Into the Wild:
Chris McCandless as a reflection of Henry David Thoreau

(video clip from the movie 3:13)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KdMqUn2SKAQ

Henry David Thoreau, cited often in Into the Wild, was a nineteenth century writer, philosopher, naturalist, and, some say, mystic. His work is the heart of the American Transcendental movement, an important philosophical thread that wended its way through American Romanticism by rising above it, so to speak. Thoreau is most remembered, however, for the many important thinkers of the 19th-20th-21st Centuries who claim him as a profound influence. Thoreau was maybe the most important of Chris McCandless’ heroes since his other professed heroes (Muir and Tolstoy) were likewise tracing their principles back to the writings of Thoreau.

However, some say that one of the mysteries of Chris McCandless is that he misunderstood Thoreau’s Walden Pond experience, taking only parts of Thoreau’s philosophies and forcing them to answer his own neuroses. If he did, it was an expensive mistake.

What did Chris understand about Thoreau that launched him into his own adventure? Krakauer helps you understand this by providing prologue quotes to each chapter, but our discussions in class this week with their focus on Thoreau and his transcendental philosophy will also be an important source of ideas.
The Assignment

You will write a four-paragraph essay on how Henry David Thoreau’s writing influenced Chris McCandless. In order to form your own thesis, you will need to isolate two of Thoreau’s ideas or principles to which McCandless responded, either by his actions or writing in his letters and journals. Your own explanation of how these ideas manifested themselves is the subject of your commentary. (How did McCandless show he valued truth? He resented his father’s duplicity. How did Thoreau show he valued simplicity? He lived in one-room cabin for 2 years.)

Ultimately, you will come to a conclusion that either
- McCandless chose a perfect role model for his ideas and was willing to live by those ideas, or
- McCandless should have thought twice about applying Thoreau’s principles to his own situation

It is important to understand that you can’t blame Thoreau for what happened to Chris McCandless. The events as they unfolded remain mysterious, for all of Krakauer’s detective work, and perhaps that’s why we are so intrigued and still discussing Chris’ story 28 years later. IF (and it’s a big IF) Krakauer is right about the fungus theory, it has nothing to do with Thoreau and his principles, or, for that matter, Chris’ principles either.

Structure

I. Introductory Paragraph
II. Body Paragraph - Thoreau
III. Body Paragraph - McCandless
IV. Conclusion
Calendar/Timeline

Day One:
- Define terms: abstract, ideas, ideals, motifs, themes, principles, transcend
- Video clip from movie (3:13) [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KdMqUn2SKAQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KdMqUn2SKAQ)
- Handout packet and read introduction together (p. 1)
- Youtube School of Life Thoreau & Transcendentalism (5:47) [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JL950J8-4k](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JL950J8-4k)
- Ppt Henry David Thoreau
  
  **Hwk:** selected readings from Thoreau, Walden, Ktaadn, & Journal

Day Two:
- Youtube: HDT & Walden (4:11) [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JhP7PKoRmmY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JhP7PKoRmmY)
- Read together Henry Hikes to Fitchburg, by D. B. Johnson
- Prewrite #1, Groups of 3 (but each responsible for his own written work), discuss in class.
  
  **Hwk:** Prewrite #2

Day Three:
- Discuss Prewrite #2
- Groups of 3 (but each responsible for his own written work), Prewrite #3, discuss in class, each group presenting one of their ideas.
- From packet, read page 2, discuss the premise of the paper.
  
  **Hwk:** Thesis statement, study for quiz

Day Four:
- Check thesis statements
- Work on completing Thesis & Outline
  
  **Hwk:** complete Thesis & Outline

Day Five:
- Check Thesis & Outline
- Work on Concrete Details & Body Paragraphs (add CM – commentary – and CS – Concluding Sentence)
  
  **Hwk:** Body Paragraph #1

Day Six:
- Check Body Paragraph #1
- Work on Body Paragraph #2 (add CM – commentary – and CS – Concluding Sentence)
  
  **Hwk:** Body Paragraph #2

Day Seven:
- Check Body Paragraph #2
- Discuss Intro and Conclusion together
  
  **Hwk:** Intro and conclusion, resulting in a complete Rough Draft

Day Eight:
- Check complete Rough Drafts
- Peer edit
  
  **Hwk:** complete edits, Final copy

Day Nine:
- Collect Final Copies, submit electronically to Turnitin.com
Prewrite #1: What ideas were important to Thoreau in the passages we consider? How did he act on them? What principles did he form as a result? List 3 (Love? Wildness? Money? Escape? Truth? Simplicity? Solitude? Desperation? A book deal?) with a paragraph explanation of your thought process in determining this. If you can identify the quote where you found it, even better – you might need it later.

#1

#2

#3
Prewrite #2: What ideas were important to Chris? How did he act on them? Was he acting for an ideal, or against something or someone? Did he state any principles as a result? List 3 (Truth? Solitude? Escape? Resentment? Anti-materialism? Anger? Desperation? Arrogance?) with an explanation of your thought process in determining this. Look for a quote – you’re going to need it later.

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Prewrite #3: Where do you see parallels? Where do you see inconsistencies? (Just because they were both concerned about the same thing doesn’t mean they agree.) Find 3 parallels, and in your explanation, state whether or not they agree, and how they disagree.

#1

#2

#3
Thesis & Outline

Complete Thesis Sentence:

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Body Paragraph One idea (Thoreau): _____________________________________________
Concrete Detail Evidence #1
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Concrete Detail Evidence #2
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Body Paragraph Two idea (McCandless): _____________________________________
Concrete Detail Evidence #1
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Concrete Detail Evidence #2
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Embedding
Worksheet for creating your Concrete Detail sentences, Body Paragraph #1

Transitions  A link to the topic sentence/main idea: ("Thoreau shows his disdain for empty patriotism in the passage where....")

Lead in  The speaker and whatever explanation of the situation might be needed to understand the quote ("...he criticizes people who take a stand based only on what everyone else is doing, and speaking of them saying...")

Quote  Only that part of the quote that is needed to prove your point, punctuated correctly, syntactically completing the sentence. (..."Patriotism is a maggot their empty heads.")

Citation  The author and page number. (Thoreau, 9)

CD #1 - one sentence, embedded Thoreau quote about idea #1

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>T (transition)</th>
<th>L (lead-in)</th>
<th>Q (quote)</th>
<th>C (cite)</th>
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CD #2 – one sentence, embedded Thoreau quote about idea #2

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Shaping a Body Paragraph – Thoreau

#1 TS: ____________________________________________________________

#2 CD: (from page 9) ________________________________________________

#3 CM: (This shows..) ________________________________________________

#4 CM: (This shows..) ________________________________________________

#5 CD: (from page 9) ________________________________________________

#6 CM: (This shows..) ________________________________________________

#7 CM: (This shows..) ________________________________________________

#8 CS: _____________________________________________________________
Embedding

Worksheet for creating your Concrete Detail sentences, Body Paragraph #2

Transitions  A link to the topic sentence/main idea: (“Thoreau shows his disdain for empty patriotism in the passage where...”)

Lead in  The speaker and whatever explanation of the situation might be needed to understand the quote (“...he criticizes people who take a stand based only on what everyone else is doing, and speaking of them saying...

Quote  Only that part of the quote that is needed to prove your point, punctuated correctly, syntactically completing the sentence. ("...Patriotism is a maggot their empty heads.

Citation  The author and page number. (Thoreau, 9)

CD #3 – one sentence, embedded McCandless quote about idea #1

T (transition) ____________________________________________________________,

L (lead-in) ____________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Q (quote) “__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

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__________________________________________________________________________.”

C (cite) (______).  

CD #4 – one sentence, embedded McCandless quote about idea #2

T (transition) ____________________________________________________________,

L (lead-in) ____________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Q (quote) “__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

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__________________________________________________________________________.”

C (cite) (______).
Here’s what you need in your Introductory Paragraph…

In your **Introductory Paragraph**, there are certain elements you must have. Most effectively, they will be all mixed together in a natural narrative form, and not look like a list of elements. Even this list is in no particular order – your own writer’s craft will decide the order in which you introduce these.

- **Introduction to the book Into the Wild and author Jon Krakauer**, since this is what the assignment is all about.

- Introduce **Chris McCandless** as the focus of the book, and explain what happened to him. This will take about **three sentences**, no more. Just summarize briefly, and don’t lapse into synopsis. Only include what your reader needs to know in order for the subsequent paper to make sense, and so that you don’t have to waste time telling the story later.

- **Introduction to Henry David Thoreau**, briefly telling who he is and that he served as an influence for Chris McCandless. This will take about **three sentences**.

- **Introduction to Thoreau’s two ideas**: Thoreau had many ideas, but you have chosen two that have been influential. Discuss these two ideas in a few sentences each. (You need more than “Thoreau was interested in money and nature.” Just sayin.) You don’t have to go into great detail, because you will do that later.

- **Your Thesis sentence**: Your own wording of the purpose of your paper, which is to show in what ways the writings of Henry David Thoreau influenced Chris McCandless to do what he did.

Your intro should set you up completely for the rest of the paper. If your reader doesn’t understand elements in your later body paragraphs, that means you left something out in the introduction that you should have included.

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**Conclusions:**

While an introduction takes your reader from his or her life to the world of philosophy and the wilderness, a conclusion allows your reader to return back to his or her life more thoughtful and knowledgeable, realizing that what you had to say is relevant to them, also.

**What to include:**

- A synthesis (not summary) of the points made in your paper. This will include your to main ideas and suggest that they are questions or considerations common to anyone living in a society of humans and a changing world. Are Thoreau’s ideas relevant to today’s world?
- A statement that answers “So what?” and highlights the importance of your paper’s topic
  - Questions or a statement that leave your reader thinking about themes addressed in your paper, and how the human condition has or has not changed, and might be relevant to your reader also.

**What to avoid:**

- Unnatural, overused transitions such as “In conclusion...” or “To summarize...”
- Summary or exact re-statement of your thesis and points
- Including new information or making conclusions not supported by your paper
- Trite clichés, especially ones that are out of place in a formal academic paper (Ex: “We shall overcome.” “Love conquers all.” “What comes around goes around.”)
- No first person pronouns. Use something like “modern readers” or “Thoreau’s audiences” or “Krakauer’s readers” instead
# Into the Wild Essay Rubric

Author’s name_________________rough draft _____ Turnitin.com _____

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Introductory Paragraph</th>
<th>/15</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Creates sufficient interest by creative or inventive opening</td>
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<td>Clear thesis sentence</td>
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<td>Works cited page, correct MLA notations</td>
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95/71 A Perfect paper in almost every way; form, content, mechanics, analysis and insight. Evidence of hard work.
90/68 Very good insightful work, clear evidence of time well spent. See rubric.
85/64 Some good clear ideas, a few problems, either mechanical, content or both. Evidence of effort. See rubric.
80/60 Ideas show evidence of understanding, but form, mechanics or factual problems. See rubric.
75/56 Just following directions, problems with logic or factual evidence, or form problems. Needed more effort. See rubric.
70/53 Barely acceptable. Needed MUCH more work. See rubric.
65/49 Not acceptable. See rubric.
## Into the Wild Essay Peer Editing

Author's name_________________ Edited by ____________________________

### Introductory Paragraph
- Creates sufficient interest by creative or inventive opening
- Introduces Thoreau and historical background
- Introduces McCandless and, briefly, his story, just enough for the rest of the paper to make sense
- Introduces Krakauer and *Into the Wild*
- Introduces the two motifs/ideas/philosophies you will be comparing
- **IF** you are arguing that McCandless may have misunderstood Thoreau, say so.
- Clear thesis sentence

### Body Paragraph One - Thoreau (perfect paragraph)
- **TS/CS:** Clear statement of focus for the paragraph – what is this paragraph proving?
- **CDs:** Relevant quotes – EMBEDDED properly, including citation
- **CMs:** insightful, focused on how the philosophy/motif/idea manifests itself in the lives of Thoreau
- Perfect paragraph form

### Body Paragraph Two – McCandless (perfect paragraph)
- **TS/CS:** Clear statement of focus for the paragraph – what is this paragraph proving?
- **CDs:** Relevant quotes – EMBEDDED properly, including citation
- **CMs:** insightful, focused on how the philosophy/motif/idea manifests itself in McCandless
- **IF** you are arguing that McCandless may have misunderstood Thoreau, this will appear in your CM.
- **Comparison language will appear in this paragraph** ("...similar to Thoreau..." or “Unlike Thoreau....”)
- Perfect paragraph form

### Conclusion
- Draw a clear conclusion about how Thoreau influenced McCandless
- Avoids merely word-for-word restating of the thesis
- Returns to the ideas of the intro but is not repetitive
- **IF** you are arguing that McCandless may have misunderstood Thoreau, mention that here.

### Proof-reading and Mechanics – MARK THESE!
- No errors of punctuation (P), spelling (SP), grammar (GR), or typos
- Heading, title
- Word choice errors (AWK, Vague, WC)
- Sentence structure errors (run-ons, fragments)
- No passive voice, no informal usage, no contractions, no first person, no meta-references
- Works cited page, correct MLA notations

### Comments:

___________________________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________________________

15
Stay home!

From Walden, Conclusion

One hastens to Southern Africa to chase the giraffe; but surely that is not the game he would be after. How long, pray, would a man hunt giraffes if he could? Snipes and woodcocks also may afford rare sport; but I trust it would be nobler game to shoot one’s self.—

“Direct your eye right inward, and you’ll find
A thousand regions in your mind
Yet undiscovered. Travel them, and be
Expert in home-cosmography.”

What does Africa,—what does the West stand for? Is not our own interior white on the chart? black though it may prove, like the coast, when discovered. Is it the source of the Nile, or the Niger, or the Mississippi, or a North-West Passage around this continent, that we would find? Are these the problems which most concern mankind? Is Franklin the only man who is lost, that his wife should be so earnest to find him? Does Mr. Grinnell know where he himself is? Be rather the Mungo Park, the Lewis and Clarke and Frobisher, of your own streams and oceans; explore your own higher latitude.

From Journal, 19 August 1851

As travelers go around the world and report natural objects and phenomena, so faithfully let another stay at home ad report the phenomena of his own life.

On materialism

From Walden, Economy

We don garment after garment, as if we grew like exogenous plants by addition without. Our outside and often thin and fanciful clothes are our epidermis, or false skin, which partakes not of our life, and may be stripped off here and there without fatal injury; our thicker garments, constantly worn, are our cellular integument, or cortex; but our shirts are our liber or true bark, which cannot be removed without girdling and so destroying the man. I believe that all races at some seasons wear something equivalent to the shirt. It is desirable that a man be clad so simply that he can lay his hands on himself in the dark, and that he live in all respects so compactly and preparedly, that, if an enemy take the town, he can, like the old philosopher, walk out the gate empty-handed without anxiety. While one thick garment is, for most purposes, as good as three thin ones, and cheap clothing can be obtained at prices really to suit customers; while a thick coat can be bought for five dollars, which will last as many years, thick pantaloons for two dollars, cowhide boots for a dollar and a half a pair, a summer hat for a quarter of a dollar, and a winter cap for sixty-two and a half cents, or a better be made at home at a nominal cost, where is he so poor that, clad in such a suit, of his own earning, there will not be found wise men to do him reverence?

When I ask for a garment of a particular form, my tailorress tells me gravely, “They do not make them so now,” not emphasizing the “They” at all, as if she quoted an authority as impersonal as the Fates, and I find it difficult to get made what I want, simply because she cannot believe that I mean what I say, that I am so rash. When I hear this oracular sentence, I am for a moment absorbed in thought, emphasizing to myself each word separately that I may come at the meaning of it, that I may find out by what degree of consanguinity They are related to me, and what authority they may have in an affair which affects me so nearly; and, finally, I am inclined to answer her with equal mystery, and without any more emphasis of the “they,”—“It is true, they did not make them so recently, but...
they do now.” Of what use this measuring of me if she does not measure my character, but only the breadth of my shoulders, as it were a peg to hang the coat on? We worship not the Graces, but Fashion. She spins and weaves and cuts with full authority. The head monkey at Paris puts on a traveller’s cap, and all the monkeys in America do the same. I sometimes despair of getting anything quite simple and honest done in this world by the help of men. They would have to be passed through a powerful press first, to squeeze their old notions out of them, so that they would not soon get upon their legs again, and then there would be someone in the company with a maggot in his head, hatched from an egg deposited there nobody knows when, for not even fire kills these things, and you would have lost your labor. Nevertheless, we will not forget that some Egyptian wheat was handed down to us by a mummy.

On the whole, I think that it cannot be maintained that dressing has in this or any country risen to the dignity of an art. At present men make shift to wear what they can get. Like shipwrecked sailors, they put on what they can find on the beach, and at a little distance, whether of space or time, laugh at each other’s masquerade. Every generation laughs at the old fashions, but follows religiously the new. We are amused at beholding the costume of Henry VIII., or Queen Elizabeth, as much as if it was that of the King and Queen of the Cannibal Islands. All costume off a man is pitiful or grotesque. It is only the serious eye peering from and the sincere life passed within it, which restrain laughter and consecrate the costume of any people. When the soldier is hit by a cannon ball rags are as becoming as purple.

On simplicity as antidote to the busy-ness of modern life

From Walden, conclusion

I learned this, at least, by my experiment; that if one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams, and endeavors to live the life which he has imagined, he will meet with a success unexpected in common hours. He will put some things behind, will pass an invisible boundary; new, universal, and more liberal laws will begin to establish themselves around and within him; or the old laws be expanded, and interpreted in his favor in a more liberal sense, and he will live with the license of a higher order of beings. In proportion as he simplifies his life, the laws of the universe will appear less complex, and solitude will not be solitude, nor poverty poverty, nor weakness weakness. If you have built castles in the air, your work need not be lost; that is where they should be. Now put the foundations under them.

From Walden, Where I lived, and What I lived for

I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived. I did not wish to live what was not life, living is so dear; nor did I wish to practise resignation, unless it was quite necessary. I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life, to live so sturdily and Spartan-like as to put to rout all that was not life, to cut a broad swath and shave close, to drive life into a corner, and reduce it to its lowest terms, and, if it proved to be mean, why then to get the whole and genuine meanness of it, and publish its meanness to the world; or if it were sublime, to know it by experience, and be able to give a true account of it in my next excursion. For most men, it appears to me, are in a strange uncertainty about it, whether it is of the devil or of God, and have somewhat hastily concluded that it is the chief end of man here to “glorify God and enjoy him forever.”

Still we live meanly, like ants; though the fable tells us that we were long ago changed into men; like pygmies we fight with cranes; it is error upon error, and clout upon clout, and our best virtue has for its occasion a superfluous and evitable wretchedness. Our life is frittered away by detail. An honest man has hardly need to count more than his ten fingers, or in extreme cases he may add his ten toes, and lump the rest. Simplicity, simplicity, simplicity! I say, let your affairs be as two or three, and not a hundred or a thousand; instead of a million count half a dozen, and keep your accounts on your thumb nail …. Simplify, simplify. Instead of three meals a day, if it be necessary eat but one; instead of a hundred dishes, five; and reduce other things in proportion. Our life is like a German Confederacy, made up of petty states, with its boundary forever fluctuating, so that even a German cannot tell you how it is bounded at any moment. The nation itself, with all its so called internal improvements,
which, by the way are all external and superficial, is just such an unwieldy and overgrown establishment, cluttered with furniture and tripped up by its own traps, ruined by luxury and heedless expense, by want of calculation and a worthy aim, as the million households in the land; and the only cure for it as for them is in a rigid economy, a stern and more than Spartan simplicity of life and elevation of purpose. It lives too fast. Men think that it is essential that the Nation have commerce, and export ice, and talk through a telegraph, and ride thirty miles an hour, without a doubt, whether they do or not; but whether we should live like baboons or like men, is a little uncertain. If we do not get out sleepers (railroad ties), and forge rails, and devote days and nights to the work, but go to tinkering upon our lives to improve them, who will build railroads? And if railroads are not built, how shall we get to heaven in season? But if we stay at home and mind our business, who will want railroads? We do not ride on the railroad; it rides upon us. Did you ever think what those sleepers are that underlie the railroad? Each one is a man, an Irishman, or a Yankee man. The rails are laid on them, and they are covered with sand, and the cars run smoothly over them. They are sound sleepers, I assure you. And every few years a new lot is laid down and run over; so that, if some have the pleasure of riding on a rail, others have the misfortune to be ridden upon. And when they run over a man that is walking in his sleep, a supernumerary sleeper in the wrong position, and wake him up, they suddenly stop the cars, and make a hue and cry about it, as if this were an exception. I am glad to know that it takes a gang of men for every five miles to keep the sleepers down and level in their beds as it is, for this is a sign that they may sometime get up again.

Why should we live with such hurry and waste of life? We are determined to be starved before we are hungry. Men say that a stitch in time saves nine, and so they take a thousand stitches to-day to save nine to-morrow. As for work, we haven’t any of any consequence. We have the Saint Vitus’ dance, and cannot possibly keep our heads still. If I should only give a few pulls at the parish bell-rope, as for a fire, that is, without setting the bell, there is hardly a man on his farm in the outskirts of Concord, notwithstanding that press of engagements which was his excuse so many times this morning, nor a boy, nor a woman, I might almost say, but would forsake all and follow that sound, not mainly to save property from the flames, but, if we will confess the truth, much more to see it burn, since burn it must, and we, be it known, did not set it on fire,—or to see it put out, and have a hand in it, if that is done as handsomely; yes, even if it were the parish church itself. Hardly a man takes a half hour’s nap after dinner, but when he wakes he holds up his head and asks, “What’s the news?” as if the rest of mankind had stood his sentinels. Some give directions to be waked every half hour, doubtless for no other purpose; and then, to pay for it, they tell what they have dreamed. After a night’s sleep the news is as indispensable as the breakfast. “Pray tell me any thing new that has happened to a man any where on this globe,”—and he reads it over his coffee and rolls, that a man has had his eyes gouged out this morning on the Wachito River; never dreaming the while that he lives in the dark unfathomed mammoth cave of this world, and has but the rudiment of an eye himself.

For my part, I could easily do without the post-office. I think that there are very few important communications made through it. To speak critically, I never received more than one or two letters in my life—I wrote this some years ago—that were worth the postage.

### Against conformity, tradition, and others’ opinions

**From Walden, Conclusion**

I left the woods for as good a reason as I went there. Perhaps it seemed to me that I had several more lives to live, and could not spare any more time for that one. It is remarkable how easily and insensibly we fall into a particular route, and make a beaten track for ourselves. I had not lived there a week before my feet wore a path from my door to the pond-side; and though it is five or six years since I trod it, it is still quite distinct. It is true, I fear that others may have fallen into it, and so helped to keep it open. The surface of the earth is soft and impressionable by the feet of men; and so with the paths which the mind travels. How worn and dusty, then, must be the highways of the world, how deep the ruts of tradition and conformity! I did not wish to take a cabin passage, but rather to go before the mast and on the deck of the world, for there I could best see the moonlight amid the mountains. I do not wish to go below now.
From *Walden, Economy*

What old people say you cannot do you try and find that you can. Old deeds for old people, and new deeds for new. Old people did not know enough once, perchance, to fetch fresh fuel to keep the fire a-going; new people put a little dry wood under a pot, and are whirled round the globe with the speed of birds, in a way to kill old people, as the phrase is. Age is no better, hardly so well, qualified for an instructor as youth, for it has not profited so much as it has lost. One may almost doubt if the wisest man has learned anything of absolute value by living. Practically, the old have no very important advice to give the young, their own experience has been so partial, and their lives have been such miserable failures, for private reasons, as they must believe; and it may be that they have some faith left which belies that experience, and they are only less young than they were. I have lived some thirty years on this planet, and I have yet to hear the first syllable of valuable or even earnest advice from my seniors. They have told me nothing, and probably cannot tell me anything to the purpose. Here is life, an experiment to a great extent untried by me; but it does not avail me that they have tried it. If I have any experience which I think valuable, I am sure to reflect that this my Mentors said nothing about.

... One generation abandons the enterprises of another like stranded vessels.

... Public opinion is a weak tyrant compared with our own private opinion. What a man thinks of himself, that it is which determines, or rather indicates, his fate.

**Truth**

From *Walden, Higher Laws*

Rather than love, than money, than fame, give me truth. I sat at a table where were rich food and wine in abundance, and obsequious attendance, but sincerity and truth were not; and I went away hungry from the inhospitable board. The hospitality was as cold as the ices. I thought that there was no need of ice to freeze them. They talked to me of the age of the wine and the fame of the vintage; but I thought of an older, a newer, and purer wine, of a more glorious vintage, which they had not got, and could not buy. The style, the house and grounds and "entertainment" pass for nothing with me. I called on the king, but he made me wait in his hall, and conducted like a man incapacitated for hospitality. There was a man in my neighborhood who lived in a hollow tree. His manners were truly regal. I should have done better had I called on him.

**On hunting, killing, and eating animals**

From *Walden, Higher Laws*

Almost every New England boy among my contemporaries shouldered a fowling piece between the ages of ten and fourteen; and his hunting and fishing grounds were not limited, like the preserves of an English nobleman, but were more boundless even than those of a savage. No wonder, then, that he did not oftener stay to play on the common. But already a change is taking place, owing, not to an increased humanity, but to an increased scarcity of game, for perhaps the hunter is the greatest friend of the animals hunted, not excepting the Humane Society. Moreover, when at the pond, I wished sometimes to add fish to my fare for variety. I have actually fished from the same kind of necessity that the first fishers did. Whatever humanity I might conjure up against it was all factitious, and concerned my philosophy more than my feelings. I speak of fishing only now, for I had long felt differently about fowling, and sold my gun before I went to the woods. Not that I am less humane than others, but I did not perceive that my feelings were much affected. I did not pity the fishes nor the worms. This was habit. As for fowling, during the last years that I carried a gun my excuse was that I was studying ornithology, and sought only new or rare birds. But I confess that I am now inclined to think that there is a finer way of studying ornithology.
than this. It requires so much closer attention to the habits of the birds, that, if for that reason only, I have been willing to omit the gun. Yet notwithstanding the objection on the score of humanity, I am compelled to doubt if equally valuable sports are ever substituted for these; and when some of my friends have asked me anxiously about their boys, whether they should let them hunt, I have answered, yes,—remembering that it was one of the best parts of my education,—make them hunters, though sportsmen only at first, if possible, mighty hunters at last, so that they shall not find game large enough for them in this or any vegetable wilderness,—hunters as well as fishers of men. ... 

There is a period in the history of the individual, as of the race, when the hunters are the “best men,” as the Algonquins called them. We cannot but pity the boy who has never fired a gun; he is no more humane, while his education has been sadly neglected. This was my answer with respect to those youths who were bent on this pursuit, trusting that they would soon outgrow it. No humane being, past the thoughtless age of boyhood, will wantonly murder any creature which holds its life by the same tenure that he himself does. The hare in its extremity cries like a child. ... 

Such is oftentimes the young man’s introduction to the forest, and the most original part of himself. He goes thither at first as a hunter and fisher, until at last, if he has the seeds of a better life in him, he distinguishes his proper objects, as a poet or naturalist it may be, and leaves the gun and fish-pole behind. 

There is something essentially unclean about this diet and all flesh, and I began to see where housework commences, and whence the endeavor, which costs so much, to wear a tidy and respectable appearance each day, to keep the house sweet and free from all ill odors and sights. Having been my own butcher and scullion and cook, as well as the gentleman for whom the dishes were served up, I can speak from an unusually complete experience. The practical objection to animal food in my case was its uncleanness; and, besides, when I had caught and cleaned and cooked and eaten my fish, they seemed not to have fed me essentially. It was insignificant and unnecessary, and cost more than it came to. A little bread or a few potatoes would have done as well, with less trouble and filth. Like many of my contemporaries, I had rarely for many years used animal food, or tea, or coffee, &c.; not so much because of any ill effects which I had traced to them, as because they were not agreeable to my imagination. The repugnance to animal food is not the effect of experience, but is an instinct. It appeared more beautiful to live low and fare hard in many respects; and though I never did so, I went far enough to please my imagination. I believe that every man who has ever been earnest to preserve his higher or poetic faculties in the best condition has been particularly inclined to abstain from animal food, and from much food of any kind. It is a significant fact, stated by entomologists, I find it in Kirby and Spence, that “some insects in their perfect state, though furnished with organs of feeding, make no use of them;” and they lay it down as “a general rule, that almost all insects in this state eat much less than in that of larvæ. The voracious caterpillar when transformed into a butterfly,” . . . “and the gluttonous maggot when become a fly,” content themselves with a drop or two of honey or some other sweet liquid. The abdomen under the wings of the butterfly still represents the larva. This is the tid-bit which tempts his insectivorous fate. The gross feeder is a man in the larva state; and there are whole nations in that condition, nations without fancy or imagination, whose vast abdomens betray them.

It is hard to provide and cook so simple and clean a diet as will not offend the imagination; but this, I think, is to be fed when we feed the body; they should both sit down at the same table. Yet perhaps this may be done. The fruits eaten temperately need not make us ashamed of our appetites, nor interrupt the worthiest pursuits. But put an extra condiment into your dish, and it will poison you. It is not worth the while to live by rich cookery. Most men would feel shame if caught preparing with their own hands precisely such a dinner, whether of animal or vegetable food, as is every day prepared for them by others. Yet till this is otherwise we are not civilized, and, if gentlemen and ladies, are not true men and women. This certainly suggests what change is to be made. It may be vain to ask why the imagination will not be reconciled to flesh and fat. I am satisfied that it is not. Is it not a reproach that man is a carnivorous animal? True, he can and does live, in a great measure, by preying on other animals; but this is a miserable way,—as any one who will go to snaring rabbits, or slaughtering lambs, may learn,—and he will be regarded as a benefactor of his race who shall teach man to confine himself to a more innocent and wholesome diet. Whatever my own practice may be, I have no doubt that it is a part of the destiny of the human race, in its gradual improvement, to leave off eating animals, as surely as the savage tribes have left off eating each other when they came in contact with the more civilized.
On the evils of commerce and industry – Don’t work!

From *Walden, Economy*

I see young men, my townsmen, whose misfortune it is to have inherited farms, houses, barns, cattle, and farming tools; for these are more easily acquired than got rid of. Better if they had been born in the open pasture and suckled by a wolf, that they might have seen with clearer eyes what field they were called to labor in. Who made them serfs of the soil? Why should they eat their sixty acres, when man is condemned to eat only his peck of dirt? Why should they begin digging their graves as soon as they are born? They have got to live a man’s life, pushing all these things before them, and get on as well as they can. How many a poor immortal soul have I met well nigh crushed and smothered under its load, creeping down the road of life, pushing before it a barn seventy-five feet by forty, its Augean stables never cleansed, and one hundred acres of land, tillage, mowing, pasture, and wood-lot! The portionless, who struggle with no such unnecessary inherited encumbrances, find it labor enough to subdue and cultivate a few cubic feet of flesh.

But men labor under a mistake. The better part of the man is soon plowed into the soil for compost. By a seeming fate, commonly called necessity, they are employed, as it says in an old book, laying up treasures which moth and rust will corrupt and thieves break through and steal. It is a fool’s life, as they will find when they get to the end of it, if not before.

... Such is the universal law, which no man can ever outwit, and with regard to the railroad even we may say it is as broad as it is long. To make a railroad round the world available to all mankind is equivalent to grading the whole surface of the planet. Men have an indistinct notion that if they keep up this activity of joint stocks and spades long enough all will at length ride somewhere, in next to no time, and for nothing; but though a crowd rushes to the depot, and the conductor shouts “All aboard!” when the smoke is blown away and the vapor condensed, it will be perceived that a few are riding, but the rest are run over,—and it will be called, and will be, “A melancholy accident.” No doubt they can ride at last who shall have earned their fare, that is, if they survive so long, but they will probably have lost their elasticity and desire to travel by that time. This spending of the best part of one’s life earning money in order to enjoy a questionable liberty during the least valuable part of it, reminds me of the Englishman who went to India to make a fortune first, in order that he might return to England and live the life of a poet. He should have gone up garret at once. “What!” exclaim a million Irishmen starting up from all the shanties in the land, “is not this railroad which we have built a good thing?” Yes, I answer, comparatively good, that is, you might have done worse; but I wish, as you are brothers of mine, that you could have spent your time better than digging in this dirt.

From *Walden, Where I Lived and What I Lived for*

Men think that it is essential that the *Nation* have commerce, and export ice, and talk through a telegraph, and ride thirty miles an hour, without a doubt, whether *they* do or not; but whether we should live like baboons or like men, is a little uncertain. If we do not get out sleepers, and forge rails, and devote days and nights to the work, but go to tinkering upon our *lives* to improve *them*, who will build railroads? And if railroads are not built, how shall we get to heaven in season? But if we stay at home and mind our business, who will want railroads? We do not ride on the railroad; it rides upon us. Did you ever think what those sleepers are that underlie the railroad? Each one is a man, an Irish-man, or a Yankee man. The rails are laid on them, and they are covered with sand, and the cars run smoothly over them. They are sound sleepers, I assure you. And every few years a new lot is laid down and run over; so that, if some have the pleasure of riding on a rail, others have the misfortune to be ridden upon. And when they run over a man that is walking in his sleep, a supernumerary sleeper in the wrong position, and wake him up, they suddenly stop the cars, and make a hue and cry about it, as if this were an exception. I am glad to know that it takes a gang of men for every five miles to keep the sleepers down and level in their beds as it is, for this is a sign that they may sometime get up again.
Solitude

From Walden, Solitude

I find it wholesome to be alone the greater part of the time. To be in company, even with the best, is soon wearisome and dissipating. I love to be alone. I never found the companion that was so companionable as solitude. We are for the most part more lonely when we go abroad among men than when we stay in our chambers. A man thinking or working is always alone, let him be where he will. Solitude is not measured by the miles of space that intervene between a man and his fellows. The really diligent student in one of the crowded hives of Cambridge College is as solitary as a dervish in the desert. The farmer can work alone in the field or the woods all day, hoeing or chopping, and not feel lonesome, because he is employed; but when he comes home at night he cannot sit down in a room alone, at the mercy of his thoughts, but must be where he can “see the folks,” and recreate, and as he thinks remunerate himself for his day’s solitude; and hence he wonders how the student can sit alone in the house all night and most of the day without ennui and “the blues;” but he does not realize that the student, though in the house, is still at work in his field, and chopping in his woods, as the farmer in his, and in turn seeks the same recreation and society that the latter does, though it may be a more condensed form of it.

Society is commonly too cheap. We meet at very short intervals, not having had time to acquire any new value for each other. We meet at meals three times a day, and give each other a new taste of that old musty cheese that we are. We have had to agree on a certain set of rules, called etiquette and politeness, to make this frequent meeting tolerable and that we need not come to open war. We meet at the post-office, and at the sociable, and about the fireside every night; we live thick and are in each other’s way, and stumble over one another, and I think that we thus lose some respect for one another. Certainly less frequency would suffice for all important and hearty communications. Consider the girls in a factory,—never alone, hardly in their dreams. It would be better if there were but one inhabitant to a square mile, as where I live.

Wilderness, the Wild, and the West

From Walking

Eastward I go only by force; but westward I go free. Thither no business leads me. It is hard for me to believe that I shall find fair landscapes, or sufficient Wildness and Freedom behind the eastern horizon. I am not excited by the prospect of a walk thither; but I believe that the forest which I see in the western horizon stretches uninterruptedly towards the setting sun, and that there are no towns nor cities in it of enough consequence to disturb me. Let me live where I will, on this side is the city, on that the wilderness, and ever I am leaving the city more and more, and withdrawing into the wilderness. I should not lay so much stress on this fact, if I did not believe that something like this is the prevailing tendency of my countrymen. I must walk toward Oregon, and not toward Europe. And that way the nation is moving, and I may say that mankind progress from east to west. Within a few years we have witnessed the phenomenon of a south-eastward migration, in the settlement of Australia; but this affects us as a retrograde movement, and, judging from the moral and physical character of the first generation of Australians, has not yet proved a successful experiment. The eastern Tartars think that there is nothing west beyond Tibet. "The World ends there", say they, "beyond there is nothing but a shoreless sea." It is unmitigated East where they live.... We go eastward to realize history, and study the works of art and literature, retracing the steps of the race,-we go westward as into the future, with a spirit of enterprise and adventure.

... To Americans I hardly need to say, “Westward the star of empire takes its way.” ...
The West of which I speak is but another name for the Wild; and what I have been preparing to say is, that in Wildness is the preservation of the world. Every tree sends its fibres forth in search of the Wild. The cities import it at any price. Men plow and sail for it. From the forest and wilderness come the tonics and barks which brace mankind. Our ancestors were savages. The story of Romulus and Remus being suckled by a wolf is not a meaningless fable. The founders of every state which has risen to eminence, have drawn their nourishment and vigor from a similar wild source. It is because the children of the empire were not suckled by the wolf that they were conquered and displaced by the children of the northern forests who were.

On trusting yourself

From Walden, Conclusion

Why should we be in such desperate haste to succeed, and in such desperate enterprises? If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer. Let him step to the music which he hears, however measured or far away. It is not important that he should mature as soon as an apple-tree or an oak. Shall he turn his spring into summer? If the condition of things which we were made for is not yet, what were any reality which we can substitute? We will not be shipwrecked on a vain reality. Shall we with pains erect a heaven of blue glass over ourselves, though when it is done we shall be sure to gaze still at the true ethereal heaven far above, as if the former were not?

From Walden, Higher Laws

If one listens to the faintest but constant suggestions of his genius, which are certainly true, he sees not to what extremes, or even insanity, it may lead him; and yet that way, as he grows more resolute and faithful, his road lies. The faintest assured objection which one healthy man feels will at length prevail over the arguments and customs of mankind. No man ever followed his genius till it misled him. Though the result were bodily weakness, yet perhaps no one can say that the consequences were to be regretted, for these were a life in conformity to higher principles. If the day and the night are such that you greet them with joy, and life emits a fragrance like flowers and sweet-scented herbs, is more elastic, more starry, more immortal,—that is your success. All nature is your congratulation, and you have cause momentarily to bless yourself. The greatest gains and values are farthest from being appreciated. We easily come to doubt if they exist. We soon forget them. They are the highest reality. Perhaps the facts most astounding and most real are never communicated by man to man. The true harvest of my daily life is somewhat as intangible and indescribable as the tints of morning or evening. It is a little star-dust caught, a segment of the rainbow which I have clutched.

From Walden, Economy

Public opinion is a weak tyrant compared with our own private opinion. What a man thinks of himself, that it is which determines, or rather indicates, his fate.
Henry David Thoreau

1817 - 1862

“As travelers go around the world and report natural objects and phenomena, so let another stay at home and report the phenomena of his own life.”
Henry David Thoreau

1817 Born in the village of Concord, Massachusetts, and lived there all his life.
Undistinguished educational career at Harvard.

Taught school and helped establish an Academy with his brother.
1836: Met Ralph Waldo Emerson, and at Emerson’s urging, began to keep a journal, which eventually grew to two million words and was his greatest literary achievement.

Lived with Emerson and his wife, serving as a handyman.
1845 Begins his “experiment” at Walden, building a cabin on land belonging to Emerson, and living there for two years.

Maintained an active social life at the same time in the small village of Concord, less than 2 miles away.
Spent the night in the local jail when, in a protest against what he regarded as the pro-slavery agenda of the war against Mexico, he refused to pay his poll tax.

As a result, he wrote the famous account of this experience now known as “Civil Disobedience.”

“That government is best which governs not at all.”
Passionate abolitionist, delivering speeches, writing essays, and most notably, defending John Brown after Brown’s arrest at Harper’s Ferry, W.Va.
1847–1854 completed seven full revisions of the manuscript that would become Walden.
Henry D. Thoreau

I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived.

— Henry D. Thoreau
Died at 44 of tuberculosis.
Most famous for the many famous people he inspired:

Mahatma Gandhi
Martin Luther King Jr.
John Muir
Aldo Leopold
John F. Kennedy
Leo Tolstoy
Ernest Hemingway
E. B. White
William Butler Yeats
Christopher McCandless
Romance, as a literary term, is literature that mixes the reality of everyday life with the supernatural and mysterious, idealizes beauty and nature, and chronicles adventuresome heroic deeds.

Transcendentalism is a sub-genre of Romanticism.
Transcendentalists

• Determining the ultimate reality of God, the universe, the self, and other important matters moves beyond, or transcends, the empirical evidence of the senses into the immaterial and the divine.

• Divinity is present everywhere, in nature and in all persons, and God is manifest in man’s work.

• Man is essentially good.
Transcendentalists continued

- Strong belief in freedom and equality, even for women and minorities
- Spirituality and the divine is more important than in the broader Romantic movement, with a stronger connection to Puritan and Quaker roots
Famous Transcendentalists

Ralph Waldo Emerson
Henry David Thoreau
Walt Whitman
Emily Dickinson
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OlRLbqVBT7U
(13:22) Thoreau, Emerson, Transcendentalism
Project completed for NEH Landmarks Institute “Living and Writing Deliberately: The Concord Landscapes and Legacy of Henry Thoreau”

Submitted to the Concord Museum

Unit:

Summer Reading writing assignment integrating *Into the Wild*, by Jon Krakauer, with excerpts from Henry David Thoreau’s *Journal, Walden and Ktaadn*, for on-level 11th Grade American Literature survey course.

Objectives:

Introduction to Thoreau and the philosophical concepts of Transcendentalism
Recognizing and conceptualizing abstract ideas from close reading of text and narrative (analysis)
Applying abstract concepts, themes and motifs across texts (synthesis)
Creating and supporting theses
Using basic academic writing skills, processes, and forms
Assessment of writing skills as a baseline for the year
Assessment of Summer Reading assignment: *Into the Wild*, by Jon Krakauer

Attachments:

Priour2, Thoreau assignment packet
Complete assignment packet handout
- Introduction (1)
- Assignment Sheet (2)
- Calendar & Resources (3)
- Prewrite #1 (4)
- Prewrite #2 (5)
- Prewrite #3 (6)
- Worksheet: Thesis & Outline (7-8))
- Worksheet: Embedding: Creating Concrete Detail Sentences Body Paragraph #1 (9)
- Worksheet: Shaping a Body Paragraph Body Paragraph #1 (10)
- Worksheet: Embedding: Creating Concrete Detail Sentences Body Paragraph #2 (11)
- Worksheet: Shaping a Body Paragraph Body Paragraph #2 (12)
- Intro & Conclusion help (13)
- Grading Rubric (14)
- Worksheet: Peer Edit (15-16)

Priour 3, Thoreau readings packet

Priour 4, Powerpoint, Thoreau

Priour 5, Powerpoint, Transcendentalis
Resources:
Krakauer, Jon. *Into the Wild.*
Movie clip of McCandless quoting Thoreau (3:13) [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KdMqUn2SKAQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KdMqUn2SKAQ)
Johnson, D.B., *Henry Hikes to Fitchburg*
Ppt: Henry David Thoreau
Ppt: Transcendentalism
Youtube, School of Life, Thoreau & Transcendentalism (5:47) [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JL95OJ8-4k](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JL95OJ8-4k)
Youtube, Henry David Thoreau & Walden (4:11) [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JhP7PKoRmmY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JhP7PKoRmmY)