

UNIT 2 Expressing a National Spirit  
American Renaissance 1800 to 1850

A GSEEM school  
**FROEBEL**  
BILINGUAL SCHOOL  
Home of the Space Generation



Henry David Thoreau's  
**Walden**

with **Jim Soto**

# SPEAK YOUR MIND

*"Practically, the old have  
no very important advice  
to give the young."*

- Henry David Thoreau

This quote is the opposite of what you've probably been hearing all your life. Could there be any truth to it?

Take a minute to consider and answer the question in your notebook.

# SPEAK YOUR MIND... AGAIN

What might you consider doing if you felt it was time to make significant changes in your life? Would you move or isolate yourself, as the author did? Why or why not?

Take another minute to consider and answer the question in your notebook.



“Walden”; or, “Life in the Woods” is based on the journals Thoreau kept during his stay on Emerson’s property from 1845 to 1847. Thoreau built his cabin at Walden Pond for \$28.<sup>00</sup>, using mostly secondhand materials, and while there, he lived off the land, raising some of his own crops and eating wild berries and apples.



Thoreau had read Ralph Waldo Emerson's "Nature" while in college, but actually meeting the man in Concord changed his life. Thoreau emphasized self-reliance, individuality, and anti-materialism and sharply questioned the basic assumptions of the way men lived. Transcendentalism proved to be the intellectual force that charged Thoreau's imagination to write about the possibilities of an ideal existence for man.

Thoreau laid the foundation for modern-day **environmentalism**. He articulated a philosophy based on environmental and social responsibility, resource efficiency, and living simply. He believed that to live a good life we must keep the wild intact.



# WHAT INSPIRED TRANSCENDENTALISM?

The 19th-century Transcendentalism movement was inspired by **German transcendentalism, Platonism and Neoplatonism, the Indian and Chinese scriptures**, and also by the writings of such mystics as Emanuel Swedenborg and Jakob Böhme.



In their religious quest, the Transcendentalists rejected the conventions of 18th-century thought (the Enlightenment), and what began in a dissatisfaction with **Unitarianism** developed into a repudiation of the whole established order. They were leaders in experimental schemes for living.





# LITERARY ELEMENTS

## Purpose

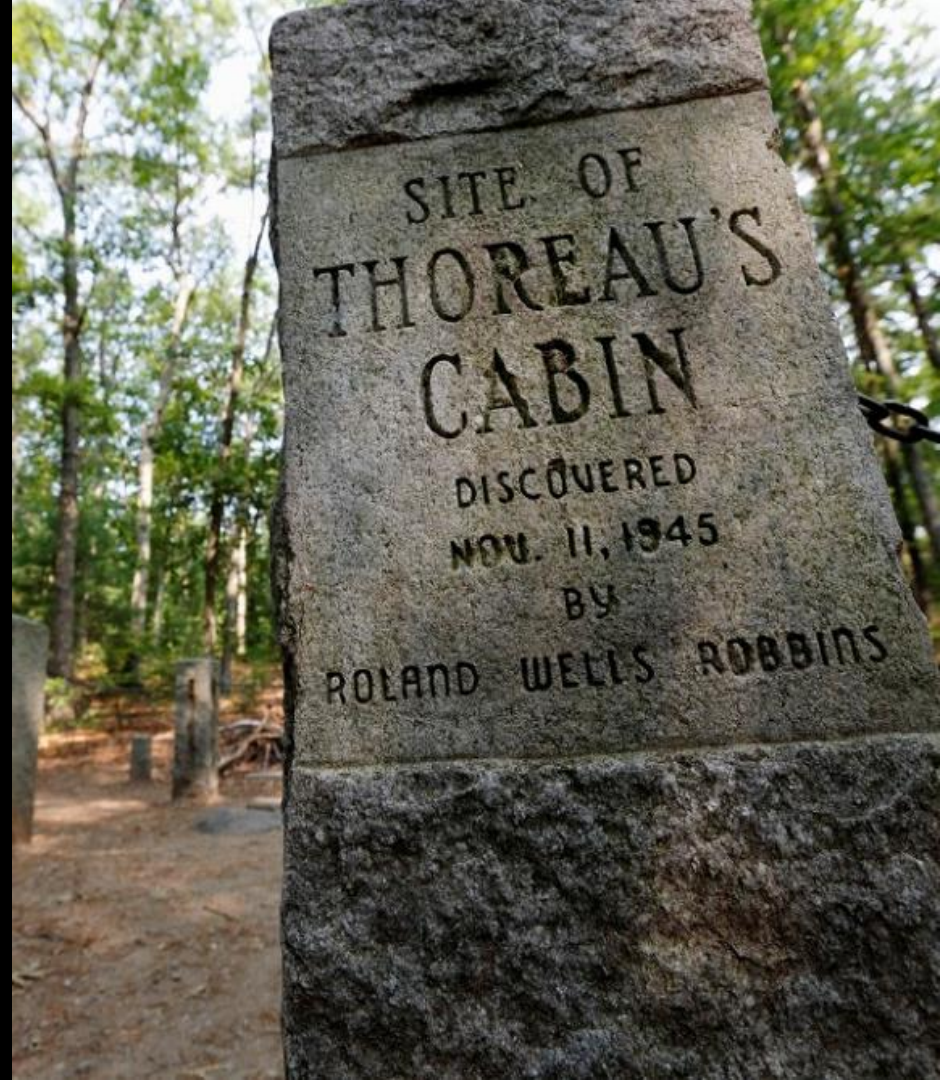
A writer's purpose is his/her aim, or goal. Authors usually have one or more of the following purposes: to inform or explain, to describe, to persuade, or to tell a story.

## Tone

Is the emotional attitude toward the reader or the subject suggested by a literary work—for instance, serious or sarcastic, playful or sincere.



“Walden” has been described as an essay, a narrative, a memoir, and even a work of fiction by a few scholars who question whether life in the woods was exactly as Thoreau described it. In reading the excerpts that follow, identify Thoreau’s purpose or purposes for writing, which may vary from one section to another. Also determine his tone, as indicated by his choices of words and phrases.



# ASSESSMENT

After reading pages 112-125 in your book, complete the activities:

1. REFER TO TEXT &
2. REASON WITH TEXT
3. & ANALYZE LITERATURE
  - **Purpose and Tone** - What is Thoreau's primary purpose in *Walden*? What other secondary purposes does he have? How does recognizing a writer's purpose enrich your appreciation of the work?
  - What is the overall tone of the essay? Use examples of language from the selection to support your suggestion. Does the tone of this essay fit its content? Explain.



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