TRANSCENDENTALISM

--Emerson
--Thoreau
--Hawthorne
--Melville
--Whitman
TRANSCENDENTALISM

● In philosophy and literature, belief in a higher reality than that found in sense experience

OR

● belief in a higher kind of knowledge than that achieved by human reason
TRANSCENDENTALISM

The belief that God gave humankind:

● The gift of intuition
● The gift of insight
● The gift of inspiration
● And, the natural world to revel within
TRANSCENDENTALISM

- Began (as Romanticism) in Germany (England too)
- Immanuel Kant, William Wordsworth
- Mid to late 1700’s, early 1800's too
- Developed in United States in 1836
- Transcendental Club
- Boston
- 1836
- Led by Ralph Waldo Emerson
RALPH WALDO EMERSON

- Author
- Essayist
- Lecturer
- Philosopher
- Unitarian minister
Emerson and the Transcendentalists led the search for truth:

- In Nature (often with a capital "N")
- Through "self-reliance", "rugged individualism"

- "No law can be sacred to me but that of my Nature." --Emerson
- "The government is best which governs least" --Thoreau
COLONIAL ROOTS OF TRANSCENDENTALISM

● Puritanism

● Belief in God as a powerful force

● Belief that each individual can experience God first-hand
Romanticism in Transcendentalism

- Romanticism placed importance on emotions and the individual
- Emphasized intuition and inner perception of truth that differs from reason
- Emphasized nature’s beauty, strangeness, and mystery
- Emphasized individual expression and artistic freedom
TRANSCENDENTAL BELIEFS

THE OVERSOUL:

- The belief that Man, Universe, and Nature are intertwined...
- I call it the Transcendental Trinity...
TRANSCENDENTAL BELIEFS

- Everything has its place
- INTERRELATIONSHIP:
TRANSCENDENTAL BELIEFS

- OPTIMISM
- Be happy!

Evil is an illusion
TRANSCENDENTAL BELIEFS

- INDIVIDUALISM:
- Be true to one’s own inner perception or intuition

"If I know it is truth, then it is truth." --Emerson
TRANSCENDENTAL BELIEFS: Translates to--

● UNLIMITED POTENTIAL OF EACH INDIVIDUAL

● So one must set high goals to improve oneself...and maintain
TRANSCENDENTAL BELIEFS

- NATURE IS TRUTH
- It can be a guide to higher understanding

Nature symbolizes God and thus nurtures the inner life of human beings.
HENRY DAVID THOREAU

- Lived the philosophy of Transcendentalism that Emerson espoused

- Spent 26 months at Walden Pond to “live deliberately - to front only the essential facts of life . . .”
TRANSCENDENTALISM

- Transcendentalism began with a few and grew.
- This philosophy lasted for several years in New England
- More or less ended as the Civil War began.
- But, later revived (in a way) by John Muir, Aldo Leopold, Sigurd Olson, Barry Lopez, etc, etc.
TRANSCENDENTALISM

- Next… Whitman’s own Transcendentalism…
- In many ways, for Whitman, it's about The People rather than Nature