

1. Transcendentalism was a period during American literature and history that really brought out the best of American writers and their views of self accomplishment and self fulfillment. Some key writers that were really highlighted in this period were Thomas Paine, Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau. Out of the three writers mentioned, however, the best example of transcendentalism was probably Ralph Waldo Emerson in his work, "Self Reliance." Throughout "Reliance," Emerson defines transcendentalism through pages upon pages of useful words, phrases, and quotes that anyone who wanted to know about transcendentalism could read his work and truly understand to a tee what it really was. The two quotes within the piece that really stand out are the ones located on page 536 where it states, "There is the man and his virtues," and "What I must do, is all that concerns me, not what the people think." That right there in twenty one words describes transcendentalism in its finest. Besides the individualism aspect of it, there is also the religion side in which a transcendentalist looks at the divine in a way that is choice rather than a need. If you believe in a God, that is your choice, and if you don't, that is your choice as well. At times it is hinted throughout many works during this period that God is preferred, but it is never directly stated. However there is something that is directly stated, that being nature. Nature has probably the most powerful role in obtaining goals and dreams in transcendentalism. Nature teaches you intuition and reason, and with those two, it is said that you can accomplish anything. First your mother through nature teaches you the basics, and then through nature's properties and everyday occurrences in nature, you learn the

basics to survive and achieve great things for yourself. Transcendentalism is just that, enlightenment for yourself.

2. Walt Whitman was a master at everything that had to do with poetry. His word choice was superb, his word usage was amazing, and his imagery was exceptional. Of course, during this time, all of these opinions were very subjective and hard to come by. But within his two poems, "Song of Myself," and "Lilacs," it is shown that Whitman can dig deep into events and show them to the world through words that paint pictures of happiness, pain, and solemnity. In "Song of Myself," Whitman writes about the pinnacle of the American dream through the language of being hopefully, thinking positive, and acting free spirited. It is shown through his use of lines such as ones on 1253, "Swift wind! Space! My Soul!" However, compared to "Lilacs," supposedly written about the death of Abraham Lincoln, a man who surely lived the American Dream, which symbolizes the end of American adolescence. Whitman does this by using solemn language, being repetitive to no end, repeating words of death such as dark, silence, night, and coffin. The mood throughout the two poems is also very noticeable and comparable. In "Song," the mood is full of self excitement with tons of exclamation marks and repetitive words of expression such as "Where, Over, and And." The repetitive use of 'and' can symbolize how happy the speaker is that he cannot use complete sentences to include everything because his strong feelings are coming out too fast. But in "Lilacs," the mood is that of which if you are at a funeral; very dark, subtle, and emotional without expression. But with all the symbolism of the two poems, the two things that Whitman expresses the best

in not only these two poems, but in the rest of his works, are imagery and sound. The sounds in "Song," include nature sounds which points to life and enjoyment of life, whereas in "Lilacs," there are no sounds at all. This shows that in death, there is complete silence, the feeling of being trapped, and the upbringing of the feud between silence and being heard. In "Song," his imagery includes that of nature (transcendentalism?), light, and earth. These three things that show full of life and happiness. Compared to "Lilacs," Whitman uses imagery of coffins, funerals, night, too much darkness to overcome, and lilacs. He mentions lilacs to try and bring happiness to a somber event, but uses words of darkness to show how overpowering such events as death really are to cover up happiness.

3. Emerson believes that the scholar and the man of action should be one and the same because if they two were to work together, great things could be accomplished. The scholar is the one in the books, observing people's actions, thinking up ideas and plans to overcome strategies and problems, whereas the man of action goes through with the plans and actions with force and use of energy to attract believers and followers. This is a prime example of why Emerson was in transcendentalism, because he believes that if you believe in yourself through your studies and not other's words, great things can happen. Both the scholar and the man of action do this because neither of which follow anyone else's words; they formulate their own feelings based on what they know already and what they have learned in the process. The scholar should do more than just study because if you stay silent for a long time, then you begin to not be able to

express your own feelings, but rather what other people say. This goes against transcendentalism, and that is why Emerson mentions it.

4. The notion of human nature that Hawthorne suggests in “Brown” is that of arrogance and temptation. If one follows temptation and succeeds in some way, shape, or form, arrogance is bound to follow with the right amount of praise and celebration. In “Brown,” the main character in his story obtains this arrogance and challenges the devil himself, leading to his downfall as a person and respect for himself. This counterbalances that of Emerson because Emerson believed that self reliance and self determination is the way to advance yourself. But because of the main character’s ego (selfishness), bad things happened to him.
5. In Poe’s “Usher,” the main character Roderick Usher has “a morbid acuteness of the senses,” but has a very strong mind. Emerson’s quote of “Nothing is at last sacred but the integrity of your own mind,” fits Roderick’s views for sure because if Roderick does not have his senses at 100%, then why even try to live life at its fullest? But Emerson suggests that if you have a working mind that creates ideas and situations for yourself, then you are set to live your life to its fullest no matter what the opposition might say. Throughout the entire story Roderick survives because of his mind, while his supporting character, Madeline, takes care of the senses for him. But in the end, they both die because the mind cannot live without its counterpart, the senses. Their personalities become the house, and because the mind and senses cannot live without each other, they fall... leading to the title of the story, “The Fall of the House of Usher.” The fall (unable to live without senses and mind) of the House (their personalities) of Usher (Roderick’s name).

6. Melville's *Bartleby* and Davis's *Hugh Wolfe* both could live by the quote of "The finest qualities of our nature, like the bloom on fruits, can be preserved only by the most delicate handling. Yet we do not treat ourselves nor one another thus tenderly." *Bartleby* was in the stock world, and had many people around him that helped each other try and make money. But this process was long and tedious to say the least. There is a line on page 1124 that describes the process of examining pages of information by the men. This could describe the "mass of men that live desperate lives," and "delicate handling of" life's flowers. "It is an indispensable part of the scrivener's business to verify the accuracy of his copy, word by word... it is a very dull, wearisome, and lethargic affair." So, in order to make money, which they are desperate for, they have to do this works of boredom and desperation. Davis's *Hugh Wolfe* is a little different in that instead of a "mass of men," Davis talks about one person, that being old Hugh Wolfe. Wolfe's life goes with Thoreau and *Walden*. Wolfe does not take care of his body and life over his lifespan, only listening to others rather than himself (showing effects of being non-transcendentalist?), so that goes with the idea that we do not take care of ourselves to the best of our knowledge. Page 1332 describes Wolfe as, "physically, nature had promised the man but little. He had already lost the strength and instinct vigor of a man, his muscles were thin, his nerves weak, his face haggard, yellow with consumption." He is also described as quiet, which is what agrees with *Walden's* views. This is also on 1332 when Davis writes of Hugh being "not popular" and when he drank, he drank "selfdom; but when he did, desperately." This desperation following exactly what *Walden* was trying to say.

8. Frederick Douglass and Harriett Jacobs were very influential writers of the slave era, and wrote of the disparity and agony of the slaves to the public. One of the arguments both of them spoke of was how slavery was morally corruption to both the slaves and the slaveholders, something that would make the average person look with a puzzled face. Throughout his work, he talks about the stories about being a former slave and what he has seen and witnessed, though it would seem some things out of a nightmare. The morally corrupting events that happened to slaves are already known, repeated over and over again in the history books, and it is common sense to know that just being called a “slave” is morally corrupting. But what he meant by slave owners being the same way, he was stating on how they really took the idea of “owner” to the next level sometimes without thinking. There are two mentions of this in which it makes the most sense. On page 1025, Douglass talks about how a slave owner was whipping a woman and whipped harder based on how loud she would yell. The louder she would yell, the harder he would whip. It seemed like the whipping, which is seen as a violent crime today, brought out another side of the slave owner in which he began to think that he “likes watching this” or that he “truly owns this person.” The second mention is on the very next page he mentions how someone did not obey one of the owner’s orders and how that person paid for it with “warm, red blood” that “came dripping to the floor.” All this because someone did not obey a simple order. Imagine if you were at work and someone did that to you, beat you down physically, if you did not follow an order (Yeah, makes you stop and realize.) Harriett Jacobs talks more of a direct way, speaking of what the slave owners say

rather than do. She talks about how the slave owners were liars to make their slaves want to stay. Lying, in some respects, is morally wrong, especially when lives are at stake. Jacobs mentions on page 912 that “Slaveholders pride themselves upon being honorable men’ but if you were to hear the enormous lies they tell their slaves, you would have small respect for their veracity. When they visit the north, and return home, they tell their slaves of the runaways they have seen, and describe them to be in the most deplorable condition.” She also says that the owners do not take back run away slaves and that is the punishment for leaving such a “great slave owner.” Just calling yourself that is ego driven, and just wrong. Who would have ever known that the adjective “great” could be combined with a slave owner?

9. Walt Whitman was indeed influenced by earlier writers in the respect that 1. They were writers just like him and 2. Some of them wrote as freely as he did, which surely was somewhat of an idol to a young Whitman. One of these men included Thomas Jefferson, a president of the United States, as well as a man who was crafty with his pen. The two comparisons between Whitman’s work and Jefferson were that they both wrote of Transcendentalism to some respect, and of democracy. Both of which are vocal points, arguably, in Whitman’s “Song of Myself” as well as Jefferson’s “Declaration.” Just by looking at the title, “Song of Myself,” it is shown that it is by a transcendentalist because it is about one’s self. By using the word, “I” throughout a poem, as well as “myself,” it surely shows the ideas of a transcendentalist without even describing what it is. Whitman describes himself as compared to nature, free spirited and happy to be alive. Jefferson, on the other

hand, writes about the freedoms of the "I" or in his case, the people of the United States. How each one should be independent, which is something that transcendentalism stands for, as well as the rights for each individual person. Individual, again, something that it stands for. Democracy, however, is somewhat hard to come by directly, but indirectly, it can be seen clear as daylight through the two works. In "Independence," the whole work is written by a democratic view, talking about rights, freedom, individualism, government, etc. These are all democratic views, compared with the opposite, republican, which would be business, wealth, groups, and laws. To wrap Jefferson up, the best way to describe both of these ideas can be seen on 346 when he states, "We hold these truths to be self evident (self): that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with inherent and inalienable rights' that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness; that to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men (democratic view), deriving their just powers form the consent of the governed." As for Whitman, the democracy is hard to see in "Song of Myself," but can be seen from the title in his piece, "From Democratic Vistas." Throughout his piece, he talks about democracy and how it is great for America not only as a country but for its individual people. However, the best line comes at the very end where he ties transcentlism and democracy together when he states, "Erect, inflated, and fully self-esteeming be the chant; and then America will listen with pleased ears." Basically saying that if America was full of transcendentalists that come together as one to have a say in government (democracy), then America will listen to what it has to say rather than listen to orders. Overall, individuality was

what Jefferson and Whitman had in common. They did not follow the mold and in doing so they are etched into our history books and literature books, respectively, forever.