

Emerson
Philosophical Leader
of Transcendentalism

Thoreau
Prose Writer of Tr.
Practical Application of Tr.

Whitman
Poetry Writer of Tr.
Creative Application of Tr.

HENRY DAVID THOREAU

- He was a much better writer than Emerson was
- He was a true non-conformist to the core
- "If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer. Let him step to the music which he hears, however measured or far away."
- He could not maintain employment and was a dependent on others
- He turned "doing his own thing" into a religion!
- He was extremely egotistical

Walden is a multi-faceted work:

- 1 – a book on nature & his interpretation of the spiritual significance of the world around him
- 2 – an autobiography of author
- 3 – inspirational literature calling readers to better life
- 4 – an expression of Emersonian transcendentalism
- 5 – a social critique

WHY ARE CHRISTIANS SOMETIMES DRAWN TO HIM?

1 - He stresses **simplicity** which is appealing to the Christian.

- "As you simplify your life, the laws of the universe will be simpler; solitude will not be solitude, poverty will not be poverty, nor weakness weakness."
- "Live your life, do your work, then take your hat."

2 - We "**Christianize**" his statements.

- "Rather than love, than money, than fame, give me truth."
- "Live your beliefs and you can turn the world around."
- "Aim above morality. Be not simply good, be good for something."
- "An early-morning walk is a blessing for the whole day."
- "You must live in the present, launch yourself on every wave, find your eternity in each moment."
- "There are a thousand hacking at the branches of evil to one who is striking at the root."
- "After the first blush of sin comes its indifference."

3 - We take his **political statements** out of context and then they sound agreeable to us.

- Thoreau stresses following individual conscience over obedience to The State.
- This sounds like he is a constitutional conservative and is against communistic social engineering liberalism.
- Rather, he is a social engineer to the core. He believes his own vision for society would naturally evolve under anarchy when men follow their individual intuition rather than laws.

SOME POLITICAL QUOTES:

- "There will never be a really free and enlightened State until the State comes to recognize the individual as a higher and independent power, from which all its own power and authority are derived, and treats him accordingly."
- "The fate of the country does not depend on how you vote at the polls -- the worst man is as strong as the best at that game; it does not depend on what kind of paper you drop into the ballot-box once a year, but on what kind of man you drop from your chamber into the street every morning."

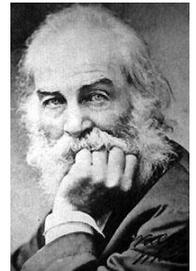
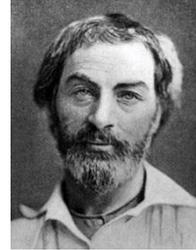


THOREAU'S MAJOR WORKS

- **Civil Disobedience** = A result of his experience of not paying his poll tax because he did not agree with the policies of the government
- **Walden** = Based on his experience of living "on his own" along the banks of Walden Pond for two years

WALT WHITMAN

- He was unsuccessful in maintaining employment, like Thoreau.
- He became a strong abolitionist while working for newspaper in New Orleans and seeing slavery first-hand.
- He volunteered as a nurse during the Civil War.
- Emerson was his great inspiration: "I was simmering, simmering, simmering; Emerson brought me to a boil."
- He self-published his first book of poems called *Leaves of Grass*.
- He sent a copy of *Leaves of Grass* to Emerson in order to gain his hero's notice.
- He was "the poet of the Transcendental Movement."
- He was completely centered on himself.
- He is most known for introducing FREE VERSE to poetry.



FREE VERSE

Free Verse Characteristics:

- Lines are irregular in length
- No metrical pattern
- No rhyme pattern

Free Verse is controversial in Literary Circles.

- The old definition of free verse = "chopped up prose"
- Robert Frost remarked that writing free verse was like "playing tennis without a net".

Although free verse requires no meter, rhyme, or other traditional poetic techniques, a poet can still utilize them to create some sense of structure.

- A clear example of this can be found in Walt Whitman's poems, where he repeats certain phrases and uses commas to create both a rhythm and structure.

Some say free verse in English can be traced back as far as the King James Bible.

- It is possible to argue that free verse in English first appeared in the 1380s in the John Wycliffe translation of the Psalms and was repeated in different form in most biblical translations ever since.

WHITMAN'S MAJOR WORKS

Leaves of Grass

- Book of Poems that he revised continually through his life adding his new poems
- Contained the following poems from our text:
 - * **I Hear America Singing**
 - * **Song of Myself**
 - * **O Captain! My Captain!**
 - * **A Noiseless Patient Spider**