which we put on in company where we do not feel at ease in answer to conversation which does not interest us. The muscles, not spontaneously moved, but moved by a low usurping will fulness, grow tight about the outline of the face with the most disagreeable sensation.

For nonconformity the world whips you with its displeasure. And therefore a man must know how to estimate a sour face. The by standers look askance on him in the public street or in the friend's parlor. If this aversation had its origin in contempt and resistance like

his own, he might well go home with a sad countenance; but the sour faces of the multitude, like their sweet faces, have no deep cause, but are put on and off as the wind blows and a newspaper directs. Yet is the discontent of the multitude more formidable than that of the senate and the college. It is easy enough for a firm man who knows the world to brook the rage of the cultivated classes. Their rage is decorous and prudent, for they are timid as being very vulnerable themselves. But when to their feminine rage the indignation of the people is added, when the ignorant and the poor are aroused, when the unintelligent brute force that lies at the bottom of society is made to growl and mow, it needs the habit of magnanimity and religion to treat it godlike as a trifle of no concernment.

The other terror that scares us from self-trust is our consistency; a reverence for our past act or word, because the eyes of others have no other data for computing our orbit than our past acts, and we are loth to disappoint them.

But why should you keep your head over your shoulder? Why drag about this corpse of your memory, lest you contradict somewhat you have stated in this or that public place? Suppose you should contradict our self; what then? It seems to be a rule of wisdom never to rely on your memory alone, scarcely even in acts of pure memory, but to bring the past for judgment into the thousand-eyed present, and live ever in a new day. In your metaphysics you have denied personality to the Deity; yet when the devout motions of the soul come, yield to them heart and life, though they should clothe God with shape and color. Leave your theory, as Joseph his coat in the hand of the harlot, and flee.

A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds, adored by little statesmen and philosophers and divines. With consistency a great soul has simply nothing to do. He may as well concern himself with the shadow on the wall. Speak what you think now in hard words, and to-morrow speak what to-morrow thinks in hard words again, though it contradict everything you said to-day."Ah, so you shall be sure to be misunderstood." Is it so bad, then, to be misunderstood? Pythagoras was misunderstood, and Socrates, and Jesus, and Luther, and Copernicus, and Galileo, and Newton, and every pure and wise spirit that ever took flesh. To be great is to be misunderstood.

I suppose no man can violate his nature. All the sallies of his will are rounded in by the law of his being, as the inequalities of Andes and Himmaleh are insignificant in the curve of the sphere. Nor does it matter how you gauge and try him. A character is like an acrostic or Alexandrian stanza; read it forward, backward, or across, it still spells the same thing. In this pleasing, contrite wood-life which God allows me, let me record day by day my honest thought without prospect or retrospect, and, I cannot doubt, it will be found symmetrical, though I mean it not, and see it not. My book should smell of pines and resound with the hum of insects. The swallow over my window should interweave that thread or straw he carries in his bill into my web also. We pass for what we are. Character teaches above our wills. Men imagine that they communicate their virtue or vice only by overt actions, and do not see that virtue or vice emit a breath every moment.

There will be an agreement in whatever variety of actions, so they be each honest and natural in their hour. For of one will, the actions will be harmonious, however unlike they seem. These varieties are lost sight of at a little distance, at a little height of thought. One tendency unites them all. The voyage of the best ship is a zigzag line of a hundred tacks. See the line from a sufficient distance, and it straightens itself to the average tendency. Your genuine action will explain itself, and will explain your other genuine actions. Your

conformity explains nothing. Act singly, and what you have already done singly will justify you now. Greatness appeals to the future. If I can be firm enough to-day to do right, and scorn eyes, I must have done so much right before as to defend me now. Be it how it will, do right now. Always scorn appearances, and you always may. The force of character is cumulative. All the foregone days of virtue work their health into this. What makes the majesty of the heroes of the senate and the field, which so fills the imagination? The consciousness of a train of great days and victories behind. They shed an united light on the advancing actor. He is attended as by a visible escort of angels. That is it which throws thunder into Chatham's voice, and dignity into Washington's port, and America into Adams's eye. Honor is venerable to us because it is no ephemeris. It is always ancient virtue. We worship it to-day because it is not of to-day. We love it and pay it homage, because it is not a trap for our love and homage, but is self-dependent, self-derived, and therefore of an old immaculate pedigree, even if shown in a young person.

I hope in these days we have heard the last of conformity and consistency. Let the words be gazetted and ridiculous henceforward. Instead of the gong for dinner, let us hear a whistle from the Spartan fife. Let us never bow and apologize more. A great man is coming to eat at my house. I do not wish to please him; I wish that he should wish to please me. I will stand here for humanity, and though I would make it kind, I would make it true. Let us affront and reprimand the smooth mediocrity and squalid contentment of the times, and hurlin the face of custom, and trade, and office, the fact which is the upshot of all history, that there is a great responsible Thinker and Actor working wherever a man works; that a true man belongs to no other time or place, but is the center of things. Where he is, there is nature. He measures you, and all men, and all events. Ordinarily, everybody in society reminds us of somewhat else, or of some other person. Character, reality, reminds you of nothing else; it takes place of the whole creation. The man must be so much, that he must make all circumstances indifferent. Every true man is a cause, a country, and an age; requires infinite spaces and numbers and time fully to accomplish his design; and posterity seem to follow his steps as a train of clients. A man Cesar is born, and for ages after we have a Roman Empire.

Christ is born, and millions of minds so grow and cleave to his genius, that he is confounded with virtue and the possible of man. An institution is the lengthened shadow of one man; as Monachism, of the hermit Antony; the Reformation, of Luther; Quakerism, of Fox; Methodism, of Wesley; Abolition, of Clarkson. Scipio, Milton called "the height of Rome"; and all history resolves itself very easily into the biography of a fewest out and earnest persons.

Let a man then know his worth, and keep things under his feet. Let him not peep or steal, or skulk up and down with the air of a charity-boy, a bastard, or an interloper, in the world which exists for him. But the man in the street, finding no worth in himself which corresponds to the force which built a tower or sculptured a marble god, feels poor when he looks on these. To him a palace, a statue, a costly book, have an alien and forbidding air, much like a gay equipage, and seem to say like that, "Who are you, Sir?" Yet they all are his, suitors for his notice, petitioners to his faculties that they will come out and take possession.

The picture waits for my verdict: it is not to command me, but I am to settle its claims to praise. That popular fable of the sot who was picked up dead drunk in the street, carried to the duke's house, washed and dressed and laid in the duke's bed, and, on his waking, treated with all obsequious ceremony like the duke, and assured that he had been insane, owes its

popularity to the fact that it symbolizes so well the state of man, who is in the world a sort of sot, but now and then wakes up, exercises his reason, and finds himself a true prince.

Our reading is mendicant and sycophantic. In history, our imagination plays us false. Kingdom and lordship, power and estate, are a gaudier vocabulary than private John and Edward in a small house and common day's work; but the things of life are the same to both; the sum total of both is the same. Why all this deference to Alfred, and Scanderbeg, and Gustavus? Suppose they were virtuous; did they wear out virtue? As great a stake depends on your private act to-day, as followed their public and renowned steps. When private men shall act with original views, the luster will be transferred from the actions of kings to those of gentlemen.

The world has been instructed by its kings, who have so magnetized the eyes of nations. It has been taught by this colossal symbol the mutual reverence that is due from man to man. The joyful loyalty with which men have everywhere suffered the king, the noble, or the great proprietor to walk among them by a law of his own, make his own scale of men and things, and reverse theirs, pay for benefits not with money but with honor, and represent the law in his person, was the hieroglyphic by which they obscurely signified their consciousness of their own right and comeliness, the right of everyman.

The magnetism which all original action exerts is explained when we inquire the reason of self trust. Who is the Trustee? What is the aboriginal Self, on which a universal reliance may be grounded? What is the nature and power of that science-baffling star, without parallax, without calculable elements, which shoots a ray of beauty even into trivial and impure actions, if the least mark of independence appear? The inquiry leads us to that source, at once the essence of genius, of virtue, and of life, which we call Spontaneity or Instinct. We denote this primary wisdom as Intuition, whilst all later teachings are tuitions. In that deep force, the last fact behind which analysis cannot go, all things find their common origin. For the sense of being which in calm hours rises, we know not how, in the soul, is not diverse from things, from space, from light, from time, from man, but one with them, and proceeds obviously from the same source whence their life and being also proceed. We first share the life by which things exist, and afterwards see them as appearances in nature, and forget that we have shared their cause. Here is the fountain of action and of thought. Here are the lungs of that inspiration which give the man wisdom, and which cannot be denied without impiety and atheism. We lie in the lap of immense intelligence, which makes us receivers of its truth and organs of its activity. When we discern justice, when we discern truth, we do not think of ourselves, but allow a passage to its beams. If we ask whence this comes, if we seek to pray into the soul that causes, all philosophy is at fault. Its presence or its absence is all we can affirm. Every man discriminates between the voluntary acts of his mind, and his involuntary perceptions, and knows that to his involuntary perceptions a perfect faith is due. He may err in the expression of them, but he knows that these things are so, like day and night, not to be disputed. My will full actions and acquisitions are but roving; the idlest reverie, the faintest native emotion, command my curiosity and respect. Thoughtless people contradict as readily the statement of perceptions as of opinions, or rather much more readily; for, they do not distinguish between perception and notion. They fancy that I choose to see this or that thing.

But perception is not whimsical, it is fatal. If I see a trait, my children will see it after me, and in course of time, all mankind, although it may chance that no one has seen it before me. For my perception of it is as much a fact as the sun.

The relations of the soul to the divine spirit are so pure, that it is profane to seek to interpose helps. It must be that when God speakethhe should communicate, not one thing, but all things; should fill the world with his voice; should scatter forth light, nature, time, souls, from the centre of the present thought; and new date and new create the whole. Whenever a mind is simple, and receives a divine wisdom, old things pass away, means, teachers, texts, temples, fall; it lives now, and absorbs past and future into the present hour. All things are made sacred by relation to it, one as much as another. All things are dissolved to their centre by their cause, and, in the universal miracle, petty and particular miracles disappear. If, therefore, a man claims to know and speak of God, and carries you backward to the phraseology of some old moldered nation in another country, in another world, believe him not. Is the acorn better than the oak which is its fullness and completion? Is the parent better than the child into whom he has cast his ripened being? Whence, then, this worship of the past? The centuries are conspirators against the sanity and authority of the soul. Time and space are but physiological colors which the eye makes, but the soul is light; where it is, is day; where it was, is night; and history is an impertinence and an injury, if it be anything more than a cheerful apologue or parable of my being and becoming.

Man is timid and apologetic; he is no longer upright; he dares not say "I think," "I am," but quotes some saint or sage. He is ashamed before the blade of grass or the blowing rose. These roses under my window make no reference to former roses or to better ones; they are for what they are; they exist with God to-day. There is no time to them. There is simply the rose; it is perfect in every moment of its eore a leaf-bud has burst, its whole life acts; in the full-blown flower there is no more; in the leafless root there is no less. Its nature is satisfied, and it satisfies nature, in all moments alike. But man postpones, or remembers; he does not live in the present, but with a reverted eye laments the past, or, heedless of the riches that surround him, stands on tiptoe to foresee the future. He cannot be happy and strong until he too lives with nature in the present, above time.

This should be plain enough. Yet see what strong intellects dare not yet hear God himself, unless he speak the phraseology of I know not what David, or Jeremiah, or Paul. We shall not always set so great a price on a few texts, on a few lives. We are like children who repeat by rote the sentences of grandames and tutors, and, as they grow older, of the men and talents and characters they chance to see, painfully recollecting the exact words they spoke; afterwards, when they come into the point of view which those had who uttered those saying, they understand them, and are willing to let the words go; for, at any time, they can use words as good when occasion comes. If we live truly, we shall see truly. It is as easy for the strong man to be strong, as it is for the weak to be weak. When we have new perception, we shall gladly disburden the memory of its hoarded treasures as old rubbish. When a man lives with God, his voice shall be as sweet as the murmur of the brook and the rustle of the corn.

And now at last the highest truth on this subject remains unsaid; probably cannot be said; for all that we say is the far off remembering of the intuition. That thought, by what I can now nearest approach to say it, is this. When good is near you, when you have life in yourself, it is not by any known or accustomed way; you shall not discern the footprints of any other; you shall not see the face man; you shall not hear any name;--the way, the thought, the good, shall be wholly strange and new. It shall exclude example and experience. You take the way from man, not to man. All persons that ever existed are its forgotten ministers. Fear and hope are alike beneath it. There is somewhat low even in hope. In the hour of vision, there is nothing that can be called gratitude, nor properly joy. The soul raised over passion beholds identity and eternal causation, perceives the self-existence of Truth and Right, and

calms itself with knowing that all things go well. Vast spaces of nature, the Atlantic Ocean, the South Sea,long intervals of time, years, centuries, are of no account. This which I think and feel underlay every former state of life and circumstances, as it does underlie my present, and what is called life, and what is called death.

Life only avails, not the having lived. Power ceases in the instant of repose; it resides in the moment of transition from a past to a new state, in the shooting of the gulf, in the darting to an aim. This one fact the world hates, that the soul *becomes*; for that forever degrades the past, turns all riches to poverty, all reputation to shame, confounds the saint with the rogue, shoves Jesus and Judas equally aside. Why, then, do we prate of self-reliance? Inasmuch as the soul is present, there will be power not confident but agent. To talk of reliance is a poor external way of speaking. Speak rather of that which relies, because it works and is. Who has more obedience than I masters me, though he should not raise his finger. Round him I must revolve by the gravitation of spirits. We fancy it rhetoric, when we speak of eminent virtue. We do not yet see that virtue is Height, and that a man or a company of men, plastic and permeable to principles, by the law of nature must overpower and ride all cities, nations, kings, rich men, poets, who are not.

This is the ultimate fact which we so quickly reach on this, as on every topic, the resolution of all into the ever-blessed ONE. Self-existence is the attribute of the Supreme Cause, and it constitutes the measure of good by the degree in which it enters in to all lower forms. All things real are so by so much virtue as they contain. Commerce, husbandry, hunting, whaling, war eloquence, personal weight, are somewhat, and engage my respect as examples of its presence and impure action. I see the same law working in nature for conservation and growth. Power is in nature the essential measure of right. Nature suffers nothing to remain in her kingdoms which cannot help itself. The genesis and maturation of a planet, its poise and orbit, the bended tree recovering itself from the strong wind, the vital resources of every animal and vegetable, are demonstrations of the self-sufficing, and therefore self-relying soul.

Thus all concentrates: let us not rove; let us sit at home with the cause. Let us stun and astonish the intruding rabble of men and books and institutions, by a simple declaration of the divine fact. Bid the invaders take the shoes from off their feet, for God is here within. Let our simplicity judge them, and our docility to our own law demonstrate the poverty of nature and fortune beside our native riches.

But now we are a mob. Man does not stand in awe of man, nor is his genius admonished to stay at home to put itself in communication with the internal ocean, but it goes abroad to beg a cup of water of the urns of other men. We must go alone. I like the silent church before the service begins, better than any preaching. How far off, how cool, how chaste the persons look, begirt each one with a precinct or sanctuary! So let us always sit.

Why should we assume the faults of our friend, or wife, or father, or child, because they sit around our hearth, or are said to have the same blood? All men have my blood, and I have all men's. Not for that will I adopt their petulance or folly, even to the extent of being ashamed of it. But your isolation must not be mechanical, but spiritual, that is, must be elevation. At times the whole world seems to be in conspiracy to importune you with emphatic trifles.

Friend, client, child, sickness, fear, want, charity, all knock at once at thy closet door, and say, "Come out unto us." But keep thy state; come not into their confusion. The power men possess to annoy men, I give them by a weak curiosity. No man can come near me but through my act. "What we love that we have, but by desire we bereave ourselves of the love."

If we cannot at once rise to the sanctities of obedience and faith, let us at least resist our temptations; let us enter into the state of war, and wake Thor and Wooden, courage and constancy, in our Saxon breasts. This is to be done in our smooth times by speaking the truth.

Check this lying hospitality and lying affection. Live no longer to the expectation of these deceived and deceiving people with whom we converse. Say to them, O father, O mother, O wife, O brother, O friend, I have lived with you after appearances hitherto. Hence for ward I am the truth's. Be it known unto you that henceforward I obey no lawless than the eternal law. I will have no covenants but proximities. I shall endeavour to nourish my parents, to support my family, to be the chaste husband of one wife, but these relations I must fill after a new and unprecedented way. I appeal from your customs. I must be myself. I cannot break myself any longer for you, or you. If you can love me for what I am, we shall be the happier.

If you cannot, I will still seek to deserve that you should. I will not hide my tastes or aversions. I will so trust that what is deep is holy, that I will do strongly before the sun and moon what everinly rejoices me, and the heart appoints. If you are noble, I will love you; if you are not, I will not hurt you and myself by hypocritical attentions. If you are true, but not in the same truth with me, cleave to your companions; I will seek my own. I do this not selfishly, but humbly and truly. It is alike your interest, and mine, and all men's however long we have dwelt in lies, to live in truth. Does this sound harsh to-day? You will soon love what is dictated by your nature as well as mine, and, if we follow the truth, it will bring us out safe at last. But so may you give these friends pain. Yes, but I cannot sell my liberty and my power, to save their sensibility. Besides, all persons have their moments of reason, when they look out into the region of absolute truth; then will they justify me, and do the same thing.

The populace think that your rejection of popular standards is a rejection of all standard, and mere antinomianism; and the bold sensualist will use the name of philosophy to gild his crimes. But the law of consciousness abides. There are two confessionals, in one or the other of which we must be shriven. You may full fill your round of duties by clearing yourself in the *direct*, or in the *reflex* way. Consider whether you have satisfied your relations to father, mother, cousin, neighbor, town, cat, and dog; whether any of these can upbraid you.

But I may also neglect this reflex standard, and absolve me to myself. I have my own stern claims and perfect circle. It denies the name of duty to many offices that are called duties. But if I can discharge its debts, it enables me to dispense with the popular code. If any one imagines that this law is lax, let him keep its commandment one day.

And truly it demands something godlike in him who has cast off the common motives of humanity, and has ventured to trust himself for a task master. High is his heart, faithful his will, clear his sight, that he may in good earnest be doctrine, society, law, to himself, that a simple purpose may be to him as strong as iron necessity is to others!

If any man consider the present aspects of what is called by distinction *society*, he will see the need of these ethics. The sinew and heart of man seem to be drawn out, and we are become timorous, desponding whimperers. We are afraid of truth, afraid of fortune, afraid of

death, and afraid of each other. Our age yields no great and perfect persons. We want men and women who shall renovate life and our social state, but we see that most natures are insolvent, cannot satisfy their own wants, have an ambition out of all proportion to their practical force,[80] and do lean and beg day and night continually. Our housekeeping is mendicant, our arts, our occupations, our marriages, our religion, we have not chosen, but society has chosen for us. We are parlor soldiers. We shun the rugged battle off ate, where strength is born.

If our young men miscarry in their first enterprises, they lose all heart. If the young merchant fails, men say he is *ruined*. If the finest genius studies at one of our colleges, and is not installed in an office within one year afterwards in the cities or suburbs of Boston or New York, it seems to his friends and to himself that he is right in being disheartened, and in complaining the rest of his life. A sturdy lad from New Hampshire or Vermont, who in turn tries all the professions, who *teams it, farms it*, *peddles*, keeps a school, preaches, edits a newspaper, goes to Congress, buys a township, and so forth, in successive years, and always, like a cat, falls on his feet, is worth a hundred of these city dolls. He walks abreast with his days, and feels no shame in not "studying a profession," for he does not postpone his life, but lives already. He has not one chance, but a hundred chances. Let a Stoic open the resources of man, and tell men they are not leaning willows, but can and must detach themselves; that with the exercise of self-trust, new powers shall appear; that a man is the word made flesh, born to shed healing to the nations, that he should be ashamed of our compassion, and that the moment he acts from himself, tossing the laws, the books, idolatries and customs out of the window, we pity him no more, but thank and revere him,--and that teacher shall restore the life of man to splendor, and make his name dear to all history.

It is easy to see that a greater self-reliance must work a revolution in all the offices and relations of men; in their religion; in their education; in their pursuits; their modes of living; their association; in their property; in their speculative views.

1. In what prayers do men allow themselves! That which they call holy office is not so much as brave and manly. Prayer looks abroad and asks for some foreign addition to come through some foreign virtue, and loses itself in endless mazes of natural and supernatural, and mediatorial and miraculous. Prayer that craves a particular commodity, anything less than all good, is vicious. Prayer is the contemplation of the facts of life from the highest point of view. It is the soliloquy of a beholding and jubilant soul. It is the spirit of God pronouncing his works good. But prayer as a means to effect a private end is meanness and theft. It supposes dualism and not unity in nature and consciousness. As soon as the man is at one with God, he will not be. He will then see prayer in all action. The prayer of the farmer kneeling in his field to weed it, the prayer of the rower kneeling with the stroke of his oar, are true prayers heard throughout nature, though for cheap ends. Caratach, in Fletcher's Bonduca, when admonished to inquire the mind of the god Audate, replies,

> "His hidden meaning lies in our endeavors;
> Our valors are our best gods."

Another sort of false prayers are our regrets. Discontent is the want of self-reliance; it is infirmity of will. Regret calamities, if you can thereby help the sufferer; if not, attend your own work, and already the evil begins to be repaired. Our sympathy is just as base. We come to them who weep foolishly, and sit down and cry for company, instead of imparting to them truth and health in rough electric shocks, putting them once more in communication with

their own reason. The secret of fortune is joy in our hands. Welcome evermore to god sand men is the self-helping man. For him all doors are flung wide: him all tongues greet, all honors crown, all eyes follow with desire. Our love goes out to him and embraces him, because he did not need it. Wesolicitously and apologetically caress and celebrate him, because he held on his way and scorned our disapprobation. The gods love him because men hated him. "To the persevering mortal," said Zoroaster, "the blessed Immortals are swift."

As men's prayers are a disease of the will, so are their creeds a disease of the intellect.

They say with those foolish Israelites, "Let not God speak to us, lest we die. Speak thou, speak any man with us, and we will obey." Everywhere I am hindered of meeting God in my brother, because he has shut his own temple doors, and recites fables merely of his brother's, or his brother's brother's God. Every new mind is a new classification. If it prove a mind of uncommon activity and power, a Locke, a Lavoisier, a Hutton, a Betham, a Fourier, it imposes its classification on other men, and lo! a new system. In proportion to the depth of the thought, and so to the number of the objects it touches and brings within reach of the pupil, is his complacency. But chiefly is this apparent in creeds and churches, which are also classifications of some powerful mind acting on the elemental thought of duty, and man's relation to the Highest. Such is Calvinism, Quakerism, Swedenborgism. The pupil takes the same delight in subordinating everything to the new terminology, as a girl who has just learned botany in seeing a new earth and new seasons thereby. It will happen for a time, that the pupil will find his intellectual power has grown by the study of his master's mind. But in all unbalanced minds, the classification is idolized, passes for the end, and not for a speedily exhaustible means, so that the walls of the system blend to their eye in the remote horizon with the walls of the universe; the luminaries of heaven seem to them hung on the arch their master built. They cannot imagine how you aliens have any right to see,--how you can see; "It must be somehow that you stole the light from us." They do not yet perceive that light, unsystematic, indomitable, will break into any cabin, even into theirs. Let them chirp awhile and call it their own. If they are honest and do well, presently their neat new pinfold will be too strait and low, will crack, will lean, will rot and vanish, and the immortal light, all young and joyful, million-orbed, million- colored, will beam over the universe as on the first morning.

2. It is for want of self-culture that the superstition of Traveling, whose idols are Italy, England, Egypt, retains its fascination for all educated Americans. They who made England, Italy, or Greece venerable in the imagination did so by sticking fast where they were, like an axis of the earth. In manly hours, we feel that duty is our place. The soul is no traveler; the wise man stays at home, and when his necessities, his duties, on any occasion call him from his house, or into foreign lands, he is at home still; and shall make men sensible by the expression of his countenance, that he goes the missionary of wisdom and virtue, and visits cities and men like a sovereign, and not like an interloper or a valet.

I have no churlish objection to the circumnavigation of the globe, for the purposes of art, of study, and benevolence, so that the man is first domesticated, or does not go abroad with the hope of finding somewhat greater than he knows. He who travels to be amused, or to get some what which he does not carry, travels away from himself, and grows old even in youth among old things. In Thebes, in Palmyra, his will and mind have become old and dilapidated as they. He carries ruins to ruins.

Travelling is a fool's paradise. Our first journeys discover to us the indifference of places. At home I dream that at Naples, at Rome, I can be intoxicated with beauty, and lose my sadness. I pack my trunk, embrace my friends, embark on the sea, and at last wake up in Naples, and there beside me is the stern fact, the sad self, unrelenting, identical, that I fled from. I seek the Vatican, and the palaces. I affect to be intoxicated with sights and suggestions, but I am not intoxicated. My giant goes with me wherever I go.

3. But the rage of travelling is a symptom of a deeper unsoundness affecting the whole intellectual action. The intellect is vagabond, and our system of education fosters restlessness.

Our minds travel when our bodies are forced to stay at home. We imitate; and what is imitation but the travelling of the mind? Our houses are built with foreign taste; our shelves are garnished with foreign ornaments; our opinions, our tastes, our faculties, lean, and follow the Past and the Distant. The soul created the arts wherever they have flourished. It was in his own mind that the artist sought his model. It was an application of his own thought to the thing to be done and the conditions to be observed. And why need we copy the Doric or the Gothic model? Beauty, convenience, grandeur of thought, and quaint expression are as near to us as to any, and if the American artist will study with hope and love the precise thing to be done by him considering the climate, the soil, the length of the day, the wants of the people, the habit and form of the government, he will create a house in which all these will find themselves fitted, and taste and sentiment will be satisfied also.

Insist on yourself; never imitate. Your own gift you can present every moment with the cumulative force of a whole life's cultivation; but of the adopted talent of another, you have only an extemporaneous, half possession. That which each can do best, none but his Maker can teach him. No man yet knows what it is, nor can, till that person has exhibited it. Where is the master who could have taught Shakespeare? Where is the master who could have instructed Franklin, or Washington, or Bacon, or Newton? Every great man is a unique.

The Scipionism of Scipio is precisely that part he could not borrow. Shakespeare will never be made by the study of Shakespeare. Do that which is assigned to you, and you cannot hope too much or dare too much. There is at this moment for you an utterance brave and grand as that of the colossal chisel of Phidias, or trowel of the Egyptians, or the pen of Moses, or Dante, but different from all these. Not possibly will the soul all rich, all eloquent, with thousand-cloven tongue, deign to repeat itself; but if you can hear what these patriarchs say, surely you can reply to them in the same pitch of voice; for the ear and the tongue are two organs of one nature. Abide in the simple and noble regions of thy life, obey thy heart, and thoushalt reproduce the Fore world again.

4. As our Religion, our Education, our Art look abroad, so does our spirit of society. All men plume themselves on the improvement of society, and no man improves.

Society never advances. It recedes as fast on one side as it gains on the other. It undergoes continual changes; it is barbarous, it is civilized, it is Christianized, it is rich, it is scientific; but this change is not amelioration. For everything that is given, something is taken. Society acquires new arts, and loses old instincts. What a contrast between the well-clad, reading, writing, thinking American, with a watch, a pencil, and a bill of exchange in his pocket, and the naked New Zealander, whose property is a club, a spear, a mat, and an undivided twentieth of a shed to sleep under! But compare the health of the two men, and you shall see that the white man has lost his aboriginal strength. If the traveler tell us truly, strike

the savage with a broad ax, and in a day or two the flesh shall unite and heal as if you struck the blow into soft pitch, and the same blow shall send the white to his grave.

The civilized man has built a coach, but has lost the use of his feet. He is supported on crutches, but lacks so much support of muscle. He has a fine Geneva watch, but he fails of the skill to tell the hour by the sun. A Greenwich nautical almanac he has, and so being sure of the information when he wants it, the man in the street does not know a star in the sky. The solstice he does not observe; the equinox he knows as little; and the whole bright calendar of the year is without a dial in his mind. His notebooks impair his memory; his libraries overload his wit; the insurance office increases the number of accidents; and it may be a question whether machinery does not encumber; whether we have not lost by refinement some energy, by a Christianity entrenched in establishments and forms, somevigor of wild virtue. For every Stoic was a Stoic; but in Christendom where is the Christian?

There is no more deviation in the moral standard than in the standard of height or bulk. No greater men are now than ever were. A singular equality may be observed between great men of the first and of the last ages; nor can all the science, art, religion, and philosophy of the nineteenth century avail to educate greater men than Plutarch's heroes, three or four and twenty centuries ago. Not in time is the race progressive. Phocion, Socrates, Anaxagoras, Diogenes, are great men, but they leave no class. He who is really of their class will not be called by their name, but will be his own man, and, in his turn, the founder of a sect. The arts and inventions of each period are only its costume, and do not invigorate men. The harm of the improved machinery may compensate its good. Hudson and Bering accomplished so much in their fishing boats, as to astonish Parry and Franklin, whose equipment exhausted the resources of science and art. Galileo, with an opera-glass, discovered a more splendid series of celestial phenomena than any one since. Columbus found the New World in an undecked boat. It is curious to see the periodical disuse and perishing of means and machinery, which were introduced with loud laudation a few years or centuries before. The great genius returns to essential man. We reckoned the improvements of the art of war among the triumphs of science, and yet Napoleon conquered Europe by the bivouac, which consisted of falling back on naked valor, and disencumbering it of all aids. The Emperor held it impossible to make a perfect army, says LasCasas, "without abolishing our arms, magazines, commissaries, and carriages, until, in imitation of the Roman custom, the soldier should receive his supply of corn, grind it in his hand mill, and bake his bread himself."

Society is a wave. The wave moves onward, but the water of which it is composed does not. The same particle does not rise from the valley to the ridge. Its unity is only phenomenal. The persons who make up a nation to-day, next year die, and their experience with them.

And so the reliance on Property, including the reliance on governments which protect it, is the want of self-reliance. Men have looked away from themselves and at things so long, that they have come to esteem the religious, learned, and civil institutions as guards of property, and they deprecate assaults on these, because they feel them to be assaults on property. They measure their esteem of each other by what each has, and not by what each is.

But a cultivated man becomes ashamed of his property, out of new respect for his nature.

Especially he hates what he has, if he see that it is accidental, came to him by inheritance, or gift, or crime; then he feels that it is not having; it does not belong to him, has no root in him, and merely lies there, because no revolution or no robber takes it away. But that which a man is, does always by necessity acquire, and what the man acquires is living property, which does not wait the beck of rulers, or mobs, or revolutions, or fire, or storm, or bankruptcies, but perpetually renews itself wherever the man breathes. "Thy lot or portion of life, "said the Caliph Ali, "is seeking after thee; therefore be at rest from seeking after it." Our dependence on these foreign goods leads us to our slavish respect for numbers. The political parties meet in numerous conventions; the greater the concourse, and with each new uproar of announcement, The delegation from Essex! The Democrats from New Hampshire! The Whigs of Maine! the young patriot feels himself stronger than before by a new thousand of eyes and arms. In like manner the reformers summon conventions, and vote and resolve in multitude. Not so, O friends! will the god deign to enter and inhabit you, but by a method precisely the reverse. It is only as a man puts off all foreign support, and stands alone, that I see him to be strong and to prevail. He is weaker by every recruit to his banner. Is not a man better than a town? Ask nothing of men, and in the endless mutation, thou only firm column must presently appear the upholder of all that surrounds thee. He who knows that power is inborn, that he is weak because he has looked for good out of him and elsewhere, and so perceiving, throws himself unhesitatingly on his thought, instantly rights himself, stands in the erect position, commands his limbs, works miracles; just as a man who stands on his feet is stronger than a man who stands on his head.

So use all that is called Fortune. Most men gamble with her, and gain all, and lose all, as her wheel rolls. But do thou leave as unlawful these winnings, and deal with Cause and Effect, the chancelors of God. In the Will work and acquire, and thou hast chained the wheel of Chance, and shalt sit hereafter out of fear from her rotations. A political victory, a rise of rents, the recovery of your sick, or the return of your absent friend, or some other favourable event, raises your spirits, and you think good days are preparing for you. Do not believe it.

Nothing can bring you peace but yourself. Nothing can bring you peace but the triumph of principles.

LESSON 12
SELF-RELIANCE- A CRITICAL APPRECIATION

Objectives

- To make the students appreciate the significance of the essay
- To encourage the students' critical analysis and evaluation of the essay

STRUCTURE

12.1 "Self-Reliance": Summary and Commentary
12.2 Notes
12.3 Self-assessment Questions
12.4 Reference Books

12.1 "SELF-RELIANCE": SUMMARY AND COMMENTARY

Emerson begins his major work on individualism by asserting the importance of thinking for oneself rather than meekly accepting other people's ideas. As in almost all of his work, he promotes individual experience over the knowledge gained from books: "To believe that what is true in your private heart is true for all men that is genius. "The person who scorns personal intuition and, instead, chooses to rely on others' opinions lacks the creative power necessary for robust, bold individualism. This absence of conviction results not in different ideas, as this person expects, but in the acceptance of the same ideas now second hand thoughts that this person initially intuited.

The lesson Emerson would have us learn? "Trust thyself," a motto that ties together this first section of the essay. To rely on others' judgments is cowardly, without inspiration or hope. A person with self-esteem, on the other hand, exhibits originality and is childlike unspoiled by selfish needs yet mature. It is to this adventure of self-trust that Emerson invites us: We are to be guides and adventurers, destined to participate in an act of creation modeled on the classical myth of bringing order out of chaos.

Although we might question his characterizing the self-esteemed individual as childlike, Emerson maintains that children provide models of self-reliant behavior because they are too young to be cynical, hesitant, or hypocritical. He draws an analogy between boys and the idealized individual: Both are masters of self-reliance because they apply their own standards to all they see, and because their loyalties cannot be coerced. This rebellious individualism contrasts with the attitude of cautious adults, who, because they are overly concerned with reputation, approval, and the opinion of others, are always hesitant or unsure; consequently, adults have great difficulty acting spontaneously or genuinely.

Emerson now focuses his attention on the importance of an individual's resisting pressure to conform to external norms, including those of society, which conspires to defeat self-reliance in its members. The process of so-called "maturing" becomes a process of conforming that Emerson challenges. In the paragraph that begins with the characteristic aphorism "Whoso would be a man, must be a nonconformist," he asserts a radical, even extreme, position on the matter. Responding to the objection that devotedly following one's inner voice is wrong because the intuition may be evil, he writes, "No law can be sacred to

me but that of my nature. The only right is what is after my constitution, the only wrong what is against it." In other words, it is better to be true to an evil nature than to behave "correctly" because of society's demands or conventions.

The non-conformist in Emerson rejects many of society's moral sentiments. For example, he claims that an abolitionist should worry more about his or her own family and community at home than about "black folk a thousand miles off," and he chides people who give money to the poor. "Are they *my* poor?" he asks. He refuses to support morality through donations to organizations rather than directly to individuals. The concrete act of charity, in other words, is real and superior to abstract or theoretical morality.

In a subdued, even gentle voice, Emerson states that it is better to live truly and obscurely than to have one's goodness extolled in public. It makes no difference to him whether his actions are praised or ignored. The important thing is to act independently: "What I must do is all that concerns me, not what the people think the great man is he who in the midst of the crowd keeps with perfect sweetness the independence of solitude." Note that Emerson contrasts the individual to society "the crowd" but does not advocate the individual's physically withdrawing from other people. There is a difference between enjoying solitude and being a social hermit.

Outlining his reasons for objecting to conformity, Emerson asserts that acquiescing to public opinion wastes a person's life. Those around you never get to know your real personality. Even worse, the time spent maintaining allegiances to "communities of opinion" saps the energy needed in the vital act of creation the most important activity in our lives and distracts us from making any unique contribution to society. Conformity corrupts with a falseness that pervades our lives and our every action: "every truth is not quite true." Finally, followers of public opinion are recognized as hypocrites even by the awkwardness and falsity of their facial expressions.

Shifting the discussion to how the ideal individual is treated, Emerson notes two enemies of the independent thinker: society's disapproval or scorn, and the individual's own sense of consistency. Consistency becomes a major theme in the discussion as he shows how it restrains independence and growth.

Although the scorn of "the cultivated classes" is unpleasant, it is, according to Emerson, relatively easy to ignore because it tends to be polite. However, the outrage of the masses is another matter; only the unusually independent person can stand firmly against the rancor of the whole of society.

The urge to remain consistent with past actions and beliefs inhibits the full expression of an individual's nature. The metaphor of a corpse as the receptacle of memory is a shocking but apt image of the individual who is afraid of contradiction. In this vivid image of the "corpse of memory," Emerson asks why people hold onto old beliefs or positions merely because they have taken these positions in the past. Being obsessed with whether or not you remain constant in your beliefs needlessly drains energy as does conformity from the act of living. After all, becoming mature involves the evolution of ideas, which is the wellspring of creativity. It is most important to review constantly and to revaluate past decisions and opinions, and, if necessary, to escape from old ideas by admitting that they are faulty, just as the biblical Joseph fled from a seducer by leaving his coat in her hands, an image particularly potent in characterizing the pressure to conform as both seductive and degrading.

Noteworthy in this discussion on consistency is the famous phrase "A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds." The term "hobgoblin," which symbolizes fear of the unknown, furthers the effect produced by the "corpse" of memory and reinforces Emerson's condemnation of a society that demands conformity. Citing cultures that traditionally frown on inconsistency, Emerson points out that history's greatest thinkers were branded as outcasts for their original ideas and scorned as such by their peers. Notable among these figures is Jesus Christ.

What appears to be inconsistency is often a misunderstanding based on distortion or perspective. Emerson develops this idea by comparing the progress of a person's thoughts to a ship sailing against the wind: In order to make headway, the ship must tack, or move in a zigzag line that eventually leads to an identifiable end. In the same way, an individual's apparently contradictory acts or decisions show consistency when that person's life is examined in its entirety and not in haphazard segments. We must "scorn appearances" and do what is right or necessary, regardless of others' opinions or criticisms.

Society is not the measure of all things; the individual is. "A true man," Emerson's label for the ideal individual, "belongs to no other time or place, but is the centre of all things. Where he is, there is nature." Nature is not only those objects around us, but also our individual natures. And these individual natures allow the great thinker the ideal individual to battle conformity and consistency.

The second section of "Self-Reliance" offers more suggestions for the individual who wants to achieve the desirable quality of self-reliance. Emerson begins with a directive: "Let a man then know his worth, and keep things under his feet." Material objects, especially those that are imposing Emerson cites magnificent buildings and heroic works of art, including costly books often intimidate people by making them feel of lesser worth. This feeling of inferiority is a mistake: Humans determine an object's worth, not vice versa. Emerson illustrates this point by relating a fable of a drunkard who is brought in off the street and treated like a royal personage; the unthinking individual is like the drunkard, living only half awake, until he comes to his senses by exercising reason and discovers that he is actually a prince.

One cause for our not exercising reason is the uncritical manner in which we read. Complaining that we often enjoy reading about the exploits of famous people while ignoring or devaluing books about ordinary righteousness and virtue, Emerson asks why people view the acts of well-known individuals as more important than the behavior of ordinary citizens, even though the good or bad behavior of ordinary people can have effects as noble or as dire as the actions of the powerful. Condemning European monarchies, he considers why royalty is accorded exaggerated respect despite the equal importance of common people; he can reason only that ordinary people respect royalty in recognition that a king or a queen represents the "royal" nature of every person, an argument he rejects outright.

Given the inferiority that an individual can feel when confronted by conformity and consistency, and now commonality, Emerson wonders how people remain confident in their abilities. The answer is provided by "that source, at once the essence of genius, of virtue, and of life, which we call Spontaneity or Instinct." The wisdom that springs from spontaneous instinct is Intuition, or inner knowledge from directly apprehending an object. All other knowledge is mere tuition, second hand beliefs received from others instead of a uniquely individual response that was sparked by the source itself. This notion of Intuition is closely

related to a main idea of transcendentalism: An all-encompassing "soul" animates the universe and is the source of all wisdom and inspiration. Direct knowledge, or intuition, is gained as a gift from this overwhelming source. But exactly what Emerson means by "Intuition" and "soul" is difficult to grasp, even for him: "If we ask whence this comes, if we seek to pry into the soul that causes, all philosophy is at fault. Its presence or its absence is all we can affirm."

Emerson now introduces a contrasting idea to the portrait he has drawn of the intuitive individual: the characteristics and behavior of the "thoughtless man," who cannot see the depth of truth being used by the self-reliant, intuitive person. Thoughtless people cannot understand self-reliant individuals' seeming inconsistencies because thoughtless people are too worried about being consistent as society oppressively wants them to be.

Transcendence is gained only through intuitive knowledge. Describing this transcendent quality is difficult, Emerson says, because we have no concrete words for such an abstract state of mind. It is beyond language and can be conveyed only in negatives, by telling what it is not: "And now at last the highest truth of this subject remains unsaid; probably cannot be said; for all that we say is the far-off remembering of the intuition." This type of understanding does not come from any teacher or intermediary; moreover, it reaches deeper than any kind of emotion, such as hope, gratitude, or even joy.

Attempting to relate transcendence to what he has been saying about self-reliance, Emerson emphasizes the important process of eternally evolving for the better. The self-reliant individual is not beholden to society: Although society may remain stagnant, the individual constantly changes, growing more virtuous and noble. This person gains something that others in society do not: namely, the knowledge and, by extension, the power of the permeating spirit that animates all things, be they natural objects plants, animals, or trees or social activities for example, commerce or war.

In the paragraphs leading up to this section's conclusion, Emerson moves from analysis to exhortation, offering suggestions on how we should act. Although everyone can become a model of self-reliance for the improvement of society, he asserts that "we" the lazy, non-self-reliant individuals are a "mob." Too many people, he says, are led by suggestions, by desires, and by feelings of responsibility. Instead of practicing independent self-reliance, we give in to others' demands. He urges us to place truth before politeness, value integrity more than comfort, and abandon hypocrisy in favor of honesty. Acknowledging that the self-reliant individual risks being misunderstood as merely selfish or self-indulgent, he vows that individuals who rigorously follow their consciences will be more "godlike" than individuals who follow society's laws.

In the final third of "Self-Reliance," Emerson considers the benefits to society of the kind of self-reliance he has been describing. His examination of society demonstrates the need for a morality of self-reliance, and he again criticizes his contemporary Americans for being followers rather than original thinkers. Condemning the timidity of most young people, whose greatest fear is failure, he levels his complaint especially at urban, educated youths, unfavorably comparing them with a hypothetical farm land, who engages himself in many occupations largely self-taught and entrepreneurial. The comparison between the city youths and the country fellow is to be expected given the quality of life Emerson traditionally assigns to each environment. Of no surprise is his favoring the bucolic life.

Emerson now focuses on four social arenas in which self-reliant individuals are needed: religion, which fears creativity; culture, which devalues individualism; the arts, which teach us only to imitate; and society, which falsely values so called progress.

Religion, Emerson says, could benefit from a good dose of self-reliance because self-reliance turns a person's mind from petty, self-centered desires to a benevolent wish for the common good. Religion's main problem is its fear of individual creativity. As a consequence, it opts for the art of mimicry: "Everywhere I am hindered of meeting God in my brother, because he has shut his own temple doors, and recites fables merely of his brother's, or his brother's brother's God." Any religion can introduce new ideas and systems of thought to an individual, but religious creeds are dangerous because they substitute a set of ready answers for the independent thought required of the self-reliant person.

Although we might question Emerson's relating travel or culture to religion, both substitute an external source of wisdom for an individual's inner wisdom. The person who travels "with the hope of finding [something] greater than he knows travels away from himself, and grows old even in youth among old things." The reference to youth reminds us that the self-reliant individual is childlike and original, whereas a person who travels for the wrong reasons creates nothing new and chooses instead to be surrounded by "old things."

The urge to travel is a symptom, according to Emerson, of our educational system's failure: Because schools teach us only to imitate, too often we travel to experience others' works of art rather than create them ourselves. In "The American Scholar," Emerson advises young scholars to break with European literary traditions.

Likewise, in "Self-Reliance," he addresses American artists with many of the same arguments: "Beauty, convenience, grandeur of thought, and quaint expression are as near to us as to any," if only American artisans would consider "the climate, the soil, the length of the day, the wants of the people, the habit and form of the government."

Emerson's criticism of society, and especially its ill-conceived notion of progress, differs from his earlier comments on the subject. The progression of ideas symbolized in the zigzag line of a ship is not what he is addressing here. He is arguing that society does not necessarily improve from material changes. For example, advances in technology result in the loss of certain kinds of wisdom: The person who has a watch loses the ability to tell time by the sun's position in the sky, and improvements in transportation and war machinery are not accompanied by corresponding improvements in either the physical or mental stature of human beings. The most effective image for this static nature of society is the wave. A wave moves in and out from the shoreline, but the water that composes it does not; changes occur in society, but "society never advances."

The last two paragraphs of "Self-Reliance" are a critique of property and fortune. Emerson castigates reliance on property, as he earlier attacked reliance on the thinking of others, as a means to a full life. Rather than admiring property, the cultivated man is ashamed of it, especially of property that is not acquired by honest work. Respect for property leads to a distortion of political life: Society is corrupted by people who regard government as primarily a protector of property rather than of persons.

Finally, Emerson urges the individual to be a risk taker. No external event, he says, whether good or bad, will change the individual's basic self-regard. "Nothing can bring you

peace but yourself. Nothing can bring you peace but the triumph of principles." Self-reliance, then, is the triumph of a principle.

Ralph Waldo Emerson ‘s essay Self-Reliance is a great self-help source ,the goal of which is to promote transcendentalism and simultaneously help the reader understand and follow transcendental beliefs .Self-Reliance serves for Emerson as a way to expresses his beliefs ,feelings , attitudes , and arguments that defend his views on religion ,education , art , and society described in the essay. Advocating his argumentation, Emerson delivers a number of vivid examples and at the same time develops the proof for his understanding of reason‘s uses to question what we are perceived to know . Concluding the essay Emerson asserts that greater self-reliance will result in a revolution. After, he links this theory to society and all of its aspects, including religion, education, and art .In the first passage Emerson represents his revolutionary religious beliefs and moreover aims to discount the practice of prayer and creeds . Emerson writes “Prayer that craves a particular commodity, anything less than all good, is vicious. Through this phrase he is basically announcing his abhorrence for the religious nature man has come to have and his opinion that we should not pray for things we can attain on our own. He goes on to say “But prayer as a means to affect a private end is meanness and theft. It supposes dualism and not unity in nature and consciousness. He is equating prayer with begging to God and believes it is not needed when you become one with God and therefore can see prayer in all productive actions. Prayer for Emerson creates a distinction between himself and God and does not allow for the self to become one with nature and consciousness .

Thus, throughout this essay, Emerson argues against conformity with the world. He argues how people should not conform to what other people in society think, but instead he should transform society with his thoughts. He gives an archetype for his own transcendental beliefs, but also argues for his slogan "trust thyself". To follow Emerson's self-reliant credo fully, one must learn to hear and obey what is most true within one's heart, and both think and act independent of popular opinion and social pressure, in order to bring satisfaction to one’s self.

12.2 NOTES

1: Nete, etc. "Do not seek for anything outside of thyself." From Persius, “Sat.” I. 7. Compare Macrobius, “Com. in Somn. Scip.”, I. ix. 3, and Boethius, “De Consol. Phil.”, IV. 4.

2: “Epilogue to Beaumont and Fletcher's Honest Man's Fortune”.

3: These lines appear in Emerson's “Quatrains” under the title “Power”.

4: Genius. See the paragraph on genius in Emerson's lecture on “The Method of Nature”, one sentence of which runs: "Genius is its own end, and draws its means and the style of its architecture from within, going abroad only for audience, and spectator."

5: "The man that stands by himself, the universe stands by him also."--EMERSON,

6: Plato (429-347 B.C.),

7: Milton (1608-1674), the great English epic poet, author of “Paradise Lost.”
"O mighty-mouth'd inventor of harmonies,
O skill'd to sing of Time or Eternity,
God-gifted organ-voice of England,
Milton, a name to resound for ages."--TENNYSON.

8: "The great poet makes feel our own wealth."EMERSON, “The Over-Soul”.

9: Then most when, most at the time when.

10: "The imitator dooms himself to hopeless mediocrity."EMERSON, “Address to the Senior Class in Divinity College, Cambridge”.

11: "For words, like Nature, half reveal
And half conceal the soul within." TENNYSON, “In Memoriam”, V. I.

12: Trust thyself. This is the theme of the present essay, and is a lesson which Emerson is never tired of teaching. In “The American Scholar” he says:
"In self-trust all the virtues are comprehended." In the essay on ”Greatness”:
"Self-respect is the early form in which greatness appears. Stick to your own. Follow the path your genius traces like the galaxy of heaven for you to walk in."
Carlyle says: "The fearful unbelief is unbelief in yourself."

13: Chaos ([Greek: Chaos), the confused, unorganized condition in which the world was supposed to have existed before it was reduced to harmony and order; hence, utter confusion and disorder.

14: These, “i.e.”, children, babes, and brutes.

15: Four or five. Supply the noun.

16: Nonchalance, a French word meaning “indifference”, ”coolness”.

17: Pit in the playhouse, formerly, the seats on the floor below the level of the stage. These cheap seats were occupied by a class who did not hesitate to express their opinions of the performances.

18: Eclat, a French word meaning “brilliancy of success”, ”striking effect”.

19: "Lethe, the river of oblivion." ”Paradise Lost”. Oblivion, forgetfulness.

20: Who. What is the construction?

21: Nonconformist, one who does not conform to established usages or opinions. Emerson considers conformity and consistency as the two terrors that scare us from self-trust.

22: Explore if it be goodness, investigate for himself and see if it be really goodness.
"Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.".PAUL, “I. Thes.” v. 21.

23: Suffrage, approval.

24: "There is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so." “Hamlet”, II. 2.

25: Barba does, an island in the Atlantic Ocean, one of the Lesser Antilles. The negroes, composing by far the larger part of the population, were formerly slaves.

26: He had rather have his actions ascribed to whim and caprice than to spend the day in explaining them.

27: Diet and bleeding, special diet and medical care, used figuratively, of course.

28: Read Emerson's essay on “Greatness”.

29: The precise man, precisely what kind of man.

30: "By their fruits ye shall know them."--”Matthew”, vii.16 and 20.

31: With, notwithstanding, in spite of.

32: Of the bench, of an impartial judge.

33: Bound their eyes with ... handkerchief, in this game of blind man's-buff.

34: "Pin thy faith to no man's sleeve; hast thou not two eyes of thy own?"--CARLYLE.

35: Give examples of men who have been made to feel the displeasure of the world for their nonconformity.

36: "Nihil tam incertumnec tam inæstimabileest quam animimultitudinis."--LIVY, xxxi. 34. "Mobile mutatur semper cum principevulgus." CLAUDIANUS, "De IV. Consul. Honorii", 302.

37: "The other terror." The first, conformity, has just been treated.

38: Consistency. Compare, on the other hand, the well-known saying, "Consistency, thou art a jewel."

39: Orbit, course in life.

40: Somewhat, something.

41: See "Genesis", xxxix. 12.

42: Pythagoras (fl. about 520 B.C.), a Greek philosopher. His society was scattered and persecuted by the fury of the populace.

43: Socrates (470?-399 B.C.), the great Athenian philosopher, whose teachings are the subject of most of Plato's writings, was accused of corrupting the youth, and condemned to drink hemlock.

44: Martin Luther (1483-1546) preached against certain abuses of the Roman Catholic Church and was excommunicated by the Pope. He became the leader of the Protestant Reformation.

45: Copernicus (1473-1543) discovered the error of the old Ptolemaic system of astronomy and showed that the sun is the centre of our planetary system. Fearing the persecution of the church, he hesitated long to publish his discovery, and it was many years after his death before the world accepted his theory.

46: Galileo (1564-1642), the famous Italian astronomer and physicist, discoverer of the satellites of Jupiter and the rings of Saturn, was thrown into prison by the Inquisition.

47: Sir Isaac Newton. The famous scientist.

48: Andes, the great mountain system of South America.

49: Himmaleh, Himalaya, the great mountain system of Asia.

50: Alexandrian stanza. The Alexandrian line consists of twelve syllables (iambic hexameter). Neither the acrostic nor the Alexandrine has the property assigned to it here. A palindrome reads the same forward as backward, as:"Madam, I'm Adam"; "Signatesigna; temere me tangisetangis";or the inscription on the church of St. Sophia, Constantinople: Greek: "Nipsonanomêmatamêmonanopsin,"

51: The reference is to sailing vessels, of course.

52: Scorn eyes, scorn observers.

53: Chatham, William Pitt, Earl of Chatham (1708-1778),this distinguished statesman and orator. He became very popular as a statesman and was known as "The Great Commoner."

54: Adams. The reference is presumably to Samuel Adams(1722-1803), a popular leader and orator in the cause of American freedom. He was a member of the Continental Congress and a signer of the Declaration of Independence. Emerson may have in mind, however, John Adams (1735-1826), second president of the United States.

55: Spartan. The ancient Spartans were noted for their courage and fortitude.

56: Julius Cæsar (100-44 B.C.), the great Roman general, statesman, orator, and author.

57: St. Anthony (251-356), Egyptian founder of monachism, the system of monastic seclusion.

58: George Fox (1624-1691), English founder of the Society of Friends or Quakers.

59: John Wesley (1703-1791), English founder of the religious sect known as Methodists.

60: Thomas Clarkson (1760-1846), English philanthropist and abolitionist.

61: Scipio (235-184 B.C.), the great Roman general who defeated Hannibal and decided the fate of Carthage. The quotation is from “Paradise Lost”, Book IX., line 610.

62: In the story of “Abou Hassan” or “The Sleeper Awakened ”in the “Arabian Nights ”Abou Hassan awakes and finds himself treated in every respect as the Caliph Haroun Al-raschid. Shakespeare has made use of a similar trick in “Taming of the Shrew”, where Christopher Slyis put to bed drunk in the lord's room and on awaking is treated as a lord.

63: Alfred the Great (849-901), King of the West Saxons. He was a wise king, a great scholar, and a patron of learning.

64: Scanderbeg, George Castriota (1404-1467), an Albanian chief who embraced Christianity and carried on a successful war against the Turks.

65: GustavusAdolphus (1594-1632), King of Sweden, the he roof Protestantism in the Thirty Years' War.

66: Hieroglyphic, a character in the picture-writing of the ancient Egyptian priests; hence, hidden sign.

67: Parallax, an angle used in astronomy in calculating the distance of a heavenly body. The parallax decreases as the distance of the body increases.

68: The child has the advantage of the experience of all his ancestors. Compare Tennyson's line in “Locksley Hall”: "I the heir of all the ages, in the foremost files of time."

69: "Why should we grope among the dry bones of the past, or put the living generation into masquerade out of its faded wardrobe? The sun shines to-day also."EMERSON, “Introd. to Nature, Addresses, etc.”

70: Explain the thought in this sentence.

71: Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Jesus.

72: Agent, active, acting.

73: An allusion to the Mohammedan custom of removing the shoes before entering a mosque.

74: Of a truth, men are mystically united; a mystic bond of brotherhood makes all men one.

75: Thor and Woden. Woden or Odin was the chief god of Scandinavian mythology. Thor, his elder son, was the god of thunder. From these names come the names of the days Wednesday and Thursday.

76: Explain the meaning of this sentence.

77: You, or you, addressing different persons.

78: "The truth shall make you free." ”John”, viii. 32.

79: Antinomianism, the doctrine that the moral law is not binding under the gospel dispensation, faith alone being necessary to salvation.

80: "There is no sorrow I have thought more about than that -to love what is great, and try to reach it, and yet to fail."……GEORGE ELIOT, “Middlemarch”, lxxvi.

81: Explain the use of “it” in these expressions.

82: Stoic, a disciple of the Greek philosopher Zeno, who taught that men should be free from passion, unmoved by joy and grief, and should submit without complaint to the inevitable.

83: Word made flesh, see “John”, i. 14.

84: Healing to the nations, see “Revelation”, xxii. 2.

85: In what prayers do men allow themselves to indulge?

86: "Prayer is the soul's sincere desire,
Uttered or unexpressed,
The motion of a hidden fire
That trembles in the breast."
MONTGOMERY, “What is Prayer?”

87: Caratach (Caractacus) is a historical character in Fletcher's (1576-1625) tragedy of “Bonduca”(Boadicea).

88: Zoroaster, a Persian philosopher, founder of the ancient Persian religion. He flourished long before the Christianera.

89: "Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die."”Exodus”, xx. 19. Compare also the parallel passage in “Deuteronomy”, v. 25-27.

90: John Locke. Empiricist philosopher

91: Lavoisier (1743-1794), celebrated French chemical philosopher, discoverer of the composition of water.

92: James Hutton (1726-1797), great Scotch geologist, author of the “Theory of the Earth”.

93: Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832), English philosopher, jurist, and legislative reformer.

94: Fourier (1772-1837), French socialist, founder of the system of Fourierism.

95: Calvinism, the doctrines of John Calvin (1509-1564).French theologian and Protestant reformer. A cardinal doctrine of Calvinism is predestination.

96: Quakerism, the doctrines of the Quakers or Friends, a society founded by George Fox (1624-1691).

97: Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772), Swedish theosophist, founder of the New Jerusalem Church. He is taken by Emerson in his ”Representative Men” as the type of the mystic, and is often mentioned in his other works.

98: "Though we travel the world over to find the beautiful, we must carry it with us, or we find it not." EMERSON, “Art”.

99: Thebes, a celebrated ruined city of Upper Egypt.

100: Palmyra, a ruined city of Asia situated in an oasis of the Syrian desert, supposed to be the Tadmor built by Solomon in the wilderness (“II. Chr.”, viii. 4).

101: "Vain, very vain, my weary search to find
That bliss which only centers in the mind....
Still to ourselves in every place consign'd,
Our own felicity we make or find."
GOLDSMITH (and JOHNSON), “The Traveler”, 423-32.
"He that has light within his own clear breast
May sit i' th' center, and enjoy bright day;
But he that hides a dark soul, and foul thoughts,
Benighted walks under the mid-day sun;
Himself in his own dungeon."MILTON, “Comus”, 381-5.

102: Vatican, the palace of the pope in Rome, with its celebrated library, museum, and art gallery.

103: Doric, the oldest, strongest, and simplest of the three styles of Grecian architecture.

104: Gothic, a pointed style of architecture, prevalent in western Europe in the latter part of the middle ages.

105: Never imitate. Emerson insists on this doctrine.

106: Shakespeare (1564-1616), the great English poet and dramatist. He is mentioned in Emerson's writings more than any other character in history, and is taken as the type of the poet in his “Representative Men”.

"O mighty poet! Thy works are not as those of other men, simply and merely great works of art; but are also like the phenomena of nature, like the sun and the sea, the stars and the flowers,--like frost and snow, rain and dew, hailstorm and thunder, which are to be studied with entire submission of our own faculties, and in the perfect faith that in them there can be no too much or too little, nothing use lessor inert,--but that, the further we press in our discoveries, the more we shall see proofs of design and self-supporting arrangement where the careless eye had seen nothing but accident!"--DE QUINCY.

107: Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790), American philosopher, statesman, diplomatist, and author. He discovered the identity of lightning with electricity, invented the lightning-rod, went on several diplomatic missions to Europe, was one of the committee that drew up the Declaration of Independence, signed the treaty of Paris, and compiled “Poor Richard's Almanac”.

108: Francis Bacon (1561-1626), a famous English philosopher and statesman. He became Lord Chancellor under Elizabeth. He is best known by his “Essays”; he wrote also the “NovumOrganum” and the “Advancement of Learning”.

109: Sir Isaac Newton. (See note 53.)

110: Scipio. (See note 61.)

111: Phidias (500?-432? B.C.), famous Greek sculptor.

112: Egyptians. He has in mind the pyramids.

113: The Pentateuch is attributed to Moses.

114: Dante (1265-1321), the greatest of Italian poets, author of the “Divina Commedia”.

115: Foreworld, a former ideal state of the world.

116: New Zealander, inhabitant of New Zealand, a group of two islands lying southeast of Australia.

117: Geneva, a city of Switzerland, situated at the south western extremity of Lake Geneva.

118: Greenwich nautical almanac. The meridian of the Royal Observatory at Greenwich, near London, is the prime meridian for reckoning the longitude of the world. The nautical almanac is a publication containing astronomical data for the use of navigators and astronomers. What is the name of the corresponding publication of the U.S. Observatory at Washington?

119: Get the meaning of these astronomical terms.

120: Plutarch. (50?-120? A.D.), Greek philosopher and biographer, author of “Parallel Lives”, a series of Greek and Roman biographies. Next after Shakespeare and Plato he is the author most frequently mentioned by Emerson. Read the essay of Emerson on Plutarch.

121: Phocion (402-317 B.C.), Athenian statesman and general.

122: Anaxagoras (500-426 B.C.), Greek philosopher of distinction.

123: Diogenes (400?-323?), Greek cynic philosopher who affected great contempt for riches and honors and the comforts of civilized life, and is said to have taken up his residence in a tub.

124: Henry Hudson (-- - 1611), English navigator and explorer, discoverer of the bay and river which bear his name.

125: Bering or Behring (1680-1741), Danish navigator, discoverer of Behring Strait.

126: Sir William Edward Parry (1790-1855), English navigator and Arctic explorer.

127: Sir John Franklin (1786-1846?), celebrated English navigator and Arctic explorer, lost in the Arctic seas.

128: Christopher Columbus (1445?-1506), Genoese navigator and discoverer of America. His ship, the Santa Maria, appears small and insignificant in comparison with the modern ocean ship.

129: Napoleon Bonaparte (1769-1821), Emperor of France, one of the greatest military geniuses the world has ever seen. He was defeated in the battle of Waterloo by the Duke of Wellington, and died in exile on the isle of St. Helena. Emerson takes him as a type of the man of the world in his “Representative Men”: "I call Napoleon the agent or attorney of the middle class of modern society. He was the agitator, the destroyer of prescription, the internal improver, the liberal, the radical, the inventor of means, the opener of doors and markets, the subverter of monopoly and abuse. He had the virtues of the masses of his constituents: he had also their vices. I am sorry that the brilliant picture has its reverse."

130: Comte de las Cases (not Casas) (1766-1842), author of “Mémorial de Sainte-Hélène”.

131: Ali, Arabian caliph, surnamed the "Lion of God," cousin and son-in-law of Mohammed. He was assassinated about 661.

132: The county of Essex in England has several namesakes in America.

133: Fortune. In Roman mythology Fortune, the goddess of fortune or chance, is represented as standing on a ball or wheel.

12.3 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

1. Write a note on transcendentalism in American literature.
2. What is the significance of self-reliance, according to Emerson?
3. How is Emerson's essay “Self-reliance”, informed by transcendentalist philosophy?
4. What, do you think, is the relevance of the essay for contemporary life?
5. Attempt a critical exposition of Emerson's essay “Self-reliance”.

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Dr. E. Dileep

LESSON 13
WALDEN BY HENRY DAVID THOREAU

OBJECTIVES

- To familiarize the students with the biography of Thoreau.
- To get the students acquainted with Thoreau as an essayist
- To enable the students to understand the significance of the essay

STRUCTURE

13.1 Thoreau's Biography
13.2 *Walden*: Introduction
13.3 *Walden*: Summary
13.4 *Walden*: A Critical Appreciation
13.5 *Walden*: Style
13.6 *Walden:* Symbolism
13.7 Review Questions
13.8 Suggested Reading

13.1 THOREAU'S BIOGRAPHY

American essayist, poet, and practical philosopher Henry David Thoreau was born on July 12, 1817, in Concord, Massachusetts. He began writing nature poetry in the 1840s, with poet Ralph Waldo Emerson as a mentor and friend. In 1845 he began his famous two-year stay on Walden Pond, which he wrote about in his master work, *Walden*. He also became known for his beliefs in Transcendentalism and civil disobedience, and was a dedicated abolitionist.

Thoreau is remembered for his philosophical and naturalist writings. He was born and raised in Concord, Massachusetts, along with his older siblings John and Helen and younger sister Sophia. His father operated a local pencil factory, and his mother rented out parts of the family's home to boarders.

A bright student, Thoreau eventually went to Harvard College (now Harvard University). There he studied Greek and Latin as well as German. Thoreau had to take a break from his schooling for a time because of illness. He graduated from college in 1837 and struggled with what do to next. At the time, an educated man like Thoreau might pursue a career in law or medicine or in the church. Other college graduates went into education, a path he briefly followed. With his brother John, he set up a school in 1838. The venture collapsed a few years later after John became ill. Thoreau then went to work for his father for a time.

After college, Thoreau befriended writer and fellow Concord resident Ralph Waldo Emerson. Through Emerson, he became exposed to Transcendentalism, a school of thought that emphasized the importance of empirical thinking and of spiritual matters over the physical world. It encouraged scientific inquiry and observation. Thoreau came to know many of the movement's leading figures, including Bronson Alcott and Margaret Fuller.

Emerson acted as a mentor to Thoreau and supported him in many ways. For some time, Thoreau lived with Emerson as a caretaker for his home. Emerson also used his influence to promote Thoreau's literary efforts. Some of Thoreau's first works were published in *The Dial*, a Transcendentalist magazine. And Emerson gave Thoreau access to the lands that would inspire one of his greatest works.

In 1845, Thoreau built a small home for himself on Walden Pond, on property owned by Emerson. He spent more than two years there. Seeking a simpler type of life, Thoreau flipped the standard routine of the times. He experimented with working as little as possible rather than engage in the pattern of six days on with one day off. Sometimes Thoreau worked as a land surveyor or in the pencil factory. He felt that this new approach helped him avoid the misery he saw around him. "The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation," Thoreau once wrote.

His schedule gave him plenty of time to devote to his philosophical and literary interests. Thoreau worked on *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers* (1849). The book drew from a boating trip he took with his brother John in 1839. Thoreau eventually started writing about his Walden Pond experiment as well. Many were curious about his revolutionary lifestyle, and this interest provided the creative spark for a collection of essays. Published in 1854, *Walden; or, Life in the Woods* espoused living a life close to nature. The book was a modest success, but it wasn't until much later that the book reached a larger audience. Over the years, *Walden* has inspired and informed the work of naturalists, environmentalists and writers.

While living at Walden Pond, Thoreau also had an encounter with the law. He spent a night in jail after refusing to pay a poll tax. This experience led him to write one of his best-known and most influential essays, "Civil Disobedience". Thoreau held deeply felt political views, opposing slavery and the Mexican-American War. He made a strong case for acting on one's individual conscience and not blindly following laws and government policy. "The only obligation which I have a right to assume is to do at any time what I think right," he wrote.

Since its publication in 1849, "Civil Disobedience" has inspired many leaders of protest movements around the world. This non-violent approach to political and social resistance has influenced American civil rights movement activist Martin Luther King Jr. and Mahatma Gandhi, who helped India win independence from Great Britain, among many others.

After leaving Walden Pond, Thoreau spent some time looking after Emerson's house while he was on tour in England. He soon took to lecturing himself. Still fascinated with nature, Thoreau wrote down his observations on plant and wildlife in his native Concord and on his journeys. He visited the woods of Maine and the shoreline of Cape Cod several times.

Thoreau also remained a devoted abolitionist until the end of his life. To support his cause, he wrote several works, including the 1854 essay "Slavery in Massachusetts." Thoreau also took a brave stand for Captain John Brown, a radical abolitionist who led an uprising against slavery in Virginia. He and his supporters raided a federal arsenal in Harpers Ferry to arm themselves in October 1859, but their plan was thwarted. An injured Brown was later convicted of treason and put to death for his crime. Thoreau rose to defend him with the

speech "A Plea for Capt. John Brown," calling him "an angel of light" and "the bravest and humanist man in all the country."

In his later years, Thoreau battled an illness that had plagued him for decades. He had tuberculosis, which he had contracted decades earlier. To restore his health, Thoreau went to Minnesota in 1861, but the trip didn't improve his condition. He finally succumbed to the disease on May 6, 1862. Thoreau was heralded as "an original thinker" and "a man of simple tastes, hardy habits, and of preternatural powers of observation" in some of his obituaries.

While other writers from his time have faded into obscurity, Thoreau has endured because so much of what he wrote about is still relevant today. His writings on government were revolutionary, with some calling him an early anarchist. Thoreau's studies of nature were equally radical in their own way, earning him the moniker of "father of environmentalism." And his major work, *Walden*, has offered up an interesting antidote to living in the modern rat race.

13.2 WALDEN: INTRODUCTION

While Thoreau lived at Walden (July 4, 1845–September 6, 1847), he wrote journal entries and prepared lyceum lectures on his experiment in living at the pond. Although Thoreau actually lived at Walden for two years, *Walden* is a narrative of his life at the pond compressed into the cycle of a single year, from spring to spring. The book is presented in eighteen chapters.

13.3 WALDEN: SUMMARY

Economy:

Walden opens with a simple announcement that Thoreau spent two years in Walden Pond, near Concord, Massachusetts, living a simple life supported by no one. He says that he now resides among the civilized again; the episode was clearly both experimental and temporary.

The first chapter, “Economy,” is a manifesto of social thought and meditations on domestic management, and in it Thoreau sketches out his ideals as he describes his pond project. He introduces his purpose in writing the book, saying he intends to answer questions people have asked about his reasons for living alone in a cabin in the woods near Walden Pond for two years. He sets forth the basic principles that guided his experiment in living, and urges his reader to aim higher than the values of society, to spiritualize. He explains that he writes in response to the curiosity of his townsmen, and draws attention to the fact that *Walden* is a first-person account. He writes of himself, the subject he knows best.

Through his story, he hopes to tell his readers something of their own condition and how to improve it. Perceiving widespread anxiety and dissatisfaction with modern civilized life, he writes for the discontented, the mass of men who "lead lives of quiet desperation."

It is a chapter full of facts, figures, and practical advice, but also offers big ideas about the claims of individualism versus social existence, all interspersed with evidence of scholarship and a propensity for humor. He explains that most people live their lives as if sleeping, blindly following the ways of their parents, and become trapped into these lives by

owning property and slaving in jobs to maintain their way of life. In contrast, he sought to discover the true necessities of life and built a cabin, for the cost of $28.12 near Walden Pond, where he lived for two years, beginning in the summer of 1845. Most of the materials and tools he used to build his home he borrowed or scrounged from previous sites. The land he squats on belongs to his friend Ralph Waldo Emerson; he details a cost-analysis of the entire construction project. In order to make a little money, Thoreau cultivates a modest bean-field, a job that tends to occupy his mornings. He reserves his afternoons and evenings for contemplation, reading, and walking about the countryside. Endorsing the values of austerity, simplicity, and solitude, Thoreau consistently emphasizes the minimalism of his lifestyle and the contentment to be derived from it. He repeatedly contrasts his own freedom with the imprisonment of others who devote their lives to material prosperity.

Distinguishing between the outer and the inner man, he emphasizes the corrosiveness of materialism and constant labor to the individual's humanity and spiritual development.

Thoreau encourages his readers to seek the divinity within, to throw off resignation to the status quo, to be satisfied with less materially, to embrace independence, self-reliance, and simplicity of life. In identifying necessities food, shelter, clothing, and fuel and detailing specifically the costs of his experiment, he points out that many so-called necessities are, in fact, luxuries that contribute to spiritual stagnation. Technological progress, moreover, has not truly enhanced quality of life or the condition of mankind. Comparing civilized and primitive man, Thoreau observes that civilization has institutionalized life and absorbed the individual. He writes of living fully in the present. He stresses that going to Walden was not a statement of economic protest, but an attempt to overcome society's obstacles to transacting his "private business." He does not suggest that anyone else should follow his particular course of action. Each man must find and follow his own path in understanding reality and seeking higher truth. Discussing philanthropy and reform, Thoreau highlights the importance of individual self-realization. Society will be reformed through reform of the individual, not through the development and refinement of institutions.

Where I Lived, and What I Lived For:

Thoreau, in the second chapter, talks about how he once considered buying the Hollowell farm for himself but the purchase fell through. He becomes a homeowner instead at Walden, moving in, significantly, on July 4, 1845 his personal Independence Day, as well as the nation's. More than the details of his situation at the pond, he relates the spiritual exhilaration of his going there, an experience surpassing the limitations of place and time. He writes of the morning hours as a daily opportunity to reaffirm his life in nature, a time of heightened awareness. To be awake to be intellectually and spiritually alert is to be alive. At Walden, he found joy and fulfillment in nature, truly awakening in his mornings there, while most of society remains perpetually asleep, living mean lives when the possibility of a much better life is possible. The key to achieving such a life, he says, is simplicity

He exhorts his readers to simplify, and points out our reluctance to alter the course of our lives. He again disputes the value of modern improvements, the railroad in particular. Our proper business is to seek the reality the absolute beyond what we think we know. This higher truth may be sought in the here and now in the world we inhabit. Our existence forms a part of time, which flows into eternity, and affords access to the universal.

Reading:

In the third chapter "Reading," Thoreau discusses literature and books a valuable inheritance from the past, useful to the individual in his quest for higher understanding. True works of literature convey significant, universal meaning to all generations. Thoreau describes how he derives enlightenment from reading Homer and other great writers, men who spoke of the truth and speak of life in terms too noble for most to understand. Such classics must be read as deliberately as they were written. He complains of current taste of the society, and of the prevailing inability to read in a "high sense" and the people who waste their time reading popular fiction and newspapers, when they should instead be dedicated to improving the intellectual culture. Instead of reading the best, we choose the mediocre, which dulls our perception. Good books help us to throw off narrowness and ignorance, and serve as powerful catalysts to provoke change within.

Sounds:

In the fourth chapter "Sounds," Thoreau turns from books to reality. He advises alertness to all that can be observed, coupled with an Oriental contemplation that allows assimilation of experience. As he describes what he hears and sees of nature through his window, his reverie is interrupted by the noise of the passing train. At first, he responds to the train symbol of nineteenth century commerce and progress with admiration for its almost mythical power. He then focuses on its inexorability and on the fact that as some things thrive, so others decline the trees around the pond, for instance, which are cut and transported by train, or animals carried in the railroad cars. His comments on the railroad end on a note of disgust and dismissal, and he returns to his solitude and the sounds of the woods and the nearby community church bells on Sundays, echoes, the call of the whippoorwill, the scream of the screech owl (indicative of the dark side of nature) and the cry of the hoot owl. Sounds, in other words, express the reality of nature in its full complexity, and our longing to connect with it. He closes the chapter with reference to the lack of domestic sounds at his Walden home. Nature, not the incidental noise of living, fills his senses.

Solitude:

Thoreau opens "Solitude" with a lyrical expression of his pleasure in and sympathy with nature. When he returns to his house after walking in the evening, he finds that visitors have stopped by, which prompts him to comment both on his literal distance from others while at the pond and on the figurative space between men. There is intimacy in his connection with nature, which provides sufficient companionship and precludes the possibility of loneliness. The vastness of the universe puts the space between men in perspective. Thoreau points out that if we attain a greater closeness to nature and the divine, we will not require physical proximity to others in the "depot, the post-office, the bar-room, the meeting-house, the school-house" places that offer the kind of company that distracts and dissipates. He comments on man's dual nature as a physical entity and as an intellectual spectator within his own body, which separates a person from himself and adds further perspective to his distance from others. Moreover, a man is always alone when thinking and working. He concludes the chapter by referring to metaphorical visitors who represent God and nature, to his own oneness with nature, and to the health and vitality that nature imparts.

Visitors:

Thoreau asserts in "Visitors" that he is no hermit and that he enjoys the society of worthwhile people as much as any man does. He comments on the difficulty of maintaining sufficient space between himself and others to discuss significant subjects. He suggests that meaningful intimacy or intellectual communion allows and requires silence (the opportunity to ponder and absorb what has been said) and distance (a suspension of interest in temporal and trivial personal matters). True companionship has nothing to do with the trappings of conventional hospitality. Thoreau is pleased that those who would bother him with trivial matters don't visit him at Walden. He writes at length of one of his favorite visitors, a French Canadian woodcutter, whose straightforward thinking and love of life please Thoreau. Other visitors include half-wits from the almshouse, who Thoreau thinks are more intellectual than most overseers, and men of business, who no longer really enjoy nature. The happiest people to visit the pond are children and young women. Thoreau enjoys the company of children, railroad men taking a holiday, fishermen, poets, philosophers all of whom can leave the village temporarily behind and immerse themselves in the woods.

The Bean-field:

In "The Bean-Field," Thoreau describes his experience of farming while living at Walden. His bean-field offers reality in the forms of physical labor and closeness to nature. He writes of turning up Indian arrowheads as he hoes and plants, suggesting that his use of the land is only one phase in the history of man's relation to the natural world. Though passing farmers criticized him for not using a plow or fertilizer, having to work so long and hard made him grow close to the soil, truly enjoying his work rather than seeing it as a means of profit, like most farmers.

His bean-field is real enough, but it also metaphorically represents the field of inner self that must be carefully tended to produce a crop. Thoreau comments on the position of his bean-field, between the wild and the cultivated a position similar to that which he himself occupies at the pond. He recalls the sights and sounds encountered while hoeing, focusing on the noise of town celebrations and military training, and cannot resist satirically underscoring the vainglory of the participants. He notes that he tends his beans while his contemporaries study art in Boston and Rome, or engage in contemplation and trade in faraway places, but in no way suggests that his efforts are inferior. Thoreau has no interest in beans as such, but rather in their symbolic meaning. He vows that in the future he will not soy beans but rather the seeds of "sincerity, truth, simplicity, faith, innocence, and the like." He expands upon seed imagery in referring to planting the seeds of new men. Lamenting a decline in farming from ancient times, he points out that agriculture is now a commercial enterprise, that the farmer has lost his integral relationship with nature. The true husbandman will cease to worry about the size of the crop and the gain to be had from it and will pay attention only to the work that is particularly his in making the land fruitful.

The Village:

Thoreau begins "The Village" by remarking that he visits town every few days, where people's stares and thirst for gossip are invasive and where the attractions of pubs, stores, and shops are a temptation. The town, full of idle curiosity and materialism, threatens independence and simplicity of life. He is always relieved to return home to his cabin but worries that society will seek one out wherever he goes. He writes of going back to Walden at

night and discusses the value of occasionally becoming lost in the dark or in a snowstorm. Sometimes a person lost is so disoriented that he begins to appreciate nature anew. Fresh perception of the familiar offers a different perspective, allowing us "to find ourselves, and realize where we are and the infinite extent of our relations." He refers to his overnight jailing in 1846 for refusal to pay his poll tax in protest against slavery and the Mexican War, and comments on the insistent intrusion of institutions upon men's lives.

The Ponds:

Living in the woods, Thoreau devotes his time to experiencing nature, sometimes fishing with an elderly man who is hard-of-hearing and sometimes floating about in his boat playing his flute. He gives detailed descriptions of surrounding bodies of water Flint's Pond, White Pond, Goose Pond, and Fair-Haven Bay but finds Walden, with its pure clear water, to be the epitome of nature's offerings. He writes of fishing on the pond by moonlight, his mind wandering into philosophical and universal realms, and of feeling the jerk of a fish on his line, which links him again to the reality of nature. He thus presents concrete reality and the spiritual element as opposing forces. He goes on to suggest that through his life at the pond, he has found a means of reconciling these forces.

Walden is presented in a variety of metaphorical ways in this chapter. Believed by many to be bottomless, it is emblematic of the mystery of the universe. As the "earth's eye," through which the "beholder measures the depth of his own nature," it reflects aspects of the narrator himself. As "a perfect forest mirror" on a September or October day, Walden is a "field of water" that "betrays the spirit that is in the air . continually receiving new life and motion from above" a direct conduit between the divine and the beholder, embodying the workings of God and stimulating the narrator's receptivity and faculties. Walden is ancient, having existed perhaps from before the fall of man in the Garden of Eden. At the same time, it is perennially young. It possesses and imparts innocence. Its waters, remarkably transparent and pure, serve as a catalyst to revelation, understanding, and vision. Thoreau refers to talk of piping water from Walden into town and to the fact that the railroad and woodcutters have affected the surrounding area. And yet, the pond is eternal. It endures despite all of man's activities on and around it. He concludesthe chapter reproachfully, commenting that man does not sufficiently appreciate nature. Like Walden, she flourishes alone, away from the towns of men.

Baker Farm:

In "Baker Farm," Thoreau presents a study in contrasts between himself and John Field, a man unable to rise above his animal nature and material values. The chapter begins with lush natural detail. Thoreau describes a visit to go fishing at Baker Farm. The scene changes when, to escape a rain shower, he visits the squalid home of Irishman John Field.

Field came to America to advance his material condition. The meanness of his life is compounded by his belief in the necessity of coffee, tea, butter, milk, and beef which are all luxuries to Thoreau. Thoreau talks to Field as if he were a philosopher, urging him to simplify, but he turns a deaf ear. Exultant in his own joy in nature and aspiration toward meaning and understanding, Thoreau runs "down the hill toward the reddening west, with the rainbow over my shoulder," the "Good Genius" within urging him to "fish and hunt far and wide day by day," to remember God, to grow wild, to shun trade, to enjoy the land but not

own it. The last paragraph is about John Field, by comparison with Thoreau "a poor man, born to be poor not to rise in this world" a man impoverished spiritually as well as materially.

Higher Laws:

In "Higher Laws," Thoreau deals with the conflict between two instincts that coexist side by side within himself — the hunger for wildness (expressed in his desire to seize and devour a woodchuck raw) and the drive toward a higher spiritual life. He seeks to strengthen his spiritual self, refraining from hunting or eating meat. In discussing hunting and fishing (occupations that foster involvement with nature and that constitute the closest connection that many have with the woods), he suggests that all men are hunters and fishermen at a certain stage of development. Although most don't advance beyond this stage, if a man has the "seeds of better life in him," he may evolve to understanding nature as a poet or naturalist and may ultimately comprehend higher truth. Thoreau says that he himself has lost the desire to fish, but admits that if he lived in the wilderness, he would be tempted to take up hunting and fishing again. A man can't deny either his animal or his spiritual side. In discussing vegetarian diet and moderation in eating, sobriety, and chastity, he advocates both accepting and subordinating the physical appetites, but not disregarding them. The chapter concludes with reference to a generic John Farmer who, sitting at his door one September evening, despite himself is gradually induced to put aside his mundane thoughts and to consider practicing "some new austerity, to let his mind descend into his body and redeem it, and treat himself with ever increasing respect."

Brute Neighbors:

This chapter opens with a dialogue between Hermit and Poet, who epitomize polarized aspects of the author himself (animal nature and the yearning to transcend it). Through the rest of the chapter, he focuses his thoughts on the varieties of animal life mice, phoebes, raccoons, woodchucks, turtle doves, red squirrels, ants, loons, and others that parade before him at Walden. He provides context for his observations by posing the question of why man has "just these species of animals for his neighbors." He answers that they are "all beasts of burden, in a sense, made to carry some portion of our thoughts," thus imparting these animals with symbolic meaning as representations of something broader and higher.

Several animals (the partridge and the "winged cat") are developed in such a way as to suggest a synthesis of animal and spiritual qualities. Thoreau at length describes a mock-heroic battle of ants, compared to the Concord Fight of 1775. He thus ironically undercuts the significance of human history and politics. The battle of the ants is as dramatic as any human saga, and there is no reason that we should perceive it as less meaningful than events on the human stage. The image of the loon is also developed at length. Diving into the depths of the pond, the loon suggests the seeker of spiritual truth. It also represents the dark, mysterious aspect of nature. Thoreau thus uses the animal world to present the unity of animal and human life and to emphasize nature's complexity.

House-warming:

The narrative moves to Thoreau's description of the winter months in "House-Warming." Thoreau praises the ground-nut, an indigenous and almost exterminated plant, which yet may demonstrate the vigor of the wild by outlasting cultivated crops. He describes the turning of the leaves, the movement of wasps into his house, and the building of his

chimney. Described as an "independent structure, standing on the ground and rising through the house to the heavens," the chimney clearly represents the author himself, grounded in this world but striving for universal truth. The pond cools and begins to freeze, and Thoreau withdraws both into his house, which he has plastered, and into his soul as well. He continues his spiritual quest indoors, and dreams of a more metaphorical house, cavernous, open to the heavens, requiring no housekeeping. He regrets the superficiality of hospitality as we know it, which does not permit real communion between host and guest. He writes of gathering wood for fuel, of his woodpile, and of the moles in his cellar, enjoying the perpetual summer maintained inside even in the middle of winter. Winter makes Thoreau lethargic, but the atmosphere of the house revives him and prolongs his spiritual life through the season. He is now prepared for physical and spiritual winter.

Former Inhabitants; and Winter Visitors:

Thoreau begins "Former Inhabitants; and Winter Visitors" by recalling cheerful winter evenings spent by the fireside. But winter is quiet even the owl is hushed and his thoughts turn to past inhabitants of the Walden Woods. He writes of Cato Ingraham (a former slave), the black woman Zilpha (who led a "hard and inhumane" life), Brister Freeman (another slave) and his wife Fenda (a fortune-teller), the Stratton and Breed families, Wyman (a potter), and Hugh Quoil all people on the margin of society, whose social isolation matches the isolation of their life near the pond. Thoreau ponders why Walden's "small village, germ of something more" failed, while Concord thrives, and comments on how little the former inhabitants have affected the landscape. The past failed to realize the promise of Walden, but perhaps Thoreau himself will do so. He observes that nobody has previously built on the spot he now occupies that is, he does not labor under the burden of the past. He has few visitors in winter, but no lack of society nevertheless. He still goes into town (where he visits Emerson, who is referred to but not mentioned by name), and receives a few welcome visitors including a farmer, a poet, and a peddlar-philosopher. He waits for the mysterious "Visitor who never comes."

Winter Animals:

He examines the landscape from frozen Flint's Pond, and comments on how wide and strange it appears. He writes of winter sounds of the hoot owl, of ice on the pond, of the ground cracking, of wild animals, of a hunter and his hounds. He describes a pathetic, trembling hare that shows surprising energy as it leaps away, demonstrating the "vigor and dignity of Nature.

The Pond in Winter:

He awakens one morning after a night of questioning to realize that nature is serene and asks no questions. He cuts holes in the ice of Walden, measuring the depth of the pond, which some people have called bottomless.

At the beginning of "The Pond in Winter," Thoreau awakens with a vague impression that he has been asked a question that he has been trying unsuccessfully to answer. But he looks out upon nature, itself "an answered question," and into the daylight, and his anxiety is quelled. The darkness and dormancy of winter may slow down spiritual processes, but the dawn of each day provides a new beginning. In search of water, Thoreau takes an axe to the pond's frozen surface and, looking into the window he cuts in the ice, sees life below despite

its apparent absence from above. The workings of God in nature are present even where we don't expect them. He writes of the fishermen who come to the pond, simple men, but wiser than they know, wild, who pay little attention to society's dictates and whims. He describes surveying the bottom of Walden in 1846, and is able to assure his reader that Walden is, in fact, not bottomless. There is a need for mystery, however, and as long as there are believers in the infinite, some ponds will be bottomless. In probing the depths of bodies of water, imagination dives down deeper than nature's reality. Thoreau expresses the Transcendental notion that if we knew all the laws of nature, one natural fact or phenomenon would allow us to infer the whole. But our knowledge of nature's laws is imperfect. He extrapolates from the pond to humankind, suggesting the scientific calculation of a man's height or depth of character from his exterior and his circumstances. The pond and the individual are both microcosms. In January, Irish laborers working for a rich man arrive to cut and cart away the ice to sell. This upsets Thoreau, until he realizes people all over the world will have a taste of Walden. The lake soon refreezes. Despite what might at first seem a violation of the pond's integrity, Walden is unchanged and unharmed. Moreover, ice from the pond is shipped far and wide, even to India, where others thus drink from Thoreau's spiritual well. Walden water mixes with Ganges water, while Thoreau bathes his intellect "in the stupendous and cosmogonal philosophy of the Bhagvat Geeta" no doubt an even exchange, in Thoreau's mind.

The Thaw:

"Spring" brings the breaking up of the ice on Walden Pond and a celebration of the rebirth of both nature and the spirit. Thoreau again presents the pond as a microcosm, remarking, "The phenomena of the year take place every day in a pond on a small scale." He revels in listening and watching for evidence of spring, and describes in great detail the sand which breaks through the snow and flows like foliage down the banks of the railroad. In its similarity to real foliage, the sand foliage demonstrates that nothing is inorganic, and that the earth is not an artifact of dead history. It is, rather, living poetry, compared with which human art and institutions are insignificant. The chapter is rich with expressions of vitality, expansion, exhilaration, and joy. Thoreau focuses on the details of nature that mark the awakening of spring. Rebirth after death suggests immortality. Walden has seemingly died, and yet now, in the spring, reasserts its vigor and endurance. The narrator, too, is reinvigorated, becomes "elastic" again. A man's thoughts improve in spring, and his ability to forgive and forget the shortcomings of his fellows to start afresh increases. Thoreau states the need for the "tonic of wildness," noting that life would stagnate without it. He comments also on the quality of our need to explore and explain things and our simultaneous longing for the mysterious. Taking either approach, we can never have enough of nature it is a source of strength and proof of a more lasting life beyond our limited human span. Thoreau refers to the passage of time, to the seasons "rolling on into summer," and abruptly ends the narrative.

He compresses his entire second year at the pond into the half-sentence, "and the second year was similar to it." The last sentence records his departure from the pond on September 6, 1847.

Conclusion:

In his "Conclusion," Thoreau again exhorts his reader to begin a new, higher life. He points out that we restrict ourselves and our view of the universe by accepting externally imposed limits, and urges us to make life's journey deliberately, to look inward and to make

the interior voyage of discovery. Evoking the great explorers Mungo Park, Lewis and Clark, Frobisher, and Columbus, he presents inner exploration as comparable to the exploration of the North American continent. Thoreau explains that he left the woods for the same reason that he went there, and that he must move on to new endeavors. There is danger even in a new enterprise of falling into a pattern of tradition and conformity. One must move forward optimistically toward his dream, leaving some things behind and gaining awareness of others.

A man will replace his former thoughts and conventional common sense with a new, broader understanding, thereby putting a solid foundation under his aspirations. Thoreau expresses unqualified confidence that man's dreams are achievable, and that his experiment at Walden successfully demonstrates this. The experience and truth to which a man attains cannot be adequately conveyed in ordinary language, must be "translated" through a more expressive, suggestive, figurative language. Thoreau entreats his readers to accept and make the most of what we are, to "mind our business," not somebody else's idea of what our business should be. He presents the parable of the artist of Kouroo, who strove for perfection and whose singleness of purpose endowed him with perennial youth. Transcending time and the decay of civilization, the artist endures, creates true art, and achieves perfection. This parable demonstrates the endurance of truth. Thoreau again urges us to face life as it is, to reject materialism, to embrace simplicity, serenely to cultivate self, and to understand the difference between the temporal and the permanent. He ends *Walden* with an affirmation of resurrection and immortality through the quest for higher truth. One last time, he uses the morning imagery that throughout the book signifies new beginnings and heightened perception: "Only that day dawns to which we are awake. There is more day to dawn. The sun is but a morning star."

13.4 WALDEN: A CRITICAL APPRECIATION

Henry David Thoreau’s Walden (1854) is perhaps the most widely read nonfiction work in 19th century American literature. It appeared in 200 different editions and has been translated into every major modern language. Oddly enough, the book was considered a failure while Thoreau was alive.

Thoreau’s masterpiece Walden is an account of the two years. Two months, and two days he spent living in his cabin at Walden Pond. A lecture which Thoreau delivered on Thomas Carlyle and his works at the Concord Lyceum and some other such lectures form the genesis of the book, Walden.

Firstly, Walden is an answer to “very particular inquiries made by my townsmen concerning my mode of life” at Walden Pond as Thoreau himself says. As Walter Harding suggests, “the book can be read as a sort of nineteenth-century Adventures of Robinson Crusoe as Thoreau writes in it about his choosing at a site at the pond, cutting of the necessary trees, erecting a cabin his moving in on the Independence Day, 1845, his planting of garden for food and income, weeding and harvesting, plastering the walls of the cabin and the fire place etc... The book also happens to have an idyllic charm that has provoked many a reader into retreating to his own woods and building a cabin in imitation of the sage of Walden Pond. Foreseeing many such literal disciples, Thoreau goes out of his way in Walden to say “I would not have any one adopt my mode of living on any account.”

Often Thoreau is taken to be a primitivist who campaigned abandoning civilization and taking to the wood. But one should realize that Thoreau spent only about two years at

Walden Pond. And Walden was not out in the Wilderness but just two miles from the centre of Concord. When he lived there, Thoreau had a constant stream of visitors and made daily journeys into the village to see his family and his friends. He was personally interested in observing and writing about nature and hence it met his personal needs to go to Walden. He asserts that one can live the simple life any place and in that Walden one can live more purposefully, more meaningfully, and more happily. This is the real essence of Walden.

Thoreau doesn't, at the same time, advocate any abandonment of the physical advantages produced by model science. On the contrary, he points out that we are not making the best use of them and hence they have turned out to be "Improved means to unimproved ends". Thoreau is not merely a negative critic or destructive critic. He is far more positive and constructive. He does not hesitate to point out the problems of our society. He also suggests solutions to them. Society may be complex but Thoreau feels that our lives need not be if we have the ability to cull what is important from that complexity. He says that we waste too much of our lives in getting a living are trying to "keep up with the Jounces". If only we reduce our wants, we would also reduce the percentage of our lives we devote to earning a living and thus have enough time to do what we really want to do.

Thoreau is completely convinced about man's potential to create heaven on this earth if only he puts his heart and mind to it. It is this vein of thought which makes him an optimistic critic and a Transcendentalist. He read Emerson's essay on "Nature." Thoreau endorsed it and experienced something more valuable. Emerson called him the "The bachelor of nature" and Channing said he was "a poet naturalist". Emerson also said "The depth of his perception found likeness of law throughout Nature". Thoreau is a transcendentalist like Emerson but a little different from the latter. He held to the concept of the presence of God in nature and in man. The sanction of religious and moral principles is to be sought in human experience and reason, not in authority or tradition. He developed a new conception of good life, characterized by self trust, a joyous love of beauty, and a sincere altruism.

At the heart of Transcendentalism is a belief that each man has within him a God-given ability to choose between right and wrong. Unfortunately man has too often ignored that inner voice. Man can renew that voice and himself only if he reverts to the godlike innocence of childhood. One of the major themes of Walden happens to be this renewal of mankind. Walden starts with Thoreau's going out to the pond in the spring and then follows him through the summer, the autumn, and the winter, ending with the renewal of life in the spring. Through this cycle of the seasons he emphasizes the theme of renewal. The theme is also suggested through the reference to the American Indians in "Economy", who through their bush fire regularly destroyed their dross so that they could begin anew. In the "Conclusion" again he speaks of the strange insect that buried itself in the wood of an apple-tree table for sixty years and then suddenly came to life. Thoreau also speaks of the pond which year went dormant under its winter covering of ice only to come alive again each spring. Thus by reiterating the image of renewal Thoreau emphasizes his hope and belief that mankind will inevitably renew his spirit and be led to greater accomplishments not physical alone but spiritual.

Thus the various themes which Thoreau touches upon in his Walden sound universal rather than provincial. At the same time there is much about Walden which is typically American. There is the pioneering spirit of the American frontiersman. The flora and the fauna he describes are inevitably American though Thoreau writes about them in universal

terms. The rugged, manly quality about the choice of words is again typically American. Most importantly, the theme of Walden is basically the logical development of the philosophy innate in the American Declaration of Independence.

13.5 STYLE OF WALDEN

Walden may also be described as a study on the flora and fauna of Concord. Thoreau spent much of his life studying the birds, the animals, the flowers, the trees, and the progress of the seasons. And a large part of Walden is devoted to reporting such observations. Writers like Gilbert White and John James Audubon credit Thoreau with creating the nature essay for the first time. Earlier nature writers had produced "letters." Episodes." and "Journals" reporting their discoveries and Thoreau was the first to be concerned with craftsmanship and thus the first to make the nature essay a definite, new literary form.

As a piece of art, Walden is often pointed out as the earliest example of modern American prose because it has the air of the twentieth century about it. Though the subject matter is obviously that of the nineteenth century i.e., of farmers driving their cattle to market or of townsfolk riding past the pond in carriages etc. the styling of the sentences and the choice of words is typically that of the twentieth century. The sentences are straight forward, concise, and to the point. The words are also precise, sensual, and concrete and not vague or abstract. In fact Thoreau's prose does not seem to differ from that of Hemingway or Henry Miller except that Thoreau's style is less monotonous

Walden is also known for the use of figurative language. It has examples of all types of figures of speech from epizeux is to meiosis, from similes to puns. Thoreau's use of humour is evident in his use of puns such as 'COENOBITES' (see no bites). Thoreau's humour is not always of a blatant or slapstick variety. It is of a "critical variety." We may laugh when we read that "the head monkey at Paris puts on a traveller's cap, and all the monkeys in American do the same," but our laughter is tinged with the knowledge that Thoreau, more than one way, is making monkeys of the readers. Thoreau seems to use humour to point out "what fools we mortals be."

Thoreau planned his book carefully and his style is unique. Its 18 chapters have 428 paragraphs having varied structures. Each paragraph is built organically. Many of the passages read like independent essays. Some sentences are long and sometimes very long while some are short. Diction is very appropriate. Imagery is vivid and sensory. The images represent the world of nature he likes. There are many references and allusions to the Bible, Classics, Gods and poets and also Hindu scriptures. He cites examples from American History also. His style is terse, racy, epigrammatic and even vigorous. Thoreau was one of the great masters of English prose. It is "purer, stranger, richer and closer to a genuine life rhythm than any one of his contemporaries of successors. There is the organic process of birth, decay and rebirth out of decay. "In brief Walden is a great work with fresh, vital and vigorous style.

13.6 SYMBOLISM IN WALDEN POND

Walden Pond

The meanings of Walden Pond are various, and by the end of the work this small body of water comes to symbolize almost everything Thoreau holds dear spiritually,

philosophically, and personally. It symbolizes the alternative to, and withdrawal from, social conventions and obligations. It also symbolizes the vitality and tranquillity of nature. The two of its aspects of the Walden Pond that fascinate Thoreau: its depth rumoured to be infinite, and it's pure and reflective quality provide a clue to its symbolic meaning. Thoreau is so intrigued by the question of how deep Walden Pond that he devises a new method of plumbing depths to measure it himself, and finds it not more than a hundred feet deep.

Thoreau surprised why people rumour that the pond is bottomless, offers a spiritual explanation: humans need to believe in infinity. He suggests that the pond is not just a natural phenomenon, but also a metaphor for spiritual belief. When he later describes the pond reflecting heaven and making the swimmer's body pure white, we feel that Thoreau too is turning the water (as in the Christian sacrament of baptism by holy water) into a symbol of heavenly purity available to humankind on earth. Thoreau's concluding lines in his chapter on "The Ponds", "Talk of heaven! Ye disgrace earth," suggests his unwillingness to subordinate earth to heaven. Thoreau finds heaven within himself, and it is symbolized by the pond, "looking into which the beholder measures the depth of his own nature." By the end of the "Ponds" chapter, the water hardly seems like a physical part of the external landscape at all anymore; it has become one with the heavenly soul of humankind.

Animals

Animals- Thoreau's chief companions after he moves to Walden Pond, inevitably symbolize his retreat from human society and closer intimacy with the natural world. Thoreau in his narrative describes in detail the behavior patterns of woodchucks, partridges, loons, and mice, among others. His animal writing does not sound like the notes of a naturalist; there is nothing truly scientific or zoological in *Walden,* for Thoreau personalizes nature too much.

He does not record animals neutrally, but instead emphasizes their human characteristics, turning them into short vignettes of human behavior somewhat in the fashion of Aesop's fables. For example, Thoreau's observation of the partridge and its young walking along his windowsill elicits a meditation on motherhood and the maternal urge to protect one's offspring. Similarly, when Thoreau watches two armies of ants wage war with all the "ferocity and carnage of a human battle," Thoreau's attention is not that of an entomologist describing their behavior objectively, but rather that of a philosopher thinking about the universal urge to destroy.

Thoreau describes the townsmen he sees on a trip to Concord as resembling prairie dogs. Ironically, the humans Thoreau describes often seem to be more "brutish" (like the authorities who imprison him in Concord) than the actual brutes in the woods do. Furthermore, Thoreau's intimacy with animals in *Walden* shows that solitude for him is not really and not meant to be, total isolation. His very personal relationship with animals demonstrates that in his solitary stay at the pond, he is making more connections, with other beings around him.

Ice

Ice - the only product of Walden Pond that is useful becomes a symbol of the social use and social importance of nature, and of the exploitation of natural resources. Thoreau's fascination with the ice industry is acute. He describes in great detail the Irish icemen who arrive from Cambridge in the winter of 1846 to cut, block, and haul away 10,000 tons of ice for use in city homes and fancy hotels. The ice-cutters are the only group of people ever

said to arrive at Walden Pond en masse, and so they inevitably represent society in miniature, with all the exploitations and injustices that Thoreau sees in the world at large. Consequently, the labour of the icemen on Walden becomes a symbolic microcosm of the confrontation of society and nature. Initially, though it appears that society gets the upper hand, as the frozen pond is chopped up, disfigured, and robbed of ten thousand tons of its contents, it is nature that triumphs in the end, since less than twenty-five percent of the ice ever reaches its destination, the rest melting and evaporating en route and making its way back to Walden Pond. This analysis of Thoreau suggests that humankind's efforts to exploit nature are in vain, since nature regenerates itself on a far grander scale than humans could ever hope to affect, much less threaten. The icemen's exploitation of Walden contrasts sharply with Thoreau's less economic, more poetical use of it. In describing the rare mystical blue of Walden's water when frozen, he makes ice into a lyrical subject rather than a commodity, and makes us reflect on the question of the market and well as the spiritual value of nature in general.

13.7 REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Write an essay on the symbolism in *Walden*.
2. Write a note on transcendentalism in *Walden*.
3. Discuss Thoreau's philosophy of life as described in *Walden*.

13.8 SUGGESTED READING

1. H.D. Thoreau, Walden
2. Student's Handbook of American Literature. ed. C.D.Narasimhaiah, New Delhi, Kalyani Publishers. 1997.

Dr. B.Karuna

LESSON 14
HUCKLEBERRY FINN

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OBJECTIVES

- To familiarize the students with the biography of Mark Twain
- To get the students acquainted with Emerson as a novelist
- To acquaint the students with the important characters in the novel.
- To sensitize the students about the important themes in the novel.

STRUCTURE

14.1 Mark Twain's Biography
14.2 Plot Overview
14.3. Character List
14.4. Themes and Motifs in the Novel
14.5. Symbols in the Novel
14.6. Analysis of Major Characters
14.7. Reference Books

14.1 MARK TWAIN'S BIOGRAPHY

Born on November 30, 1835, in Florida, Missouri, Samuel L. Clemens wrote under the pen name Mark Twain and went on to pen several novels, including two major classics of American literature, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. He was also a riverboat pilot, journalist, lecturer, entrepreneur and inventor. Twain died on April 21, 1910, in Redding, Connecticut.

Writing grand tales about Tom Sawyer, Huckleberry Finn and the mighty Mississippi River, Mark Twain explored the American soul with wit, buoyancy, and a sharp eye for truth. He became nothing less than a national treasure.

Samuel Langhorne Clemens, better known by his pen name, Mark Twain, was born on November 30, 1835, in the tiny village of Florida, Missouri, the sixth child of John and Jane Clemens. When he was 4 years old, his family moved to nearby Hannibal, a bustling town of 1,000 people. John Clemens worked as a storekeeper, lawyer, judge and land speculator, dreaming of wealth but never achieving it, sometimes finding it hard to feed his family. He was an unsmiling fellow; according to one legend, young Sam never saw him laugh. His mother, by contrast, was a fun-loving, tenderhearted homemaker who whiled away many a winter's night for her family by telling stories. She became head of the household in 1847 when John died unexpectedly. The Clemens family "now became almost destitute," writes biographer Everett Emerson, and was forced into years of economic struggle—a fact that would shape the career of Mark Twain.

14.2 PLOT OVER-VIEW

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn opens by familiarizing us with the events of the novel that preceded it, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*. Both novels are set in the town of St.

Petersburg, Missouri, which lies on the banks of the Mississippi River. At the end of Tom Sawyer, Huckleberry Finn, a poor boy with a drunken bum for a father, and his friend Tom Sawyer, a middle-class boy with an imagination too active for his own good, found a robber's stash of gold. As a result of his adventure, Huck gained quite a bit of money, which the bank held for him in trust. Huck was adopted by the Widow Douglas, a kind but stifling woman who lives with her sister, the self-righteous Miss Watson.

As *Huckleberry Finn* opens, Huck is none too thrilled with his new life of cleanliness, manners, church, and school. However, he sticks it out at the bequest of Tom Sawyer, who tells him that in order to take part in Tom's new "robbers' gang," Huck must stay "respectable." All is well and good until Huck's brutish, drunken father, Pap, reappears in town and demands Huck's money. The local judge, Judge Thatcher, and the Widow try to get legal custody of Huck, but another well-intentioned new judge in town believes in the rights of Huck's natural father and even takes the old drunk into his own home in an attempt to reform him. This effort fails miserably, and Pap soon returns to his old ways. He hangs around town for several months, harassing his son, who in the meantime has learned to read and to tolerate the Widow's attempts to improve him. Finally, outraged when the Widow Douglas warns him to stay away from her house, Pap kidnaps Huck and holds him in a cabin across the river from St. Petersburg.

Whenever Pap goes out, he locks Huck in the cabin, and when he returns home drunk, he beats the boy. Tired of his confinement and fearing the beatings will worsen, Huck escapes from Pap by faking his own death, killing a pig and spreading its blood all over the cabin. Hiding on Jackson's Island in the middle of the Mississippi River, Huck watches the townspeople search the river for his body. After a few days on the island, he encounters Jim, one of Miss Watson's slaves. Jim has run away from Miss Watson after hearing her talk about selling him to a plantation down the river, where he would be treated horribly and separated from his wife and children. Huck and Jim team up, despite Huck's uncertainty about the legality or morality of helping a runaway slave. While they camp out on the island, a great storm causes the Mississippi to flood. Huck and Jim spy a log raft and a house floating past the island. They capture the raft and loot the house, finding in it the body of a man who has been shot. Jim refuses to let Huck see the dead man's face.

Although the island is blissful, Huck and Jim are forced to leave after Huck learns from a woman onshore that her husband has seen smoke coming from the island and believes that Jim is hiding out there. Huck also learns that a reward has been offered for Jim's capture. Huck and Jim start downriver on the raft, intending to leave it at the mouth of the Ohio River and proceed up that river by steamboat to the free states, where slavery is prohibited. Several days' travel takes them past St. Louis, and they have a close encounter with a gang of robbers on a wrecked steamboat. They manage to escape with the robbers' loot.

During a night of thick fog, Huck and Jim miss the mouth of the Ohio and encounter a group of men looking for escaped slaves. Huck has a brief moral crisis about concealing stolen "property" Jim, after all, belongs to Miss Watson but then lies to the men and tells them that his father is on the raft suffering from smallpox. Terrified of the disease, the men give Huck money and hurry away. Unable to backtrack to the mouth of the Ohio, Huck and Jim continue downriver. The next night, a steamboat slams into their raft, and Huck and Jim are separated.

Huck ends up in the home of the kindly Granger fords, a family of Southern aristocrats locked in a bitter and silly feud with a neighboring clan, the Shepherd sons. The elopement of a Granger ford daughter with a Shepherdson son leads to a gun battle in which many in the families are killed. While Huck is caught up in the feud, Jim shows up with the repaired raft. Huck hurries to Jim's hiding place, and they take off down the river.

A few days later, Huck and Jim rescue a pair of men who are being pursued by armed bandits. The men, clearly con artists, claim to be a displaced English duke (the duke) and the long-lost heir to the French throne (the dauphin). Powerless to tell two white adults to leave, Huck and Jim continue down the river with the pair of "aristocrats." The duke and the dauphin pull several scams in the small towns along the river. Coming into one town, they hear the story of a man, Peter Wilks, who has recently died and left much of his inheritance to his two brothers, who should be arriving from England any day. The duke and the dauphin enter the town pretending to be Wilks's brothers. Wilks's three nieces welcome the con men and quickly set about liquidating the estate. A few townspeople become skeptical, and Huck, who grows to admire the Wilks sisters, decides to thwart the scam. He steals the dead Peter Wilks's gold from the duke and the dauphin but is forced to stash it in Wilks's coffin. Huck then reveals all to the eldest Wilks sister, Mary Jane. Huck's plan for exposing the duke and the dauphin is about to unfold when Wilks's real brothers arrive from England. The angry townspeople hold both sets of Wilks claimants, and the duke and the dauphin just barely escape in the ensuing confusion. Fortunately for the sisters, the gold is found. Unfortunately for Huck and Jim, the duke and the dauphin make it back to the raft just as Huck and Jim are pushing off.

After a few more small scams, the duke and dauphin commit their worst crime yet: they sell Jim to a local farmer, telling him Jim is a runaway for whom a large reward is being offered. Huck finds out where Jim is being held and resolves to free him. At the house where Jim is a prisoner, a woman greets Huck excitedly and calls him "Tom." As Huck quickly discovers, the people holding Jim are none other than Tom Sawyer's aunt and uncle, Silas and Sally Phelps. The Phelpses mistake Huck for Tom, who is due to arrive for a visit, and Huck goes along with their mistake. He intercepts Tom between the Phelps house and the steamboat dock, and Tom pretends to be his own younger brother, Sid.

Tom hatches a wild plan to free Jim, adding all sorts of unnecessary obstacles even though Jim is only lightly secured. Huck is sure Tom's plan will get them all killed, but he complies nonetheless. After a seeming eternity of pointless preparation, during which the boys ransack the Phelps's house and make Aunt Sally miserable, they put the plan into action. Jim is freed, but a pursuer shoots Tom in the leg. Huck is forced to get a doctor, and Jim sacrifices his freedom to nurse Tom. All are returned to the Phelps's house, where Jim ends up back in chains.

When Tom wakes the next morning, he reveals that Jim has actually been a free man all along, as Miss Watson, who made a provision in her will to free Jim, died two months earlier. Tom had planned the entire escape idea all as a game and had intended to pay Jim for his troubles. Tom's Aunt Polly then shows up, identifying "Tom" and "Sid" as Huck and Tom. Jim tells Huck, who fears for his future particularly that his father might reappear that the body they found on the floating house off Jackson's Island had been Pap's. Aunt Sally then steps in and offers to adopt Huck, but Huck, who has had enough "sivilizing," announces his plan to set out for the West.

14.3 CHARACTER LIST

Huckleberry Finn - The protagonist and narrator of the novel. Huck is the thirteen-year-old son of the local drunk of St. Petersburg, Missouri, a town on the Mississippi River.

Tom Sawyer - Huck's friend, and the protagonist of *Tom Sawyer,* the novel to which *Huckleberry Finn* is ostensibly the sequel. In *Huckleberry Finn,* Tom serves as a foil to Huck: imaginative, dominating, and given to wild plans taken from the plots of adventure novels, Tom is everything that Huck is not.

Widow Douglas and Miss Watson - Two wealthy sisters who live together in a large house in St. Petersburg and who adopt Huck. The gaunt and severe Miss Watson is the most prominent representative of the hypocritical religious and ethical values Twain criticizes in the novel. The Widow Douglas is somewhat gentler in her beliefs and has more patience with the mischievous Huck.

Jim - One of Miss Watson's household slaves. Jim is superstitious and occasionally sentimental, but he is also intelligent, practical, and ultimately more of an adult than anyone else in the novel. **Pap** - Huck's father, the town drunk and ne'er-do-well. Pap is a wreck when he appears at the beginning of the novel, with disgusting, ghostlike white skin and tattered clothes. The illiterate Pap disapproves of Huck's education and beats him frequently. Pap represents both the general debasement of white society and the failure of family structures in the novel.

The duke and the dauphin - A pair of con men whom Huck and Jim rescue as they are being run out of a river town. The older man, who appears to be about seventy, claims to be the "dauphin," the son of King Louis XVI and heir to the French throne. The younger man, who is about thirty, claims to be the usurped Duke of Bridgewater. The duke and the dauphin carry out a number of increasingly disturbing swindles as they travel down the river on the raft.

Judge Thatcher - The local judge who shares responsibility for Huck with the Widow Douglas and is in charge of safeguarding the money that Huck and Tom found at the end of *Tom Sawyer.*

The Granger fords - A family that takes Huck in after a steamboat hits his raft, separating him from Jim. The kindhearted Granger fords, who offer Huck a place to stay in their tacky country home, are locked in a long-standing feud with another local family, the Shepherd sons. Twain uses the two families to engage in some rollicking humor and to mock a overly romanticizes ideas about family honor. Ultimately, the families' sensationalized feud gets many of them killed.

The Wilks family - At one point during their travels, the duke and the dauphin encounter a man who tells them of the death of a local named Peter Wilks, who has left behind a rich estate. The man inadvertently gives the con men enough information to allow them to pretend to be Wilks's two brothers from England, who are the recipients of much of the inheritance.

Silas and Sally Phelps - Tom Sawyer's aunt and uncle, whom Huck coincidentally encounters in his search for Jim after the con men have sold him. Sally is the sister of Tom's aunt, Polly.

Aunt Polly - Tom Sawyer's aunt and guardian and Sally Phelps's sister. Aunt Polly appears at the end of the novel and properly identifies Huck, who has pretended to be Tom, and Tom, who has pretended to be his own younger brother, Sid.

14.4 THEMES AND MOTIFS IN THE NOVEL

Racism and Slavery

Although Twain wrote *Huckleberry Finn* two decades after the Emancipation Proclamation and the end of the Civil War, America and especially the South was still struggling with racism and the aftereffects of slavery. By the early 1880s, Reconstruction, the plan to put the United States back together after the war and integrate freed slaves into society, had hit shaky ground, although it had not yet failed outright. As Twain worked on his novel, race relations, which seemed to be on a positive path in the years following the Civil War, once again became strained. The imposition of Jim Crow laws, designed to limit the power of blacks in the South in a variety of indirect ways, brought the beginning of a new, insidious effort to oppress. The new racism of the South, less institutionalized and monolithic, was also more difficult to combat. Slavery could be outlawed, but when white Southerners enacted racist laws or policies under a professed motive of self-defense against newly freed blacks, far fewer people, Northern or Southern, saw the act as immoral and rushed to combat it.

Although Twain wrote the novel after slavery was abolished, he set it several decades earlier, when slavery was still a fact of life. But even by Twain's time, things had not necessarily gotten much better for blacks in the South. In this light, we might read Twain's depiction of slavery as an allegorical representation of the condition of blacks in the United States even *after* the abolition of slavery. Just as slavery places the noble and moral Jim under the control of white society, no matter how degraded that white society may be, so too did the insidious racism that arose near the end of Reconstruction oppress black men for illogical and hypocritical reasons. In *Huckleberry Finn,* Twain, by exposing the hypocrisy of slavery, demonstrates how racism distorts the oppressors as much as it does those who are oppressed. The result is a world of moral confusion, in which seemingly "good" white people such as Miss Watson and Sally Phelps express no concern about the injustice of slavery or the cruelty of separating Jim from his family.

Intellectual and Moral Education

By focusing on Huck's education, *Huckleberry Finn* fits into the tradition of the bildungsroman: a novel depicting an individual's maturation and development. As a poor, uneducated boy, for all intents and purposes an orphan, Huck distrusts the morals and precepts of the society that treats him as an outcast and fails to protect him from abuse. This apprehension about society, and his growing relationship with Jim, lead Huck to question many of the teachings that he has received, especially regarding race and slavery. More than once, we see Huck choose to "go to hell" rather than go along with the rules and follow what he has been taught. Huck bases these decisions on his experiences, his own sense of logic, and what his developing conscience tells him. On the raft, away from civilization, Huck is especially free from society's rules, able to make his own decisions without restriction. Through deep introspection, he comes to his own conclusions, unaffected by the accepted and often hypocritical rules and values of Southern culture. By the novel's end, Huck has learned to "read" the world around him, to distinguish good, bad, right, wrong, menace, friend, and so

on. His moral development is sharply contrasted to the character of Tom Sawyer, who is influenced by a bizarre mix of adventure novels and Sunday-school teachings, which he combines to justify his outrageous and potentially harmful escapades.

Motifs Childhood

Huck's youth is an important factor in his moral education over the course of the novel, for we sense that only a child is open-minded enough to undergo the kind of development that Huck does. Since Huck and Tom are young, their age lends a sense of play to their actions, which excuses them in certain ways and also deepens the novel's commentary on slavery and society. Ironically, Huck often knows better than the adults around him, even though he has lacked the guidance that a proper family and community should have offered him. Twain also frequently draws links between Huck's youth and Jim's status as a black man: both are vulnerable, yet Huck, because he is white, has power over Jim. And on a different level, the silliness, pure joy, and naïveté of childhood give *Huckleberry Finn* a sense of fun and humor. Though its themes are quite weighty, the novel itself feels light in tone and is an enjoyable read because of this rambunctious childhood excitement that enlivens the story.

Lies and Cons

Huckleberry Finn is full of malicious lies and scams, many of them coming from the duke and the dauphin. It is clear that these con men's lies are bad, for they hurt a number of innocent people. Yet Huck himself tells a number of lies and even cons a few people, most notably the slave-hunters, to whom he makes up a story about a smallpox outbreak in order to protect Jim. As Huck realizes, it seems that telling a lie can actually be a good thing, depending on its purpose. This insight is part of Huck's learning process, as he finds that some of the rules he has been taught contradict what seems to be "right." At other points, the lines between a con, legitimate entertainment, and approved social structures like religion are fine indeed. In this light, lies and cons provide an effective way for Twain to highlight the moral ambiguity that runs through the novel.

Superstitions and Folk Beliefs

From the time Huck meets him on Jackson's Island until the end of the novel, Jim spouts a wide range of superstitions and folktales. Whereas Jim initially appears foolish to believe so unwaveringly in these kinds of signs and omens, it turns out, curiously, that many of his beliefs do indeed have some basis in reality or presage events to come. Much as we do, Huck at first dismisses most of Jim's superstitions as silly, but ultimately he comes to appreciate Jim's deep knowledge of the world. In this sense, Jim's superstition serves as an alternative to accepted social teachings and assumptions and provides a reminder that mainstream conventions are not always right.

Parodies of Popular Romance Novels

Huckleberry Finn is full of people who base their lives on romantic literary models and stereotypes of various kinds. Tom Sawyer, the most obvious example, bases his life and actions on adventure novels. The deceased Emmeline Granger ford painted weepy maidens

and wrote poems about dead children in the romantic style. The Shepherdson and Granger ford families kill one another out of a bizarre, overexcited conception of family honor. These characters' proclivities toward the romantic allow Twain a few opportunities to indulge in some fun, and indeed, the episodes that deal with this subject are among the funniest in the novel. However, there is a more substantive message beneath: that popular literature is highly stylized and therefore rarely reflects the reality of a society. Twain shows how a strict adherence to these romantic ideals is ultimately dangerous: Tom is shot, Emmeline dies, and the Shepherdson's and Granger fords end up in a deadly clash.

14.5. SYMBOLS IN THE NOVEL

The Mississippi River

For Huck and Jim, the Mississippi River is the ultimate symbol of freedom. Alone on their raft, they do not have to answer to anyone. The river carries them toward freedom: for Jim, toward the free states; for Huck, away from his abusive father and the restrictive "sivilizing" of St. Petersburg. Much like the river itself, Huck and Jim are in flux, willing to change their attitudes about each other with little prompting. Despite their freedom, however, they soon find that they are not completely free from the evils and influences of the towns on the river's banks. Even early on, the real world intrudes on the paradise of the raft: the river floods, bringing Huck and Jim into contact with criminals, wrecks, and stolen goods. Then, a thick fog causes them to miss the mouth of the Ohio River, which was to be their route to freedom.

As the novel progresses, then, the river becomes something other than the inherently benevolent place Huck originally thought it was. As Huck and Jim move further south, the duke and the dauphin invade the raft, and Huck and Jim must spend more time ashore. Though the river continues to offer a refuge from trouble, it often merely effects the exchange of one bad situation for another. Each escape exists in the larger context of a continual drift southward, toward the Deep South and entrenched slavery. In this transition from idyllic retreat to source of peril, the river mirrors the complicated state of the South. As Huck and Jim's journey progresses, the river, which once seemed a paradise and a source of freedom, becomes merely a short-term means of escape that nonetheless pushes Huck and Jim ever further toward danger and destruction.

14.6. ANALYSIS OF MAJOR CHARACTERS

Huck Finn

From the beginning of the novel, Twain makes it clear that Huck is a boy who comes from the lowest levels of white society. His father is a drunk and a ruffian who disappears for months on end. Huck himself is dirty and frequently homeless. Although the Widow Douglas attempts to "reform" Huck, he resists her attempts and maintains his independent ways. The community has failed to protect him from his father, and though the Widow finally gives Huck some of the schooling and religious training that he had missed, he has not been indoctrinated with social values in the same way a middle-class boy like Tom Sawyer has been. Huck's distance from mainstream society makes him skeptical of the world around him and the ideas it passes on to him.

Huck's instinctual distrust and his experiences as he travels down the river force him to question the things society has taught him. According to the law, Jim is Miss Watson's property, but according to Huck's sense of logic and fairness, it seems "right" to help Jim. Huck's natural intelligence and his willingness to think through a situation on its own merits lead him to some conclusions that are correct in their context but that would shock white society. For example, Huck discovers, when he and Jim meet a group of slave-hunters, that telling a lie is sometimes the right course of action.

Because Huck is a child, the world seems new to him. Everything he encounters is an occasion for thought. Because of his background, however, he does more than just apply the rules that he has been taught—he creates his own rules. Yet Huck is not some kind of independent moral genius. He must still struggle with some of the preconceptions about blacks that society has ingrained in him, and at the end of the novel, he shows himself all too willing to follow Tom Sawyer's lead. But even these failures are part of what makes Huck appealing and sympathetic. He is only a boy, after all, and therefore fallible. Imperfect as he is, Huck represents what anyone is capable of becoming: a thinking, feeling human being rather than a mere cog in the machine of society.

Jim

Jim, Huck's companion as he travels down the river, is a man of remarkable intelligence and compassion. At first glance, Jim seems to be superstitious to the point of idiocy, but a careful reading of the time that Huck and Jim spend on Jackson's Island reveals that Jim's superstitions conceal a deep knowledge of the natural world and represent an alternate form of "truth" or intelligence. Moreover, Jim has one of the few healthy, functioning families in the novel. Although he has been separated from his wife and children, he misses them terribly, and it is only the thought of a permanent separation from them that motivates his criminal act of running away from Miss Watson. On the river, Jim becomes a surrogate father, as well as a friend, to Huck, taking care of him without being intrusive or smothering. He cooks for the boy and shelters him from some of the worst horrors that they encounter, including the sight of Pap's corpse, and, for a time, the news of his father's passing.

Some readers have criticized Jim as being too passive, but it is important to remember that he remains at the mercy of every other character in this novel, including even the poor, thirteen-year-old Huck, as the letter that Huck nearly sends to Miss Watson demonstrates. Like Huck, Jim is realistic about his situation and must find ways of accomplishing his goals without incurring the wrath of those who could turn him in. In this position, he is seldom able to act boldly or speak his mind. Nonetheless, despite these restrictions and constant fear, Jim consistently acts as a noble human being and a loyal friend. In fact, Jim could be described as the only real adult in the novel, and the only one who provides a positive, respectable example for Huck to follow.

Tom Sawyer

Tom is the same age as Huck and his best friend. Whereas Huck's birth and upbringing have left him in poverty and on the margins of society, Tom has been raised in relative comfort. As a result, his beliefs are an unfortunate combination of what he has learned from the adults around him and the fanciful notions he has gleaned from reading romance and adventure novels. Tom believes in sticking strictly to "rules," most of which

have more to do with style than with morality or anyone's welfare. Tom is thus the perfect foil for Huck: his rigid adherence to rules and precepts contrasts with Huck's tendency to question authority and think for himself.

Although Tom's escapades are often funny, they also show just how disturbingly and unthinkingly cruel society can be. Tom knows all along that Miss Watson has died and that Jim is now a free man, yet he is willing to allow Jim to remain a captive while he entertains himself with fantastic escape plans. Tom's plotting tortures not only Jim, but Aunt Sally and Uncle Silas as well. In the end, although he is just a boy like Huck and is appealing in his zest for adventure and his unconscious wittiness, Tom embodies what a young, well-to-do white man is raised to become in the society of his time: self-centered with dominion over all.

14.7 REFERENCE BOOKS

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LESSON 15
HUCKLEBERRY FINN

OBJECTIVES

- To enable the students to understand the novel.
- To make the students appreciate the various concerns of the novel
- To encourage the students' critical analysis and evaluation of the novel

STRUCTURE

15.1 Chapter wise Summary and analysis of the novel Huckleberry Finn.
15.2 Self-assessment Questions
15.3 Reference Books

15.1 CHAPTER WISE SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

Chapter 1

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn begins where the The Adventures of Tom Sawyer leaves off. At the end of the previous novel, Huck and Tom find a treasure of twelve thousand dollars, which they divide. Judge Thatcher takes their money and invests it in the bank at six percent interest, so that each boy earns a dollar a day on their money. Huck Finn moves in with the Widow Douglas, who has agreed to care for him.

Huckleberry Finn is the narrator of this story, and he starts off by describing his life to the reader. After moving in with the Widow Douglas, who buys him new clothes and begins teaching him the Bible. Huck is uncomfortable with all of these "restrictions" on his life, and soon runs away to avoid being "civilized". Tom Sawyer goes after Huck and convinces him to return to the Widow's house after promising that they will start a band of robbers together.

Huck agrees to return, but still complains about having to wear new clothes and eat only when the dinner bell rings, something he was not used to while growing up with his Pap.

The Widow Douglas teaches Huck the Bible and forbids him from smoking. Her attentions towards him are complemented by her sister, Miss Watson, who also lives in the house. Miss Watson is a spinster who decides that Huck must get an education. She tries to teach him spelling and lectures him on how to behave well so that he will be welcomed into heaven. Miss Watson warns Huck that if he does not change his ways, he will go to hell.

Ironically, Huck finds the description of hell far more enticing and exciting than the description of heaven, and decides he would rather go to hell, but doesn't tell Miss Watson of his decision.

That night, Huck goes into his bedroom and lights a candle before falling asleep.

Huck flicks a spider away, and accidentally burns it up in the candle flame, which he thinks is a very bad omen. Huck lies awake until midnight, at which time he hears a soft meow from below his window. The meow is a signal from Tom Sawyer, and Huck replies

with a similar meow. He climbs out of the bedroom window and drops to the ground to meet his friend.

Chapter 2

While the boys are sneaking away, Huck trips over a root and makes a noise when he falls. Miss Watson's slave Jim hears the sound and comes outside to look around. Huck and Tom hunker down to hide, and Jim ends up sitting down right between them to wait to hear the sound again. At first, Huck thinks they will never get away, but Jim soon gets tired and falls asleep against a tree.

While Jim sleeps, Tom wants to play a trick on him. He and Huck climb into the house and steal three candles, for which they leave a nickel as "pay". Then Tom quietly makes his way to Jim, takes off Jim's hat, and places it on a tree branch above Jim's head. He soon returns and tells Huck what he did.

After Jim wakes up, he believes he has been bewitched, and keeps the nickel as a token around his neck for the rest of his life. According to Huck, Jim tells all the other slaves that he had been ridden around the world by some witches, and that the nickel was given to him by the devil.

Tom and Huck sneak down to the river and meet some of the other boys who are supposed to be members of Tom's robber band. Together, they steal a skiff and float down the river several miles to an area where Tom has discovered a cave. Tom shows the boys a hidden room in the cave which they make their robber headquarters. Tom then reads them an oath that he has written, taken mostly from robber books and pirate stories. The boys argue over what Huck Finn's role in the gang will be, because Huck does not have a family for them to kill in case he reveals any of the gang's secrets. Huck finally offers them Miss Watson in place of his real parents, and the boys then sign an oath in blood to join the band. Tom is elected captain.

Tom explains that as robbers, they will only attack carriages and take the things inside. The men will be killed and the women will be brought back to the cave. He also mentions that they will ransom some of the people, because that is what they do in books, although he has no idea what "ransom" means. After that, all the boys agree to meet again soon. They return home exhausted and Huck climbs into bed having muddied up his new clothes, and feeling dead tired.

Chapter 3

The morning after his robber gang adventure, Huck receives a lecture from Miss Watson for dirtying his clothes. She takes him into a closet to pray, and tells him to pray every day so he will get what he wants. Huck tries to pray daily, but becomes disillusioned when all he gets is a fish-line with no hooks, when he prayed extra hard for hooks. When he asks Miss Watson about it, she tells him praying brings spiritual gifts. Unable to see any use for that sort of thing, Huck decides praying is probably not worth his time.

A drowned man is found in the river, and the townspeople believe is Huck's Pap. Huck is unconvinced after he hears the man was found floating on his back. He remarks that everyone knows dead men float face down, so this must have been a woman in man's clothing that looked like his Pap.

Tom Sawyer's robber band falls apart after a few weeks because the boys get bored of pretending they are robbing people. The only real escapade is when they wreck a Sunday School picnic and chase some of elementary school children away. Tom pretends that during this 'battle' there were Arabs and elephants and that the boys were attacking a large army, but Huck is too practical to follow Tom's fantastical imaginations. When Huck asks why they could not see all the elephants, Tom explains that some magicians must have turned the whole army into a Sunday School picnic. Tom then tells Huck all about genies in bottles, and how the genies must obey whoever rubs the bottle. Huck gets an old lamp and tries to find a genie, but when it fails he decides that the genies were just another of Tom's lies.

Chapter 4

Huck spends the next three months living with the widow and getting acclimated to his new life. He starts to attend school and remarks, "I liked the old ways best, but I was getting so I liked the new ones, too."

Everything goes fairly well until one day when Huck accidentally overturns a salt-shaker at the breakfast table. Miss Watson does not let him throw any salt over his left shoulder (as a way of avoiding the bad luck), and as a result Huck starts to get worried that something bad will happen. As soon as Huck leaves the house, he notices boot prints in the fresh snow. Upon closer inspection he realizes that there is a cross on the left boot-heel, which he has only ever seen in his Pap's. Huck's Pap has returned.

Aware that Pap is probably after his money (the $6,000 that he got from sharing the treasure with Tom), Huck goes to Judge Thatcher and begs the Judge to take all his money as a gift. The Judge is quite surprised by the request, but when Huck refuses to reveal why he wants to give away his money, Judge Thatcher agrees to "buy" it for one dollar, saying he will take the money "for a consideration."

Huck, still quite worried over what is going to happen now that Pap has returned, goes to the Miss Watson's slave Jim for advice. Jim takes out a hair-ball in order to do some magic with it for Huck. When the hair-ball refuses to work properly, Jim suggest that Huck give it some money. Huck offers a counterfeit quarter, which Jim takes and places under the ball. Jim tells Huck that Pap is torn between two angels, a good white angel and a bad black angel.

He also explains that Huck will have considerable pain in his life and at the same time considerable joy. Huck returns to his room that night and finds his Pap sitting there.

Chapter 5

Huck arrives back at his room and sees his Pap sitting in a chair. Huck describes Pap as a filthy, poor man who used to scare him a great deal. Now, however, Huck is no longer scared of Pap, and instead notes how old his father has grown.

Pap harasses Huck for wearing good clothes and going to school. He then accuses Huck of putting on airs and acting better than his own father. Pap remarks that no one in his family could ever read, and that he certainly does not want his son to be smarter than he is.

He demands that Huck read him something, and soon becomes quite furious when he realizes that Huck is in fact able to read. Pap threatens to beat Huck if he ever catches him

near the school again. He makes Huck hand over the dollar that Judge Thatcher "paid" him and then climbs out the window to go drinking in the town.

The next day, Pap goes to Judge Thatcher and tries to make the Judge give him Huck's money. The Judge refuses, and he and the widow take a case to court in an effort to get Huck legally placed with one of them. The custody judge is unfortunately new to the town and refuses to separate Huck from his father. Judge Thatcher, realizing he cannot win, gives Huck some money, which Huck immediately turns over to Pap. Pap gets extremely drunk and is placed in jail for a week.

The new judge then sympathetically takes Pap into his home, dresses him well, and tries to reform him. After thinking that he has reformed Pap, the Judge goes to bed. That night, Pap sneaks out of the new judge's house and buys some alcohol. By morning he is so drunk that he breaks his arm in two places and nearly freezes to death on the porch. The new judge is livid at this betrayal of his trust and comments that the only way to reform Pap is with a shotgun.

Chapter 6

Pap begins hanging out around the town and demands Huck give him money every few days. When the widow tells Pap to get away from her property, he kidnaps Huck and takes him three miles upriver to a log cabin. Pap carefully locks the door and never leaves Huck's side without making sure that Huck cannot escape. Huck enjoys being free from school but soon gets upset that he is being beaten so much.

Searching for a way to escape, Huck discovers part of a saw that is missing its handle and starts to saw off a log in the rear corner of the cabin, but is forced to stop when Pap returns. Pap is drunk and makes Huck go outside and bring in all the supplies he has brought from town. Pap proceeds to drunkenly curse everyone he has ever met and spends a significant part of his tirade criticizing the government.

Huck hopes to escape after Pap falls asleep, but Pap has a fitful night, and Huck is afraid he might wake up and catch him trying to get out of the cabin. At one point Pap jumps up thinking he is covered with snakes. Later, he dreams that the angel of death is after him and he starts to chase Huck around the cabin with a knife. Huck runs for his life and manages to survive after Pap falls asleep again. Huck then takes down the gun and holds it for protection.

Chapter 7

Pap and Huck go out into the woods to hunt for game. While there, Huck sees an abandoned canoe on the river and jumps in to get it. When he realizes that Pap did not see him snare the canoe, he hides it in a little stream for future use and returns to Pap. Next, Huck fetches a wooden raft from the river with timber that is worth about ten dollars. Pap locks Huck into the cabin and takes the raft to town in order to sell it.

Taking advantage of Pap's absence, Huck quickly finishes his sawing and climbs out of the cabin, taking everything worth any money to his canoe. He axes down the front door and goes hunting for game. Huck shoots a wild pig, butchers it inside the cabin, and spreads the blood on his shirt and the floor. He also carefully lays some of his hairs on the now

bloody ax to make it appear as if he has been killed. Huck cuts open a sack of flour and marks a trail indicating that the killer left via a lake that does not connect to the river. Thus, he prevents anyone from searching along the river for anything more than his dead body.

As Huck is finishing, a man appears nearby in a skiff. Huck recognizes that it is Pap returning early and that he is sober. Immediately, Huck jumps into the canoe and pushes off. He floats downstream until he reaches Jackson's Island, a deserted stretch of land in the middle of the river. Huck ties up the canoe and satisfied with his work, settles down to get some sleep.

Chapter 8

Huck wakes up on Jackson's Island late the next day and hears a cannon being fired. A ferryboat filled with his friends comes down the river firing a cannon in hopes of bringing his dead body to the surface. The search parties have also set loaves of bread filled with mercury afloat, believing the mercury and bread will be attracted to his body. Knowing the loaves will be floating around the area, Huck searches for one and enjoys eating it for lunch.

After a few days, Huck begins exploring the island. While following and hunting a large snake, he accidentally stumbles into a clearing with a still smoking campfire. Out of fear, he retreats to his campsite and paddles over to the Illinois side of the river. However, he soon returns for the night and sleeps poorly as he is overwhelmed with fear for who else might be inhabiting the island.

The next morning Huck decides to find out who else is on the island with him. He paddles his canoe down to the other campsite and hides in the brush. Soon he sees Jim, the slaveTom Sawyer played tricks on. Out of joy for finding a friend on the island, Huck rushes out and greets him. Jim nearly dies of fright when he sees Huck, whom he believes to be dead. Huck tells him the story about how he faked his murder. Jim relates that he overhead Miss Watson telling the widow that she was going to sell him down the river for a good sum of money. To avoid being sold, Jim ran away, and has been hiding out on Jackson's island.

Jim starts to tell Huck about various superstitious signs which the slaves watch out for. When some birds go hopping along the ground, stopping every few feet, Jim comments that means it will rain soon. He also tells Huck a story about how he lost a large sum of money, fourteen dollars at the time, by speculating. First, Jim bought a cow that died, and then invested with another slave who was setting up a "bank." Unfortunately, the bank lost all its money and poor Jim had nothing left.

Chapter 9

Jim and Huck explore the island together and discover a cavern atop a hill in the middle of the island. They paddle their canoe to the base of the hill and then haul their equipment into the cave in order to keep it dry. The storm Jim predicted arrives that night, and the river rises for more than twelve days straight.

Huck and Jim go out on the river at night to pick up drifting logs and other objects that happen to float downstream. One night, they capture a large raft which they will later use to navigate the river after they leave the island. Later on, they see a whole house floating

downstream and climb into it to salvage some of the goods. Jim finds Huck's Pap lying dead on the floor of the house, but refuses to let Huck see the man's face and does not reveal that it is Pap. Jim sees Pap was shot in the back while obviously attempting to rob the house.

Chapter 10

Huck is thrilled with all the things they managed to get from the house and tells Jim that he wishes they could have fun like that more often. Huck is also still curious about the man in the house but Jim refuses to talk about him. Huck mentions that he thought they would have bad luck after he brought a snakeskin into the cave, not great luck like what they were having. Always superstitious, Jim warns Huck that the bad luck is still coming.

Three days later, Huck tries to play a trick on Jim by leaving a curled up dead rattlesnake under Jim's blanket. But when Jim crawls into the bed he gets bitten in the ankle by the snake's mate. Huck kills the mate and sheepishly carries both snakes far away from the cave, embarrassed by the results of his behavior. Jim takes the jug of Pap's whiskey and drinks himself into a drunken stupor to avoid feeling the pain of his swollen leg. It takes Jim four entire days to recover from the bite and Huck vows to never touch a snakeskin with his hands again.

In order to catch up on what is happening in the town, Huck dresses up as a girl and goes to the village. He stops at a house where he sees a woman knitting. Since she is new to the town, Huck figures he can talk to her without being recognized.

Chapter 11

Dressed as a girl, Huck knocks on the door of the house. The woman lets him in, believing him to be a young girl. Huck inquires about the area, and the woman talks for over an hour about her problems. She finally gets to the news about Jim and Huck and tells him that there is a three hundred dollar bounty for capturing Jim. Apparently some of the townspeople believe that Jim killed Huck and ran away, while other people believe that Pap killed Huck. She tells Huck that she personally believes Jim is hiding out on Jackson's Island.

Huck becomes nervous at this news and picks up a needle and thread. He does such a poor job of threading the needle that the woman gets suspicious of his gender. Without Huck knowing he is being tested, the woman has him throw a piece of lead at a rat in order to judge his aim. Afterwards, she reveals where Huck went wrong with his "girl" behavior and asks him what his real name is, telling him to be honest. Huck cleverly pretends to be an escaped apprentice hiding in women's clothes to avoid detection.

Huck is finally able to extricate himself from the woman and immediately returns to the island. He tells Jim to grab everything and put it in the canoe. Together they shove off, after piling their belongings onto the raft, which they then tow behind them.

Chapter 12

Jim and Huck spend the next few days traveling down the river. They improve the raft by building a wigwam, which will keep them dry and warm. Each night, Huck goes into a

nearby town and buys more provisions for the next day. They only travel at night to avoid being seen and questioned.

One night, during a strong storm, they see a wrecked steamboat ahead of them. Huck convinces Jim to tie the raft to the boat and climb on board. They are surprised to hear voices, which Huck goes to investigate. There are three robbers on board, two of whom have tied up the third man. Apparently the bound man had threatened to turn them all in to the state. One of the robbers wants to kill him immediately, but the other man restrains him. The two men finally decide to kill their partner by leaving him on the boat and waiting until it sinks.

At this news, Huck scrambles back to rejoin Jim. Together they discover that their raft has come untied and floated away.

Chapter 13

Having lost their raft, Huck and Jim search along the crashed ferryboat for the robbers' skiff. Just as they find it, the two robbers emerge and place the goods they have looted into the skiff. The robbers then remember that their partner still has his share of the money, so they return to steal it from him. Before they can return back to the boat, Huck and Jim jump into the skiff, cut the rope, and speed away downstream. Before morning, they manage to find their raft again and recapture it.

Huck then goes ashore and finds a ferry night-watchman. To try to save the robbers, because he feels guilty leaving them for dead, he tells the man that his family ran into the wreck while traveling downriver and that they are stuck there. The man immediately gets his ferry moving to try and save them. However, before he gets very far, the wreck floats by, having come loose and sunk even further. Huck realizes that all three men aboard the wreck have surely drowned. Disappointed, but proud of his effort, Huck paddles downriver until he meets up with Jim. Together they sink the skiff and tie up to wait for daylight.

Chapter 14

Huck and Jim spend some time relaxing and discussing various things. Huck tells Jim all about kings and other aristocratic personages, and Jim is very impressed and interested. However, when Huck mentions King Solomon, Jim starts telling him that Solomon was one of the most foolish men who ever lived. Jim comments that any man who had as many wives as Solomon would go crazy, and that the notion of chopping a child in half in order to figure out which woman is the rightful mother is plain stupid. Jim remarks that the issue was about a whole child, not a half a child, and Solomon would have shown more respect for children if he had not had so many. Huck tries to explain the moral lesson Solomon was trying to teach, but Jim hears none of it.

Next, Huck tries to explain to Jim that Frenchmen speak a different language. Jim is surprised by this and cannot understand why all men would not speak the same language.

Huck tries to make the analogy that a cat and a cow do not speak the same language, so neither should an American and a Frenchman. Jim then points out that a cat and a cow are not the same species, but Frenchmen and Americans are. He concludes that Frenchmen should therefore speak the same language he does. At this point Huck gets frustrated and gives up trying to argue with Jim.

Chapter 15

Jim is hoping to reach Cairo, at the bottom of Illinois where the Ohio river merges with the Mississippi. From there, both he and Huck will be able to take a steamboat upriver and into the free states where Jim will finally be a free man.

As they approaching that section of the river, a dense fog arrives and blankets everything in a murky white. They land on the shore, but before Huck is able to tie up the raft, the raft pulls loose and starts floating downstream with Jim aboard. Huck jumps into the canoe and follows it, but soon loses sight of it in the fog. He and Jim spend several hours tracking each other by calling out, but a large island finally separates them and Huck is left all alone.

The next morning, Huck awakens and luckily manages to catch up with the raft. He finds Jim asleep and wakes him up. Jim is glad to see him, but Huck tries to play a trick on Jim by telling him that the events of the night before were just a dream. After some convincing, Jim starts to interpret the "dream." After some time, Huck finally points out the leaves and debris left from the night before, at which point Jim gets mad at Huck for playing such a mean trick on him. Huck feels terrible about what he did and apologizes to Jim.

Chapter 16

As Jim and Huck float downriver, Jim restlessly searches the riverbank for the town of Cairo. Each time Jim mentions how soon he will be free, Huck feels increasingly guilty.

Huck knows that helping Jim escape is breaking the law, but Jim is also his friend. Thus, Huck is trapped in a difficult moral dilemma. After a great deal of reasoning, Huck realizes he will feel possibly even worse if he turned Jim into the authorities, and decides it would be best to let him escape.

Huck makes this decision spontaneously, when heading to shore to determine what town they are near and with the intention of reporting Jim. On his way to shore, Huck meets two white men searching for runaway slaves. The men ask him who else is on his raft and rather than telling them about Jim, Huck tells them his Pa, mother, and sister are aboard.

Huck pretends to be eager for their help and tells them no one else has been willing to pull the raft to shore. At this news, the men become suspicious and finally conclude that Huck's family must have smallpox. Each man then puts a twenty dollar coin on a log and floats it over to Huck to avoid any interaction with him, but only after making him promise not to land anywhere near their town. Huck's ingenious lie fools the men and saves Jim from capture.

Huck and Jim are thrilled to have received so much extra money, which is enough for several trips up the river. They continue watching for Cairo, but are unable to locate it. After several days, both Huck and Jim begin to suspect that they passed Cairo in the fog several nights prior. The next night, Huck and Jim start to plan to use the canoe to paddle upriver.

However, the canoe disappears, forcing them to continue downriver in hopes of buying a new canoe. While drifting downstream, they encounter an oncoming steamboat.

Instead of getting out of their way as the steamboats usually do, the boat ploughs directly over the raft. Both Huck and Jim are forced to dive overboard. Huck emerges and grabs a piece of wood with which he paddles to the shore. Jim is nowhere to be seen. Huck is soon surrounded by dogs and stands dripping wet and immobilized.

Chapter 17

Huck knows better than to run when surrounded by dogs, and stands stock still. Within a few moments, a man calls out to him from the house telling him to be still. After several of the men in the house prepare their rifles, Huck is allowed to approach. He cautiously enters the house and when the family sees him, they immediately become friendly.

Huck has happened upon the Grangerford household, which is in a drawn out and violent feud with the nearby Shepherdson family. When the Grangerford's recognize that Huck is no relation to the Shepherdson's, they welcome him with open arms.

Huck tells the family that he is an orphan named George Jackson from down south who has lost everything, and arrived at their home after falling off of a steamboat. The Grangerford's offer him a place in their home and he agrees to stay. The youngest son, Buck, is near to Huck's age and they soon become good friends.

As Huck grows acclimated to his new home, he learns that the family had a younger daughter named Emmeline who passed away several years earlier. She was a talented poet and painter, and concentrated her work on eulogies for the dead. Huck thinks Emmeline's poetry is very beautiful and wishes that he could compose some lines devoted to Emmeline, but is unable to come up with anything.

The family is quite wealthy considering their location. They own a fairly large house with nice furnishings and even have intellectual books in the parlor. Huck is happy to stay there, especially when he discovers their wonderful cooking.

Chapter 18

Huck introduces the reader to most of the Grangerford family. The father of the house is Colonel Grangerford, whom Huck describes as a powerful, well-respected and honored man. The family owns a considerable amount of land and over one hundred slaves, including a slave for each member of the household. The two eldest sons are Tom and Bob, and the youngest is Buck, with whom Huck becomes friends. There are two daughters: Miss Charlotte, who bears herself like her father, and Miss Sophia, who is timid and kind.

While out hunting one day, Huck and Buck hear a horse approaching behind them. Quickly, they run behind a bush and wait to see who arrives. Harvey Shepherdson passes by and Buck takes a shot at him, knocking off his hat. Harvey then follows the two boys into the woods but is unable to catch them. At this point, Buck explains the family feud to Huck. For over thirty years, the men in each family have been committed to killing off the men in the opposing family. No one remembers why the feud started, but several men have been killed each year.

When the Grangerford's attend church, all the men carry guns with them, and ironically listen to preaching about brotherly love. After the service and once they have all

returned home, Miss Sophia pulls Huck aside and urgently asks him to return to the church and fetch her Testament, which she accidentally left there. Huck does as he is asked and finds the book, but also sees a note that has been slipped into it which reads, "half past two." Huck returns the Testament to Sophia, and promises that he did not read the note.

When Huck goes outside, he realizes that his personal slave is following him very closely, which is unusual. The slave offers to show him some water moccasins, an offer which he had extended the day before as well. Huck realizes that the slave is speaking to him in some kind of code and that something else is going on. Huck agrees to follow him and in the swamp is surprised to find Jim asleep on the ground. Jim has the raft, which he completely repaired, and is waiting for Huck to rejoin him so they can continue their trip downriver.

The next day Miss Sophia elopes with Harvey Shepherdson, and the feud is rekindled in full force. Buck's father and both his brothers are killed in an ambush, and Huck arrives at the harbor in time to see Buck and his cousin shooting at five grown men. Eventually the men manage to sneak around Buck and kill both the boys while Huck watches from a tree that he climbed in an attempt to find safety. Once the Shepherdson's have left, Huck pulls Buck and the other boy out of the river and onto dry land where he weeps and covers their faces.

Huck runs back to the house and sees that it is quite silent in the wake of the family tragedy. He goes to the swamp, finds Jim, who is glad to see that Huck lived through the massacre, and together they push the raft into the river and start floating downstream.

Chapter 19

Huck and Jim continue down the river for a few days, enjoying the fresh air and warm breezes. Huck finds a canoe and uses it to paddle up a stream about a mile in search of berries. Two men come running through the woods and beg him for help. Huck makes them cover their tracks and then all three paddle back to the river.

The two men are humbugs and frauds who were running away from townspeople who meant to tar and feather them. One man is about seventy and balding, and the other is in his thirties. The younger man specializes in printing and theater while the older man often "works" camp revivals.

The younger man then tells them that he is actually the direct descendent of the Duke of Bridgewater and therefore is a Duke. Both Huck and Jim start to treat him as royalty and cater to his every need. This makes the older man jealous and so he then tells them that he is the Dauphin, or Louis the XVII. Huck and Jim treat both men as aristocracy, although Huck comments that it is pretty obvious neither is true royalty.

Chapter 20

Huck explains to the King and Duke that he is a farmer's son who has lost his father and brother. He tells them that Jim is the last slave the family owns and that he is traveling south to Orleans to live with his Uncle Ben. Huck also says that he and Jim travel at night because they keep getting harassed by people who think Jim is a runaway slave. The Duke tells him that he will figure out a way for them to travel during the daytime.

That night, the Duke and King take over Huck and Jim's beds. A large storm causes the river to become choppy, and Huck watches for danger. Soon Jim takes over and Huck falls asleep until he is washed overboard by a large wave. Jim bursts out laughing at the sight of Huck flailing about in the water.

The next day, the King and Duke brainstorm money making schemes. The Duke decides that they should put on a play where they perform short scenes from Shakespeare and the King agrees. After dinner, they go into a nearby town to see what luck will bring them.

The men find the town deserted, as everyone has gone to a revival meeting. The Duke breaks into a printer's shop and takes orders from some farmers. He collects cash and promises to print advertisements in the paper. In his final project, he makes a handbill showing a runaway slave and describing Jim. He tells the others that this handbill will make it seem as if they are taking Jim back to collect the reward.

The King goes to the revival meeting with Huck and chances upon a crowd being listening to the preacher. The people get inflamed with the spirit of repentance, and in the middle of all their crying and yelling, the King jumps up onto the stage. He tells the audience that he was once a pirate in the Indian Ocean and that their meeting made him regret the actions of his former life. The King says that he would return to the Indian Ocean to convert his former colleagues, if only he had the money to do so. Immediately, a collection is taken up and the King leaves with over eighty-seven dollars.

Chapter 21

The King and Duke turn their attention to performing scenes from Shakespeare. The King learns the lines for Juliet and practices sword-fighting with the Duke in order to perform part of Richard III. The Duke decides that a great encore would be for the King to perform Hamlet's soliloquy. Unfortunately, without the text at hand, the Duke must piece the famous lines together from memory. The end result is quite different from the true soliloquy, but still contains some elements of drama.

The men stop in a nearby town and decide to set up their show. They rent the courthouse for a night and print up bills proclaiming how wonderful the performance will be.

Unfortunately, a circus is also in town, but they hope people will still attend their dramatic performances.

During the day of the show a man named Boggs rides into town. He is a drunk who comes in each month and threatens to kill a man, but never actually harms anyone. This time, he is after a Colonel Sherburn, the wealthiest man in town and a storeowner. Boggs stands outside the store and screams insults at the Colonel. The Colonel comes out of his store and tells Boggs that he will put up with the insults until one o'clock and after that he will kill him if Boggs utters even one word. Boggs continues relentlessly, and at exactly 1pm, the Colonel appears and kills Boggs on the spot. At that exact moment, Boggs's daughter approaches, hoping to save her father, but she is too late. After Boggs is laid to rest, the crowd turns into a mob and concludes that Sherburn should be lynched for the killing.

Chapter 22

The crowd travels to Sherburn's store and rips down the front fence. They halt when Sherburn emerges with a shotgun and calmly stands in front of them. He lectures the mob on how pathetic they are, tells them they are being led by half of a man,Buck Harkness, and calls them all cowards. When he finishes his speech, he cocks his gun and the crowd runs off in every direction.

Huck leaves and goes to the circus which is in town until late that night, and after which the Duke and King plan to perform their show. He sneaks in and watches all the fun activities, such as the clown and showgirls. Huck then remarks that it is the best circus he has ever witnessed and the most fun.

That night, the Shakespearean show is a disaster, with only twelve people showing up and none of them staying until the end. In response, the Duke prints up some new handbills touting a show titled the Royal Nonesuch. He then cleverly adds the line, "Ladies and Children Not Admitted" and comments that if such a line does not bring an audience, then he does not know Arkansas.

Chapter 23

The Royal Nonesuch opens to a house packed with men. The Duke greets them and hypes up the audience for the King. The King emerges completely naked, covered in paint, and crawling on all fours. The audience laughs their heads off, and he is called back to do it twice more. Then the Duke thanks them all and wishes them a good night.

The men are furious that the show is so short and realize they have been "sold," or cheated. But, before they can rush the stage in protest, one man stands up and tells them that they will be the laughingstocks of the town if it ever is revealed how badly they were cheated.

They all agree to leave and tout the show for being wonderful so the rest of the town can be cheated as well.

As a result, the next night's performance is also full, and the audience leaves just as angry. The third night, all the men show up, carrying rotten eggs, dead cats, and other foul items with them. The Duke pays a man to mind the door and he and Huck rush away to the raft. They immediately push out onto the river and the King emerges from the wigwam where he and Jim have been hiding all along. Together, the two con-artists made four hundred sixty-five dollars.

That night, Jim grieves over no longer being able to see his wife and children. Huck remarks that Jim cares almost as much about his family as a white person would. Jim then tells Huck a story about when he was with his daughter, Elizabeth, one day. Jim told her to shut the door and she just stood there smiling at him. Jim got mad that she did not obey and yelled at her until he finally whacked her on the side of the head for not listening to him. Ten minutes later Jim returned and his daughter still had not closed the door. She was standing in the same place, crying. At that moment, a strong wind slammed the door behind her, causing Jim to jump. However, his daughter never moved an inch. Jim realized his poor daughter had lost her hearing. Jim tells Huck that he burst out crying upon making this realization and

grabbed his daughter to give her a hug. Ever since, he has felt terrible about how he treated her.

Chapter 24

To avoid tying Jim up in ropes during the day (since he has been pretending to be a runaway slave), the Duke figures out a better solution. He paints Jim in blue and makes him wear a costume. Then, he writes a sign that reads, "Sick Arab - but harmless when not out of his head." Jim is happy that he can now move around.

The King and Huck cross the river and meet a young fool waiting for the ferry to Orleans. He proceeds to tell them all about how a Peter Wilks has died, leaving his whole estate to his daughters and brothers. The two brothers have not yet arrived from England, which greatly saddened the man before he died. The King takes a keen interest in the story and gathers every detail he can.

Once he has all the details, the King gets the Duke and tells him the entire story. The two men agree to pretend to be Peter Wilks's brothers from Sheffield, England. Together, with Huck acting as a servant, they get a steamboat to take them to the town and drop them off. Their ploy works perfectly and when they hear that Peter is dead, both men put up a huge cry and lament. Huck remarks that, "It was enough to make a body ashamed of the human race."

Chapter 25

The two con artists are taken by the crowd that greeted them upon arrival to visit the family, which consists of three orphaned girls: Mary Jane, Susan, and Joanna. Everyone exchanges hugs and cries, and then the King and Duke go to view the coffin. The two men burst out crying again, and finally the King makes a speech about how sad the whole situation is. They finish off by kissing all the women on the forehead and acting heartbroken. Huck comments that the whole scene is "disgusting."

The King and Duke discover they have received the bulk of the estate holdings as well as three thousand dollars cash. The three girls have also received three thousand dollars and the house they live in. Wilks's will tells them where in the cellar to find the cash, and the two men go downstairs and find it. The King and Duke count the money and come up four hundred and fifteen dollars short. To alleviate any suspicion, they add the money they made from the Royal Nonesuch to the pile. Then, to permanently win the town over to their side, they graciously give their share of the money to the three girls, knowing they can steal it back at anytime.

The King gives a speech and foolishly digresses. A Doctor Robinson enters the crowd, hears the King and laughs heartily, calling the King a fraud because his British accent is such a bad imitation. The townspeople rally around the King, who has been so generous, and defend him. The Doctor warns Mary Jane directly, but in response, she hands the bag of money to the King and tells him to invest it for her. The doctor warns them one final time of the mistakes they are making, and then departs.

Chapter 26

The night of the doctor's warning, Joanna and Huck eat together, since they are the youngest two people present. She asks him all about England, and Huck lies to her in order to sound knowledgeable. She catches him in several of the lies, and Huck keeps pretending to choke on a chicken bone in order to think of a way out. Mary Jane overhears Joanna telling Huck that she does not believe him and makes Joanna apologize to Huck for being so rude.

Huck decides he cannot let the King and Duke steal the money from these extremely kind girls.

Huck goes to the King's room and hides when he hears the Duke and King approaching. The conmen debate whether they should leave now that suspicion has been raised or wait until the rest of the property is sold off. They choose to stay and hide their money in the straw tick mattress. Huck steals the money immediately and waits until it is safe to slip downstairs to hide it.

Chapter 27

Huck is afraid he will be caught with the stolen money, so he hides it inside Peter Wilks's coffin. That day, the funeral service is held, and is interrupted by loud barking from a dog locked in the cellar. The undertaker goes to silence the dog, returns, and tells the audience the dog caught a rat. Huck remarks that the service was long and tiresome, but is relieved when Peter Wilks and the money are finally buried.

The King and Duke immediately begin selling everything they can, including the slave family owned by the household. To sell the slaves faster, they break up the family. The girls are extremely upset by this insensitivity. Many of the townspeople also expressed disapproval, but the men are not swayed.

On the day of the auction, the King realizes the money is gone. He questions Huck, who cleverly blames the slaves who were sold. Both the Duke and King feel extremely foolish for selling the slaves at such low prices considering all their money is now lost.

Chapter 28

Later that morning, Huck sees Mary Jane sitting on her floor, crying while packing to go to England with her uncles. Mary Jane explains that she is upset about the slaves being so mistreated, and Huck blurts out that they will be together again in two weeks at the most, knowing the Duke and King will abandon the town. When he realizes he has slipped, he decides to tell her everything. She becomes furious as he relates the story, and when Huck finishes, she calls the King a "brute."

Huck makes Mary Jane leave the house and stay with a friend across the river. Before she leaves, he writes down where the money is located so she will be able to find it later on. Huck is afraid that if Mary Jane stays at the house, her face will give away Huck's indiscretion. Huck tells her sisters that she is across the river trying to stir up interest in buying the house. After telling this part of the story to the reader, Huck remarks that he has never forgotten Mary Jane and still thinks she is one of the most beautiful girls he has ever met.

The auction occurs that afternoon and the King works hard to sell every last thing. In the middle of the auction, a steamboat lands, and two men claiming to be the real heirs to the Wilks's fortune disembark. As they approach the crowd, Huck notices that the elder man is speaking, and that the younger man's right arm is in a sling.

Chapter 29

The new heirs claim to have lost their baggage and are therefore unable to prove their identity. The King and Duke continue pretending to be the real heirs. Both groups are taken to the tavern where Levi Bell and Dr. Robinson grill them for information.

The first information revealed is that the Wilks money has been stolen, which looks bad for the King and Duke. However, they blame it on the slaves and continue pretending.

The lawyer, Levi Bell, manages to get all three men to write a line for him. He pulls out some old letters and examines the handwriting, only to discover that none of three men had written the letters to Peter Wilks. The real Harvey Wilks explains that his brother had transcribed all his letters because his handwriting is so poor. Unfortunately, since his brother has a broken arm, he cannot write and therefore they cannot prove their case.

Harvey Wilks then remembers that his deceased brother had his initials tattooed on his chest and challenges the King to tell him what was on Peter's chest, assuming that the men who had laid his brother out would have seen the mark and will be able to determine who is lying. Refusing to give up, the King continues pretending and tells them Peter had a blue arrow tattooed on his chest. The men who laid out Peter Wilks cannot remember seeing anything, and thus they are forced to exhume the body.

The entire town travels to the gravesite. When they finally unearth and open the casket, they discover the gold Huck has hidden there. Immediately, the men holding the King and Duke let go to get a look at the money. At this opportunity, Huck, the King, and the Duke run to the river as fast as they can. Huck gets to the raft and takes off down the river, hoping to escape the two men. When the Duke and King catch up to him in a little skiff, he almost starts to cry.

Chapter 30

After the King boards the raft, he grabs Huck, shakes him, and yells at him for trying to get away and for escaping without waiting. The Duke finally intervenes and calls the King an "old idiot," asking, "Did you enquire for him when you got loose?"

Next, the King and Duke get into an argument about the money and start accusing each other of stealing the cash and hiding it, especially since they had added the proceeds of the Royal Nonesuch to the pot. The Duke finally physically attacks the King and forces him say that he took the money. Next, both men get drunk, but Huck notices the King never again admits to taking the money and rather denies it at every opportunity.

Chapter 31

The Duke and King spend a few days plotting how to recover their fortunes. Soon, they reach a village named Pikesville. The King leaves and tells the Duke and Huck to follow

him if he does not return by midday. After he fails to reappear, they go to find him, leaving Jim with the raft. Huck and the Duke search for quite some time, and finally find the King in a tavern. Soon, both the Duke and King are drunk.

Huck sees his chance and runs straight back to the raft, but when he arrives Jim is gone. A young man on the road tells him Jim, a runaway slave, was just captured and sold to the Phelps family, down the road. Huck realizes that in an effort to make some money, the King had snuck back to the raft while he and the Duke had been searching for him, took Jim, sold him for forty dollars, and returned to the town to drink.

Huck sits down and contemplates his next move. He is torn between his friendship for Jim and his belief that helping a runaway slave is a sin. Huck finally writes a letter to Miss Watson explaining where Jim is. Not quite satisfied, he thinks about it some more, and, in one of the most dramatic scenes in the novel, rips apart the letter saying, "All right, then, I'll go to hell!"

Huck starts walking to the Phelps's farm, but encounters the Duke along the way. The Duke is posting advertisements for the Royal Nonesuch, which the two men are planning to perform again. When he sees Huck, the Duke gets extremely nasty and is afraid Huck will warn the townspeople. Next, he lies to Huck and tells him Jim was sold to a farm several days away and threatens Huck in order to keep him silent. Huck promises not to say a word, and hopes he will never have to deal with men such as the Duke and King ever again.

Chapter 32

Huck decides to trust his luck, and walks directly up to the front door of the Phelps's farm. He is quickly surrounded by about fifteen hound dogs, which scatter when a large black woman chases them away. Aunt Sally emerges and hugs Huck, saying "It's you, at last! - ain't it?" Entirely surprised, Huck merely mutters "yes'm."

Aunt Sally drags Huck into the house and starts to ask him why he is so late. Not sure how to respond, Huck says the steamboat blew a cylinder. The woman asks if anyone was hurt, to which Huck replies, "No'm, killed a nigger." Before he has a chance to answer any more questions, Silas Phelps returns home after picking up his nephew at the wharf. Aunt Sally hides Huck, pretends he is not there, then drags him out and surprises Silas. Silas does not recognize Huck until Aunt Sally announces, "It'sTom Sawyer!" Huck nearly faints from joy when he hears his friend's name and realizes Aunt Sally is Tom's aunt.

Over the next two hours, Huck tells the family all about the Sawyer's and entertains them with stories. Soon, he hears a steamboat coming down the river, and realizes Tom is probably on the boat, since the family was expecting him. Eager to meet his friend and keep himself safe, Huck tells Aunt Sally and Silas that he must return to town to fetch his baggage, quickly explaining they need not accompany him.

Chapter 33

Huck meets Tom Sawyer on the road and stops his carriage. Tom is frightened, thinking Huck is a ghost, but Huck reassures him and they settle down to catch up. Huck tells Tom what has happened at the Phelps's, and Tom thinks about how they should proceed. He

tells Huck to return to the farm with his suitcase, while Tom returns to town and begins his trip to the Phelps's again.

Huck arrives back at the Phelps house, and soon thereafter, Tom arrives. The family is excited because they do not get very many visitors, so they make Tom welcome. Tom makes up a story about his hometown and then suddenly and impudently kisses Aunt Sally right on the mouth. Shocked at his behavior, she nearly hits him over the head with her spinning stick, until Tom reveals that he is Sid Sawyer, Tom's brother.

Next, Silas tells the family that their new slave Jim warned him about the Royal Nonesuch, and that he took it upon himself to inform the rest of the town. Silas figures the two cheats Jim spoke of will be ridden out of town that night. In a last minute attempt to warn the Duke and King, Huck and Tom climb out of their windows, but they are too late. They see the two men being paraded through the street covered in tar and feathers. Observing the scene, Huck remarks that human beings can be awfully cruel to one another.

Chapter 34

Tom and Huck brainstorm ways to break Jim out of his prison. Huck plans to get the raft, steal the key to the padlock, unlock the door and then float down the river some more.

Tom claims that plan is too simple and would work too well. Tom's plan is much more elaborate and stylish, and takes a great deal longer to implement.

The boys go to the hut where Jim is being kept and search around. Finally, Tom decides that the best way, or at least the way that will take the longest, is to dig a hole for Jim to climb out of. The next day, he and Huck follow the black man who is delivering Jim's food. Jim recognizes Huck and Tom and calls them by name, but both boys pretend not to hear. When he has a chance, Tom tells Jim that they are going to dig him out. Jim is so happy he grabs Tom's hand and shakes it.

Chapter 35

To create as fantastical a story and game as possible, Tom tries to determine how to make Jim into a real prisoner before his daring escape. He decides that he and Huck will have to saw off the leg of Jim's bed in order to free the chain, send him a knotted ladder made of sheets, give him a shirt to keep a journal on, and get him some tin plates to write messages on and throw out the window. To top it off, Tom tells Huck that they will use case-knives to dig Jim out, rather than the much quicker and more appropriate picks and shovels.

Chapter 36

The next night, Tom and Huck sneak out and start digging with their case knives. They tire soon and their hands quickly develop blisters, but it seems they haven't accomplished anything. Tom finally sighs and agrees to use a pick and shovel, but only as long as they pretend to be using case knives. Huck agrees and tells Tom his head is getting "leveler" all the time.

The next day, they steal some tin plates and a brass candlestick for Jim to write with. They also finish digging the hole and make it possible for Jim to crawl out. Jim wants to

escape immediately, but Tom then tells Jim all about the little things he needs to do first, including writing in blood, throwing the tin plates out of the hut, etc. Jim thinks all of these ideas are a little crazy, but agrees to do it.

Tom then convinces the man who brings Jim his food that Jim is bewitched and offers to heal him by baking a pie, in which he plans to conceal the sheet ladder.

Chapter 37

Aunt Sally notices that she has lost a sheet, a shirt, six candles, a spoon and a brass candlestick. Very confused by the strange disappearances, she becomes absolutely livid. Aunt Sally yells at poor Silas, who eventually discovers the missing spoon in his pocket, where Tom had placed it. He looks ashamed and promises her he has no idea how the spoon got into his pocket. Aunt Sally then yells at everyone to get away from her and let her get some peace and quiet.

Tom decides that the only way to steal back the spoon is to confuse his poor Aunt Sally even further. Tom has Huck hide one of spoons while Aunt Sally counts them, and then Huck puts it back when Aunt Sally counts again. By the time she has finished counting, Aunt Sally has no idea exactly how many spoons she has, and Tom is able to take one without any more trouble. Tom then does the same thing with the sheet, by stealing one out of her closet and putting it on the clothesline, only to remove it the next day.

The boys bake Jim a witches pie, in which they hide the rope. It takes them several hours to get it right because the pie is so large, but they finally succeed. The man who normally takes Jim his food takes the pie in to him, and Jim happily removes the rope.

Chapter 38

Tom designs a coat-of-arms for Jim to inscribe on the walls so as to permanently leave his mark on the prison cell. Next, Tom works out three mournful inscriptions and tells Jim he must carve them into a rock. Huck and Tom go to fetch an old grindstone for Jim to use as his rock, but it is too heavy for them to carry, so they are forced to allow Jim to leave his "prison" and come help them. Jim rolls the rock into the hut and sets to work on the inscriptions.

Tom decides that Jim needs some cell companions, such as snakes and spiders. He tells Jim that he and Huck will find some for him, but Jim is vehemently opposed to the idea. Tom then tries to convince Jim to get a flower so he can water it with his tears. Jim replies that the flower would not last very long. Tom finally gets frustrated, and gives up for the night.

Chapter 39

Huck and Tom spend the next day catching creatures to live with Jim in his cell. They first gather about fifteen rats, but Aunt Sally's son frees them by accident and both Tom and Huck receive beatings for bringing rats into her house. Determined, the boys catch another fifteen rats, along with some spiders, caterpillars, frogs, and bugs. At the end of the day they gather some garter snakes and put them in a bag, but after dinner they discover all the snakes

escaped in the house as well. Huck remarks that there was no shortage of snakes in the house for quite a while after that.

Uncle Silas decides to start advertising Jim as a runaway slave in some of the local newspapers because he has failed to receive a reply to his earlier letters. Since the plantation to which he wrote never existed, it makes sense that he never received a reply. Tom figures out how to stop Silas, by planting anonymous letters that warn him off this plan of action.

Tom and Huck first plant a letter reading, "Beware. Trouble is brewing. Keep a sharp lookout." The next night the boys tack up a letter containing a skull and crossbones, which they follow with a picture of a coffin.

Tom plans a final coup by drafting a longer letter. Pretending to be a member of a gang of robbers who are planning to steal Jim from the family, he warns them that the gang will be coming late at night from the north to get Jim. The family is terribly frightened and does not know what to do.

Chapter 40

The letter has a strong effect, and over fifteen armed farmers are sitting in the house waiting for the robbers to come during the night of the escape. Huck is frightened for their safety when he slips out the window and tells Tom they must leave immediately or they will be shot. Tom gets very excited when he hears about how many people came to catch them.

As Tom, Huck and Jim start to move away from the hut, Tom gets caught on the fence and his britches rip quite loudly. All three start to run, and the farmers shoot after them. When they get to a dark area, Huck, Jim, and Tom hide behind a bush and let the whole pack of farmers and dogs run past them.

Once safe, they proceed to where the raft is hidden and Tom tells Jim he is a free man again, and that he will always be a free man from now on. Jim thanks him and tells him it was a great escape plan. Tom then shows them where he got a bullet in the leg, but Jim is worried for Tom's health. Jim rips up one of the Duke's old shirts and ties up the leg with it.

Jim tells Tom that he is not going to move until they get a doctor there and make sure he is safe. Tom gets mad at both of them and yells, but Huck ignores him and gets the canoe ready to go to town. Tom makes him promise to blindfold the doctor before bringing him back to their hiding place.

Chapter 41

Huck returns to town and finds a doctor. Instead of allowing Huck to come along, the doctor makes Huck tell him where the raft is and takes the canoe out alone to find Tom and Jim. Huck falls asleep on a woodpile while waiting for him to return. When he wakes up, he is told the doctor has not yet returned.

Huck soon sees Silas, who is very glad Huck is not hurt. Together, they go to the post office, and Silas asks where Sid is. Huck makes up a story about Sid taking off to gather news about the events of the night. When they return home, Aunt Sally makes a fuss over Huck, but is glad he has returned.

A large gathering is held at the house, and the women discuss how they think Jim must have been crazy due to Jim's grindstone inscriptions and the tools found in his hut, all of which Huck and Tom actually crafted.

Aunt Sally is worried about Sid's whereabouts. Huck tells her the same tale he told Uncle Silas, but it does not set her mind at ease. During the night, Huck sneaks out several times and each time sees her sitting with a lit candle on the front porch, waiting for Sid's return. Huck feels very sorry for her and wishes he could tell her everything.

Chapter 42

The next day, the doctor appears, bringing Tom on a stretcher and Jim in chains. Tom is comatose due to a fever from the bullet wound, but is still alive. Aunt Sally takes him inside and immediately starts to care for him. Tom improves rapidly and is almost completely better by the next day.

Huck goes into the bedroom to sit with Tom and see how he is doing. Aunt Sally walks in as well and while both of them are sitting there, Tom wakes up. He immediately starts to tell Aunt Sally about everything the two of them did and how they managed to help Jim escape. Aunt Sally cannot believe they were creating all of the trouble around her house.

When Tom hears that Jim has been recaptured he shouts at them that they cannot chain Jim up anymore. He tells them that Jim has been free ever since Miss Watson died and freed him in her will. Apparently Miss Watson was so ashamed about planning to sell Jim that she felt it best to set him free.

At that moment Aunt Polly, Aunt Sally's sister, appears. Aunt Sally is so surprised that she rushes over to her sister to give her a hug. Aunt Polly proceeds to tell Aunt Sally that the boys masquerading as Tom and Sid are actually Huck and Tom. Embarrassed, the boys look quite sheepish. Aunt Polly only gets angry when she discovers that Tom has been stealing and hiding her letters. She also explains to Aunt Sally that in regards to Jim, Tom is correct. Miss Watson freed Jim in her will.

Chapter 43

Tom tells Huck he had planned for them to run all the way to the mouth of the Mississippi if they had managed to escape unharmed. Jim gets a positive reception in the house because of how well he cared for Tom when he was sick. Tom, feeling slightly guilty, gives Jim forty dollars for putting up with them the entire time and for being such a good prisoner. Jim turns to Huck and tells him he was right about being a rich man one day.

Huck asks about his six thousand dollars, assuming Papmanaged to take it all. However, Tom explains that Pap was never seen again after Huck disappeared. Finally, Jim reveals that the man he and Huck found dead in the floating house was in fact Pap, but Jim had not wanted Huck to see him.

Huck ends the novel by announcing that Aunt Sally wants to adopt him now, so he needs to start planning on heading west since he tried to be civilized once before, and did not like it.

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn is Twain's literary masterpiece. To create this novel he first overcame the difficulty of writing in the first person from a young boy's perspective. The novel is also a testament to the various dialects and characteristics of the southern regions. Lastly, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* is a story about freedom, as it deals with physical freedom for the slaves and spiritual freedom for both Jim and Huck. Few novels have approached the success of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* in combining such serious issues with Twain's characteristically delightful humor

15.2 SUGGESTED ESSAY TOPICS

1. Lying occurs frequently in this novel. Curiously, some lies, like that Huck tells to save Jim, seem to be “good” lies, while others, like the cons of the duke and the dauphin, seem to be “bad.” What is the difference? Are both “wrong”? Why does so much lying go on in *Huckleberry Finn*?
2. Describe some of the models for families that appear in the novel. What is the importance of family structures? What is their place in society? Do Huck and Jim constitute a family? What about Huck and Tom? When does society intervene in the family?
3. The revelation at the novel’s end that Tom has known all along that Jim is a free man is startling. Is Tom inexcusably cruel? Or is he just being a normal thirteen-year-old boy? Does Tom’s behavior comment on society in some larger way?
4. What techniques does Twain use to create sympathy for his characters, in particular, Jim? Are these techniques effective?
5. Discuss the place of morality in *Huckleberry Finn*. In the world of the novel, where do moral values come from? The community? The family? The church? One’s experiences? Which of these potential sources does Twain privilege over the others? Which does he mock, or describe disapprovingly?
6. Why might Twain have decided to set the novel in a time before the abolition of slavery, despite the fact that he published it in 1885, two decades after the end of the Civil War?

15.3 REFERENCE BOOKS

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- Long E. Hudson: *Mark Twain Handbook,* New York, 1957.

Prof. G.M. Sundaravalli

(304EG21)

MODEL QUESTION PAPER
M.A. DEGREE EXAMINATION
Third Semester
English
Paper IV — American Literature - 1

Time : Three hours **Maximum : 70 marks**

Answer ONE question from each Unit.
All questions carry equal marks.

1. (a) Write a short note on any FOUR of the following.
   (i) A note on transcendentalism.
   (ii) Phi Beta Kappa.
   (iii) Rioneers of American Novel.
   (iv) Practitioners of mysticism in their works.
   (v) Romanticism in American poetry.
   (vi) Nationalism in American Novel.

Or

(b) Write an essay on American Transcendentalism.

2. (a) Write about the elegies features of "when Lilaes Last in the Derryard Bloom`d" by Walt Whitman.

Or

(b) Write an essay on the recurring themes of Emily Dickinson`s poetry.

3. (a) What is the main theme of 'The American Schilar'?

Or

(b) Describe precisely the four main ideas of "self reliance'.

4. (a) Examine Thoteau`s association with Nature as it reflected in his walden.

Or

(b) Bring out the central of Henry David Thoreau`s Walden.

5. (a) Write an Essay on Huckleberry Firm`s views on religion.

Or

(b) Discuss the Novel Huckleberry firm as a realistic portrayal of American racism before and after the civil war