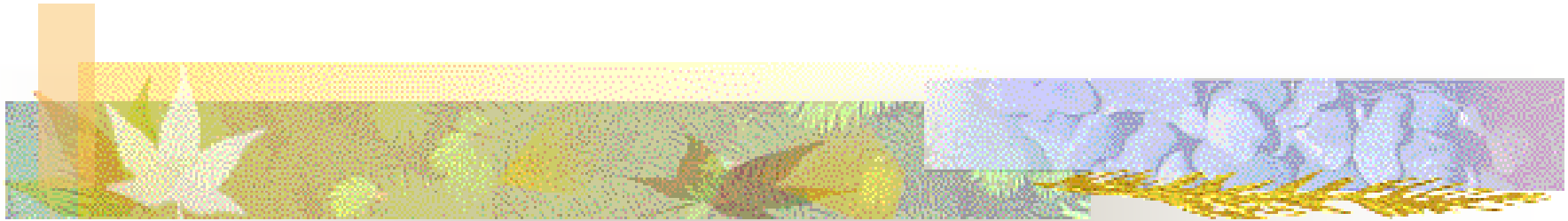


Banha University - Faculty of Arts
English Department
Third Year Students

American Literature (19 Century)

Lecture 3



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**Henry David Thoreau's
Walden; or, Life in the Woods**



Thoreau's Life

- Born July 1817
- Died of TB at age 44 in May 1862
- Educated at Harvard
- Long friendship with Emerson
- Mixed philosophy with action



Beginnings at Walden pond


- Moved to pond on July 4, 1845
- Wrote first book and worked on journal
- Gardened and worked as a surveyor
- Went back to civilization in Sept 1847



Walden

- As a naturalist, believes that the only way to understand our life on earth is to develop a greater understanding of the natural world

“We can never have enough of nature. We must be refreshed by the sight... We need to witness our own limits transgressed, and some life pasturing freely where we never wander.”





I see young men, my townsmen, whose misfortune it is to have inherited farms, houses, barns, cattle, and farming tools; for these are more easily acquired than got rid of. Better if they had been born in the open pasture and suckled by a wolf, that they might have seen with clearer eyes what field they were called to labor in. Who made them serfs of the soil? Why should they eat their sixty acres, when man is condemned to eat only his peck of dirt? Why should they begin digging their graves as soon as they are born? They have got to live a man's life, pushing all these things before them, and get on as well as they can. How many a poor immortal soul have I met well-nigh crushed and smothered under its load, creeping down the road of life, pushing before it a barn seventy-five feet by forty, its Augean stables never cleansed, and one hundred acres of land, tillage, mowing, pasture, and woodlot! The portionless, who struggle with no such unnecessary inherited encumbrances, find it labor enough to subdue and cultivate a few cubic feet of flesh.



The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation.

If it is asserted that civilization is a real advance in the condition of man, -- and I think that it is, though only the wise improve their advantages, -- it must be shown that it has produced better dwellings without making them more costly; and the cost of a thing is the amount of what I will call life which is required to be exchanged for it, immediately or in the long run.

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- *Most of the luxuries and many of the so called comforts of life are not only dispensable, but positive hindrances to the elevation of mankind.*
 - *Philanthropy is almost the only virtue which is sufficiently appreciated by mankind. Nay, it is greatly overrated; and it is our selfishness which overrates it.*



"I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived. I did not wish to live what was not life, living is so dear; nor did I wish to practice resignation, unless it was quite necessary. I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life, to live so sturdily and Spartan-like as to put to rout all that was not life, to cut a broad swath and shave close, to drive life into a corner, and reduce it to its lowest terms, and, if it prove to be mean, why then to get the whole and genuine meanness of it, and publish its meaning to the world; or if it were sublime, to know it by experience, and be able to give a true account of it in my next excursion."