

Third Year Students

American Literature (19 Century)

Lecture 2

Dr Iman A. Hanafy

Professor of English Literature Faculty of Arts- Banha University

• 2019-2020

Henry David Thoreau's Walden

Outline



- Introduction to Henry David Thoreau
- General Ideas of the Essay
- Summary of Walden (Chapter 1, 2, 9, 17, 18)
- 垣 Main Ideas
- Techniques
- Conclusion
- References

Introduction to Thoreau

→ His life

1817 borne at Concord, Massachusetts
1837 graduated from Harvard College
1841 intermittently lived in Emerson's house
1845 built a cabin on the shore of Walden Pond
1849 "Civil Disobedience"
1854 Walden was published
1862 died in Concord on May 6

- → His Philosophy of Living
 - A. The importance of self-reliance
 - B. The value of simplicity
- → Influence on Him
 - A. Emerson (Transcendentalism)
 - B. Oriental Philosophy (Hinduism)
- → His Impact on Others
 - A. Emily Dickinson,
 - B. Martin Luther King Jr.
 - C. Mahatma Gandhi

General Ideas of the Work

→ Background of the essay

- 1. Time: 1845.7.4 -1847.9.6 (2 years and 2 months)
- 2. Place: Walden, in Concord, Massachusetts
- 3. Motivation: a. Lead a simple life (877)
 - b. Know the facts of life (915)
- 4. Reason to move back the "civilized society"
- 5. "When I wrote the following pages [...] I lived there two years and two months. (868 B1807-08)

General Ideas of the Work 2

- Features of the essay:
 - a. First point of view- egotism
 - b. Based on Thoreau's own experiences

- Characters
 - 1. Thoreau himself—the main character in this work
 - 2. Alex Therien (the wood chopper)—an occasional visitor (Ch6 Visitors 1881-88) More information

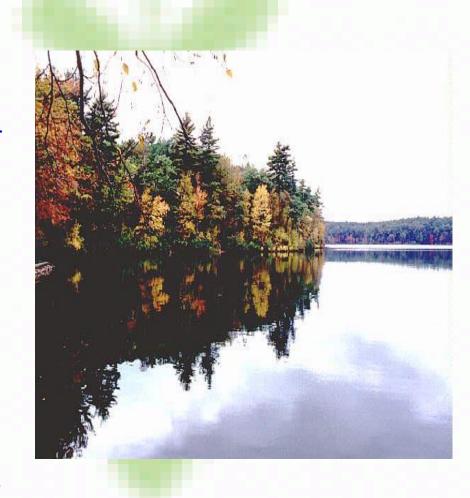
Summary-Ch 1 Economy

- → Simplified lifestyle
- → Excess possessions of people in the present
- Four necessities of all creatures: food, shelter, clothing and fuel
- * "By the words necessary of life, [...] and thus have forged their own golden or silver fetters. (873-75 B1812-15)



Summary-Ch 9 The Ponds

- → The pond is pure and deep
 - "The water is so transparent that the bottom can easily be discerned at the depth [...] where the water was 25ft deep." (937 B 19010)
- The changes of colors
- Previous generations vs. the surroundings of the pond
 - "A lake is the landscape's most beautiful and expressive feature [...] are its overhanging brows." (941 B1905)



Main Idea

* A. Self-reliance: both economical and spiritual

*B. Value of Simplicity: one may acquire more, or reduce one's desire

* C. Illusion of modern life: "They are but improved means to an unimproved end"

Conclusion

- Thoreau provides a new way of living, but seems to be too idealistic.
- This essay does not contradict with his philosophy of living, because for him, life is experience.
- Not preaching his way of living, but encourage people to find out their own way of living
 - "In short, I am convinced both by faith and experience. [...] unless he sweats easier than I do." (905 B1845)



References

• Thoreau, Henry David. Walden. http://neuro.ohbi.net/taiwanese/mofa_Thoreau.php

• Spark Notes. Walden. http://www.sparknotes.com/lit/walden/