

Week 2 Nationmaking and the Transcendentalists:

T. Jefferson: “The Declaration of Independence”

Reading Check:

- a. Name 3 important political positions Jefferson held.
- b. Name 4 of J’s significant contributions to the country.
- c. In the first paragraph of the Declaration of Independence, Jefferson states the purpose for the document. Explain the purpose.
- d. Describe how the Declaration in its second paragraph proposed to secure the “unalienable rights” of all men.
- e. Jefferson uses strong verbs. Try to determine the meanings from the context.

evince, expunge, abdicate, redress

- f. Summarize the Declaration’s main points.
- g. What sort of impression do you think the document has made?

B. Franklin: *Autobiography* (abstracts)

Reading Check:

Why did Franklin submit his articles to his brother’s newspaper anonymously?

Why was Franklin’s brother imprisoned by the Assembly?

What caused Franklin to continue his journey from New York to Philadelphia?

Which of his list of virtues gave Franklin the most trouble?

What is the point of the story about the speckled ax?

R. W. Emerson: “Self-Reliance”, The passage from “Self-Reliance” sums up views that we have seen in earlier Emerson essays.

Question:

If all that is taught to us by others may be called “tuitions”, what kind of knowledge is classified as “intuition”?

H. D. Thoreau: *Walden* (“Conclusion”)

Reading Check

Conclusion

1. In his conclusion Thoreau again applies the lessons of his experiment to broader experiences. In the first paragraph, what general lesson about conformity is to be drawn from the path he wore between his house and the pond?
2. The example in the third paragraph of the man who “hears a different drummer” is one of the most quoted passages from *Walden*. How does this passage support the earlier criticism of conformity?
3. The powerful fifth paragraph centers upon the rebirth that is possible once we have opened ourselves to nature and to our true inner being. Within this context, what is the “moral” of the story of the beautiful bug that hatched after being buried many years in an old wooden table?
4. In some respects the final sentences of “Conclusion” sum up all of *Walden*. Thoreau reminds us that finding our “perfect summer life,” as did the beautiful bug, is not merely a matter of waiting. According to Thoreau, in what way may any of us prepare to experience spiritual awakening?