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# Walden

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## Walden

Nature is the source of humanity's wisdom and philosophy. In his book *Walden*, Henry David Thoreau mentioned nature almost constantly, which is fitting because his writing includes him immersing himself in nature for "two years and two months" (Thoreau 827). When he became more involved and intimate with nature, he managed to escape bustling society and look at it from a new perspective, which enabled him to criticize it. This new perspective makes *Walden* a controversial read, especially for the time it was written. Thoreau fearlessly challenged himself to see the natural world as it actually was, and to immerse himself in nature so he could reap the benefits.

Thoreau immersed himself into nature, living up to his ideas and morals. He writes, "I lived alone, in the woods, a mile from any neighbor, in a house which I had built myself, on the shore of Walden Pond, in Concord, Massachusetts, and earned my living by the labor of my hands only" (Thoreau 827). He reflected on the time he spent there and how he was so close to the superior essence of nature. He left behind prejudices, but not the philosophy proven by nature. He states that "The ancient philosophers, Chinese, Hindoo, Persian, and Greek, were a class in which none has been poorer in outward riches, none so rich in inward" (Thoreau 833). In that statement, he is reiterating that the closer people can get to nature, the more philosophical

they will become. Nature is inspiration for mankind as a whole, and its entirety shows the collaboration and intricacy that society resembles.

Thoreau shows how nature can teach important, yet new lessons of wisdom. He wrote, “What old people say you cannot do, you try and find that you can. Old deeds for old people, new deeds for new” (Thoreau 830). He learned that fact firsthand by finding the purity of nature. Nature teaches us things that have been true for millions of years, and also new philosophical ideas. Nature is an inspiring entity that encourages change in us as well as in itself. An example of this is the seasons; each is so genuine and unique, yet ever-changing. This mocks society by showing how nature can teach methods for success while society struggles to exist in harmony. Thoreau supported this when he said, “The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation” (Thoreau 830). When the average man is surrounded by booming society constantly, he becomes like a machine, working constantly without true direction or inspiration. This is similar to what Ralph Waldo Emerson said in his speech *The American Scholar*. Emerson said, “The first in time and the first in importance of the influences upon the mind is that of nature” (Emerson 643). Emerson and Thoreau take notice and explain the benefit of nature on us individually and even our society.

*Walden* can be read with many different interpretations; a nature book, a do-it-yourself guide to simple life, a satirical criticism of modern life, a belletristic achievement, and a spiritual book. *Walden* is clearly a nature book. Thoreau shows multiple times how he was able to get close to nature, and show how it changed his perspective. At one part in *Walden*, he mentioned how he watched the black and red ants fight their ferocious battle. When he saw them fighting he said, “I was myself excited somewhat even as if they had been men. The more you think of it, the less the difference” (Thoreau 896). Nature itself is very similar to humanity and the interactions

of our society. The occurrences within nature can teach us lessons about ourselves and living life. Thoreau also criticizes modern life by mentioning that we learn too much from the people that comprise our previous generations, and not enough from nature. Nature has been around longer; it has adapted. Thoreau supported this statement when he wrote, "Age is no better, hardly so well, qualified for an instructor as youth, for it has not profited so much as it has lost" (Thoreau 830). Nature is constantly changing, and so is the knowledge we have and the lifestyles we lead. The satirical argument supports the idea that nature is relative to our human existence, but it is not the main argument. Nature impacts us in many ways and teaches us many lessons.

## Works Cited

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