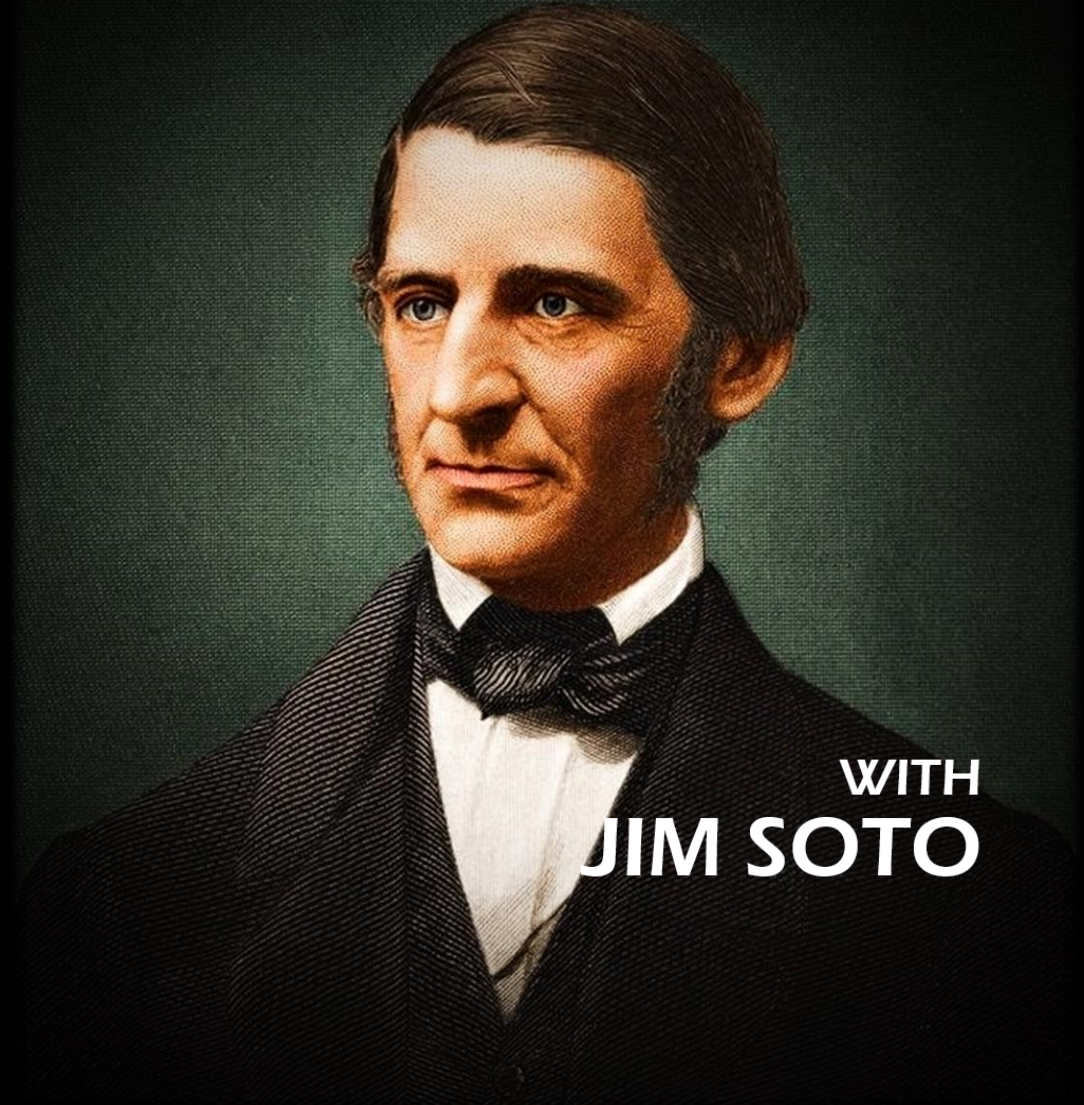


UNIT 2 Expressing a National Spirit  
American Renaissance 1800 to 1850

A STEMM SCHOOL  
FROEBEL  
BILINGUAL SCHOOL  
Home of the Space Generation

Author Focus:  
RALPH  
WALDO  
EMMERSON



WITH  
JIM SOTO

The background of the slide is a dark, almost black, image featuring various tropical plants. In the top left, there are large, green, deeply lobed leaves, likely from a Monstera plant, with some holes. Below them, there are smaller, feathery green leaves. In the bottom right, there is another large Monstera leaf, similar to the one in the top left. The overall effect is a lush, naturalistic border around the central text.

# SPEAK YOUR MIND

Ralph Waldo Emerson believed in the deep spiritual connection between humanity and nature. By concentrating on their innermost thoughts and feelings, Emerson said, individuals could glimpse the spirit of the universe.

How can an activity as simple as walking in the woods or the beach change your perspective on life?

Take a minute to consider and answer the question.



## FINDING HIS OWN WAY

After attending Harvard Divinity School, Emerson served as a Unitarian minister in Boston for several years, before leaving the pulpit. On July 15, 1838, he spoke to the graduating class of the divinity school, in a speech known as "The Divinity School Address." In this address, Emerson shared the ideas of Transcendentalism, comparing it with the beliefs of Unitarianism. For example, he felt that personal intuition, rather than religious teaching, provides a better moral compass for individuals seeking guidance in difficult or morally ambiguous situations. Perhaps because they saw Emerson's remarks as opposing established dogma, the leaders of the divinity school referred to Transcendentalism as "the latest form of infidelity."

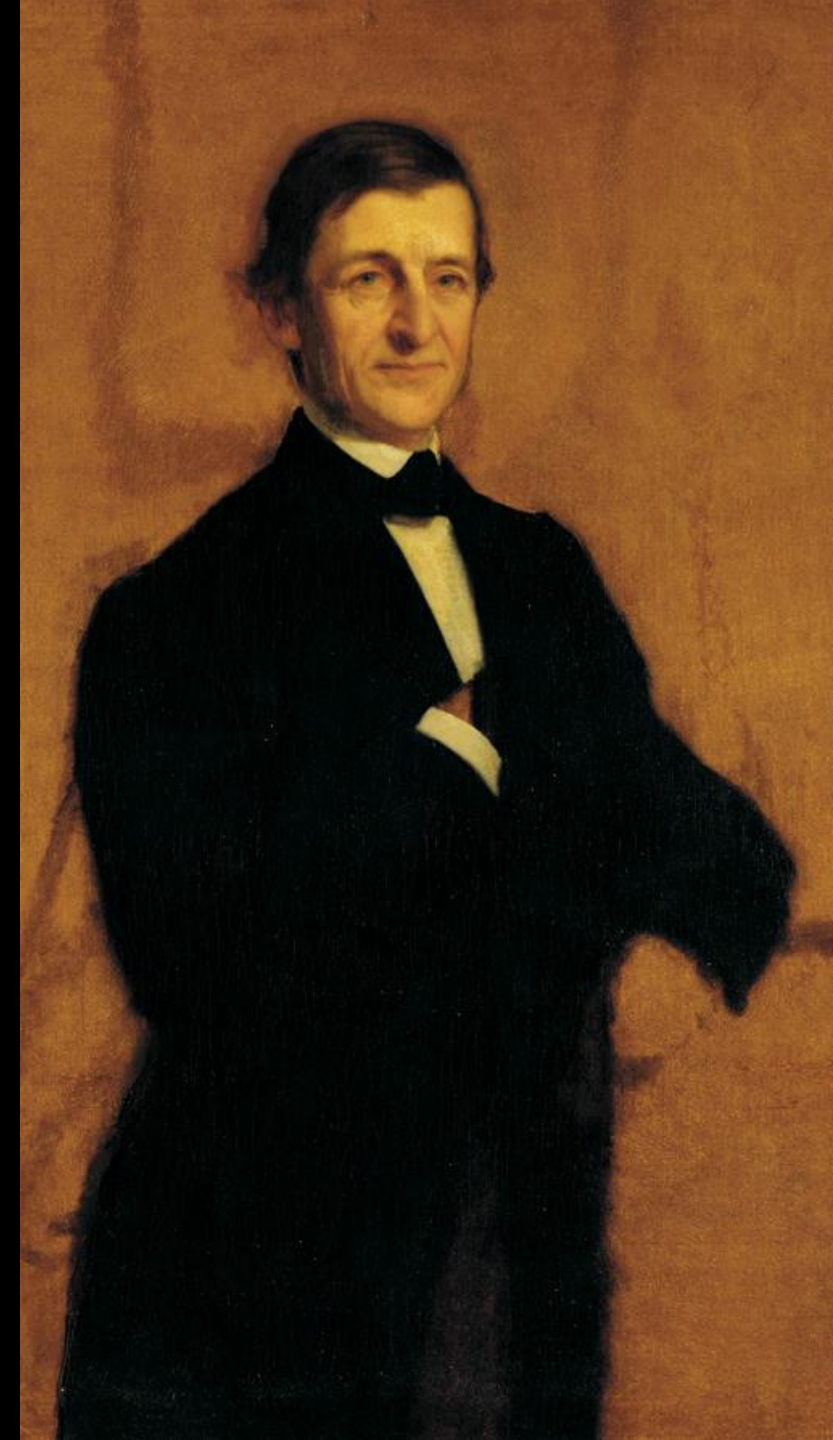


# LITERARY WORKS

Ralph Waldo Emerson was considered the greatest American thinker of his time. He is considered a symbol of optimism and independent thinking. He influenced a long line of American poets, including Emily Dickinson, Walt Whitman and Robert Frost.

Noted works include:

- Nature (1836)
- "Self-Reliance," in Essays: First Series (1841)
- "Experience" & "Politics," in Essays: 2nd Series (1844)
- The Conduct of Life (1860)





## from NATURE

Emerson felt his purpose in writing was to share what he experienced in the world: what he had seen, thought, and felt. He thought of his essays as offering “revelations,” from which others would infer meaning.

In the following excerpt, Emerson describes the thoughts and feelings triggered by a walk through the fields and woods. In the first section, the forest renews his reason and his faith, and he senses a unity with earth’s bounty. In the second section, he notes that humans have distanced themselves from nature by relating to it in a more intellectual way. In the third one, the writer explores ways in which humans can renew their ties to nature.



# THE RHODORA

This poem extends some of the thoughts from the essay: specifically, that humans can understand universal, beauty and truth only through what can be experienced through their senses. Again, Emerson describes his experiences, writing about finding a beautiful flower in the remote woods. The encounter suggests to him that human appreciation of the natural world and nature's glorious abundance spring from the same source. All natural forms are harmonious and beautiful. They work together to express a universal beauty and truth that **transcend** the beauty and truth of the natural world.





# LITERARY ELEMENTS

## Argument

Refers to a form of persuasion that makes a case to an audience for accepting or rejecting a proposition or course of action.

## Theme

Is a central message or perception about life that is revealed through a literary work. The theme may be stated, or presented directly, or it may be implied, leaving the reader to infer it. It expresses a position regarding a particular topic.

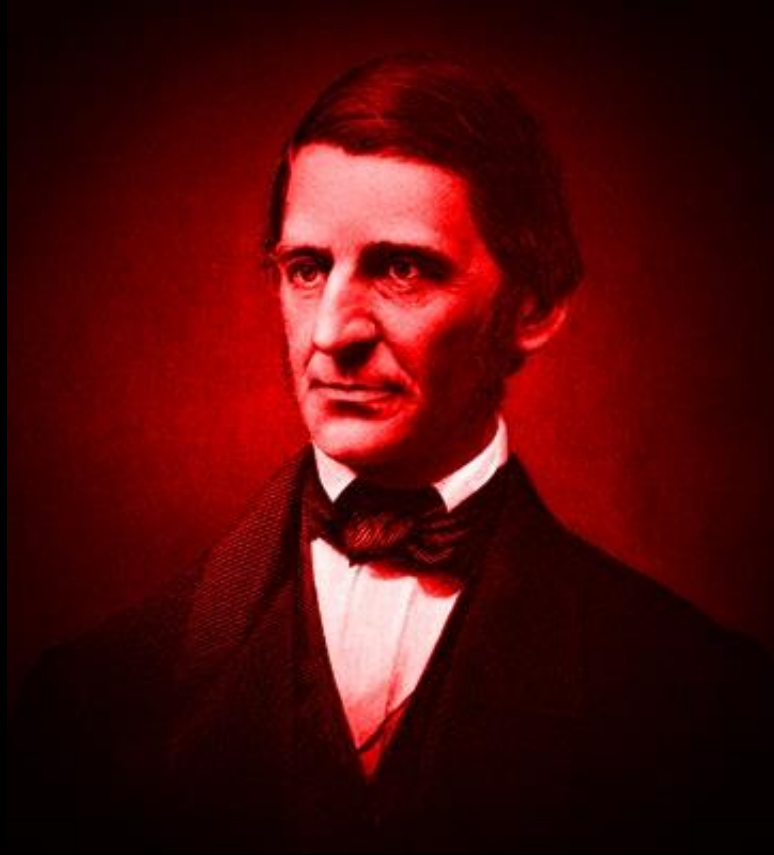


# ASSESSMENT

After reading pages 103-110 in your book, complete the activities:

1. REFER TO TEXT &
2. REASON WITH TEXT
3. & ANALYZE LITERATURE
  - **Argument and Theme** - What is the primary argument Emerson makes in these excerpts from Nature? What evidence does he provide to support the argument? Is his argument convincing? Why or why not?
  - Themes relating to humans' relationship with nature run throughout Emerson's writing. What themes does Nature contain? What is the theme of "The Rhodora"? Are these themes stated or implied?





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