

UNIT 2 Expressing a National Spirit
American Renaissance 1800 to 1850

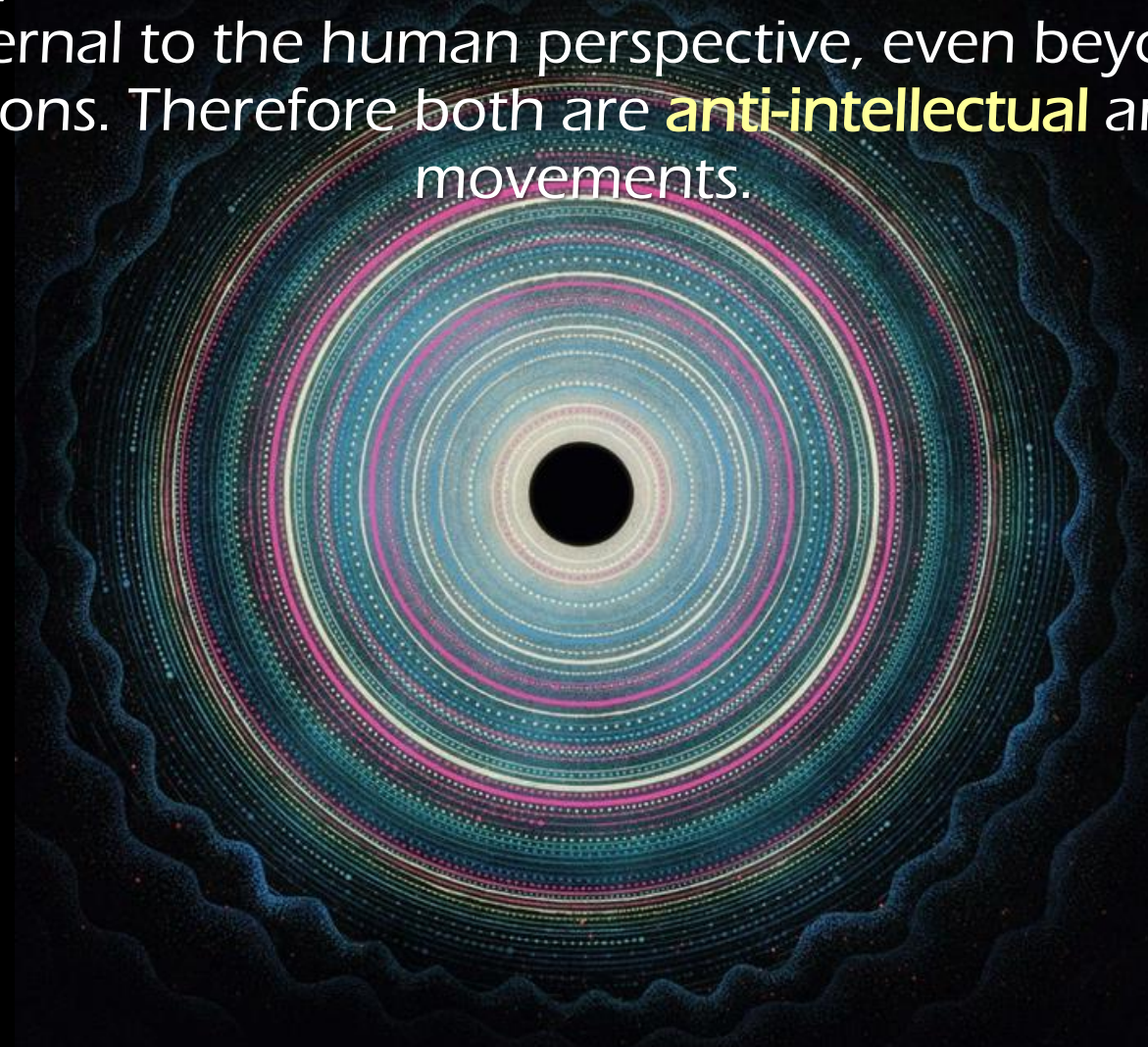
A STEIN WOOD
FROEBEL
BILINGUAL SCHOOL
Home of the Space Generation

WITH
JIM SOTO



TRANSCENDENTALISM

Romanticism exemplifies the importance of emotions and freedom over intellectual growth. It believes that everyone should follow what they're feeling. **Transcendentalism**, branched out from Romanticism and draws inspiration from the Beyond or external to the human perspective, even beyond reasoning, and normal traditions. Therefore both are **anti-intellectual** and **reactionary** movements.

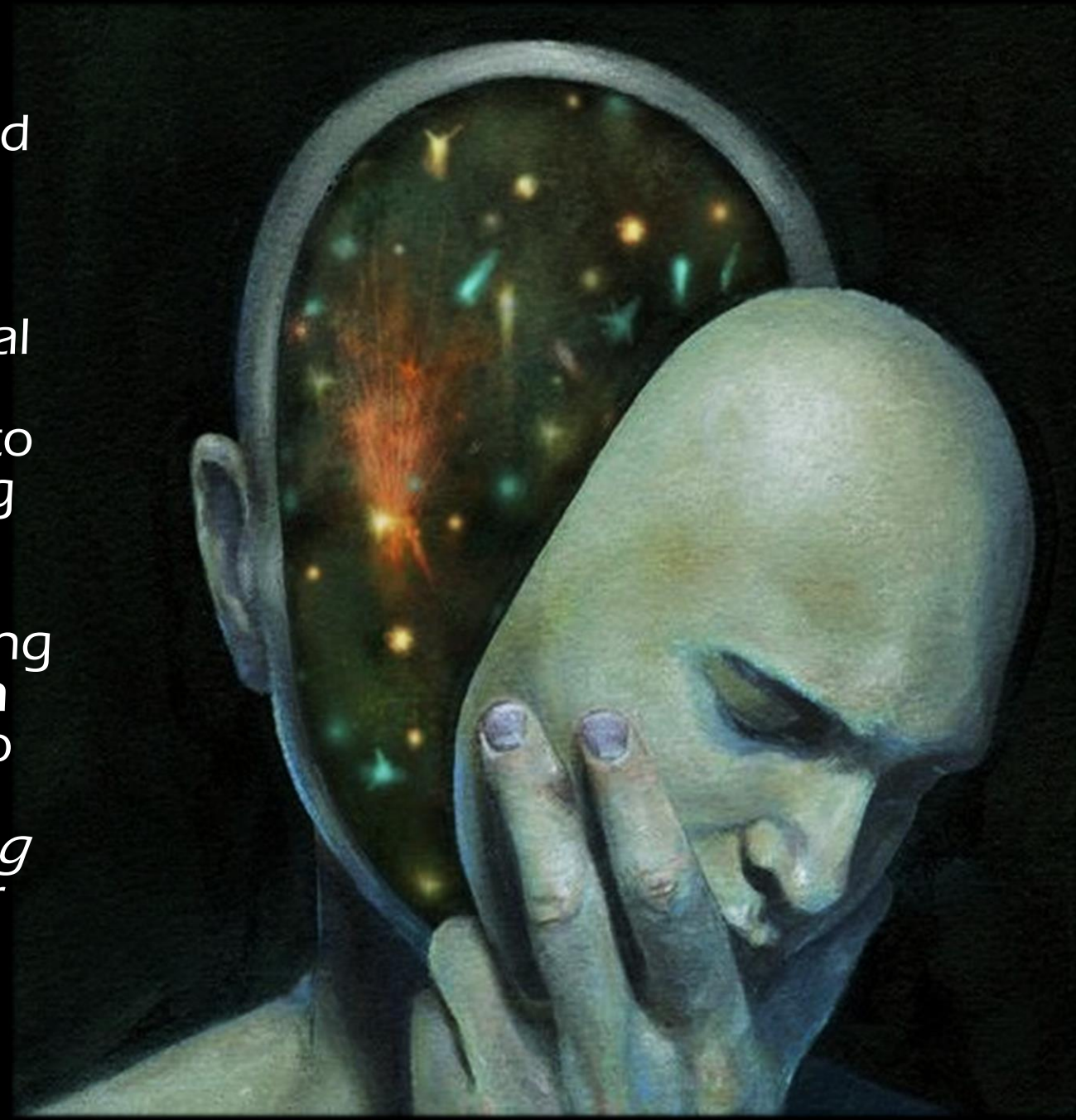


WHAT IS TRANSCENDENTALISM?

American Romanticism, developed on the heels of romantic movements in Europe. real flowering of Romanticism in American literature came in the New England literary movement called **Transcendentalism**. At the core of Transcendentalism was the belief in a realm of spiritual or transcendent truths beyond what humans can know through their senses. These truths could be apprehended in moments of heightened contemplation or by living close to nature.



Because the Transcendentalists believed each person capable of intuiting truths directly, they opposed any authority beyond that of the individual conscience, including cultural and social conventions. For the first time in America, "the self" became something to celebrate rather than deny. By studying the self, a person could know the universe. The Transcendentalist movement attracted many of the leading intellectuals of the day, including **Ralph Waldo Emerson** who advised people to trust their own better natures. In his essay "Self-Reliance," he stated, "*Nothing is at last sacred, but the integrity of our own mind.*"





Henry David Thoreau, a protégé of Emerson, carried out an experiment in self-reliance, building a small cabin in the woods near Walden Pond to live simply and in close contact with nature. “Walden”, a record of this experience, was a clear statement of American individualism and later became an inspiration to environmentalists.

THE TENETS OF TRANSCENDENTALISM

The tenets, or main principles that Transcendentalism emphasizes are:

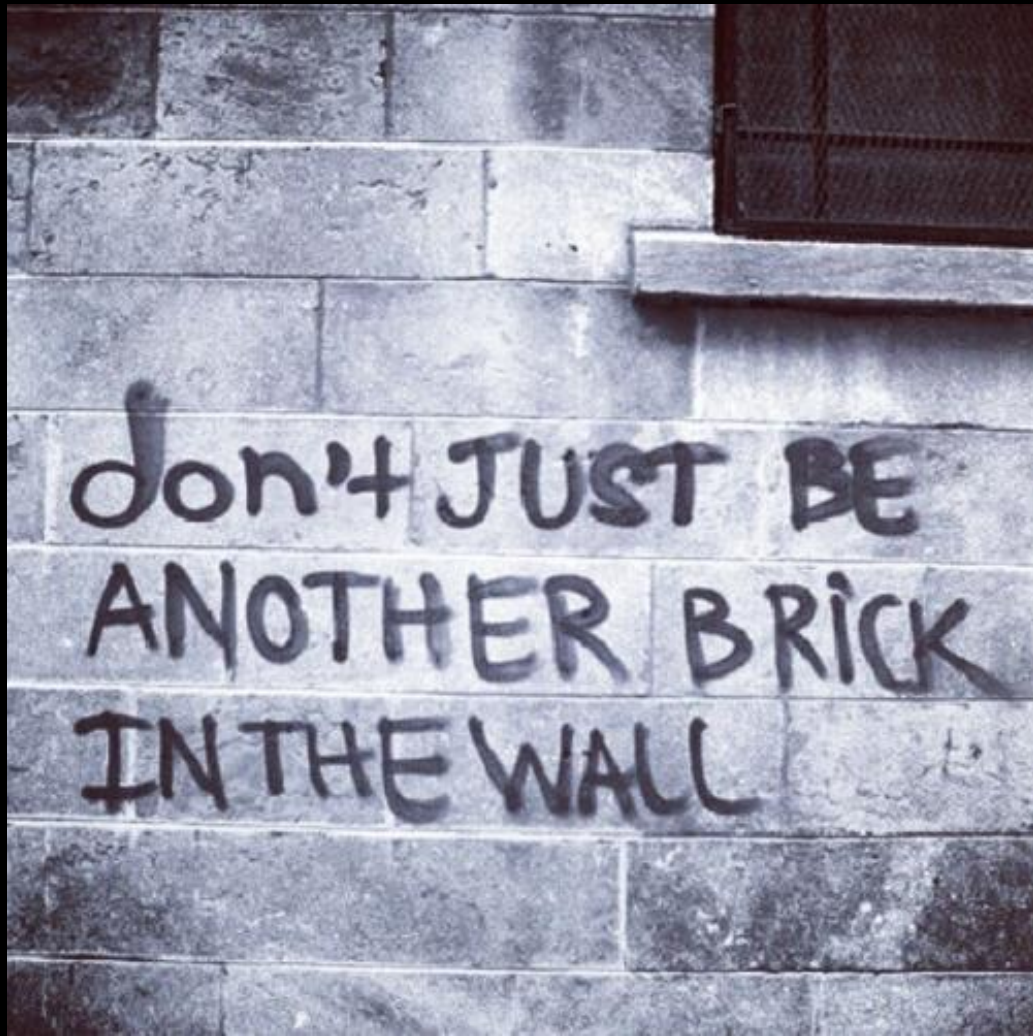
Nonconformity

Self-reliance

Importance of Nature

Favoring Intuition over Reason

Simplified Life



Nonconformity

Is a refusal to conform with established customs, attitudes, or ideas.

Transcendentalists hate conforming to society to fit in. They believed that by remaining outside of society's influences a person could transcend the evils society tempted them with and achieve true peace supported violating the laws set forth by the government if one felt that they were harmful.



Self-reliance

Refers to a state of being where one's own thoughts, actions, and emotions are unaffected by outside influences like social pressure, society, and the media.

People are often afraid to sever their strong ties to other people and materials for fear of learning that they are not capable of being truly self-reliant. You have to accept yourself for what and who you are.



Importance of Nature

Transcendentalists believe that nature allows us to escape from our reality. Allows us to free our minds so that we can connect with ourselves. Thoreau believed that he had wasted a day if he had not gone for at least a three hour nature walk. Appreciate nature, but don't try to control it. Understand your place within the world. Meditate.



Favoring Intuition over Reason

People can understand truth through intuition. Trust your gut. We may not have proof that god exists, but our gut tells us that he/she/it does exist.



Simplified Life

Simplifying your life allows you to get back to things that are important.

Plant a garden instead of buying from the grocery store, etc.

Practice Minimalism.

Give away your possessions.

TRANSCENDENTALISM TODAY

Songs that exemplify the tenets of Transcendentalism today include:

- Twisted Sister – **We're Not Gonna Take It**



- Destiny's Child – **Survivor**



- Creedence Clearwater Revival – **Green River**



In your notebook write down at least one tenet showcased in each song after hearing them.

ASSESSMENT

Examining Transcendentalism through Popular Culture

Look at all the resources in pop culture that are available. You can consider mediums such as sitcoms, soaps, cartoons, movies, TV ads, newspaper editorials, and so forth. Find examples that complete the Transcendental Thought Chart.

- Provide at least one example for each characteristic of transcendental thought. You may provide more than one example if you wish.
- Choose a different quotation for each category of your chart. You can repeat the sources that you choose, but should find different example quotations or actions. For instance, two of your quotations might come from *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*, but the quotations must be different.
- Look for examples from multiple media. include at least two different types.
- Be sure to provide explanations for the quotations or examples that you've chosen that show why each is an example of transcendentalist thought.

Examples of Transcendental Thought

	Nonconformity	Self-reliance	Free Thought	Importance of Nature	Confidence
Quotations & Examples					
Explanation					



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