

Banha University - Faculty of Arts
English Department

Third Year Students

American Literature (19 Century)

Lecture 2

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The background features faint, stylized green floral or leaf-like patterns scattered across the white space. These patterns are composed of soft, pixelated green shapes, giving them a delicate and ethereal appearance. They are positioned around the central text, with some appearing as larger, more defined shapes and others as smaller, more abstract forms.

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)

 *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/>