

# #9319

## THE NEW ENGLAND TRANSCENDENTALISTS

FILMS FOR THE HUMANITIES & SCIENCES

1997

Grade Levels: 10-13+

27 minutes



### DESCRIPTION

Examines the lives and writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Margaret Fuller, and Henry David Thoreau. Uses experts' comments, reenactments, and readings from major works to explore the American transcendentalist movement.

### ACADEMIC STANDARDS

#### Subject Area: Language Arts

- Standard: Uses reading skills and strategies to understand and interpret a variety of literary texts
  - Benchmark: Understands how themes are used across literary works and genres
  - Benchmark: Understands the effects of author's style and complex literary devices and techniques on the overall quality of a work
  - Benchmark: Understands relationships between literature and its historical period, culture, and society

### INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS

1. To explore the development of transcendentalism in 19<sup>th</sup>-century America.
2. To understand the intentions behind the literary works of the New England transcendentalists: Ralph Waldo Emerson, Margaret Fuller, and Henry David Thoreau.

### BEFORE SHOWING

1. Discuss the concept of transcendentalism in 19<sup>th</sup>-century America.
2. Discuss the themes, beliefs and goals of the transcendentalist. What questions are transcendentalists seeking to answer and why?
3. Create a list of class opinions of transcendentalism. Discuss differing opinions.



## DURING SHOWING

### Discussion Items and Questions

1. View the video more than once, with one showing uninterrupted.
2. After the ending of the segment on each author, answer the following questions:
  - a. What event/s in this author's life evoked the desire to seek change?
  - b. How did the author go about dealing with this change?
  - c. What are the ongoing themes in each author's works?



## AFTER SHOWING

### Discussion Items and Questions

1. Discuss the themes of the works of the New England transcendentalists and why they are appealing to modern-day readers.
2. Discuss the following concepts:
  - a. Self-reliance
  - b. Individualism
  - c. Rebuilding oneself
  - d. Women studying their own inner direction before taking cultural order
  - e. Nature versus Society
  - f. Simplify
  - g. Civil disobedience
3. Lead a class discussion on modern-day human's relationship with nature. Speculate on how Thoreau or other transcendentalists might react to these views.

### Applications and Activities

1. Compare and contrast the views of the three writers as shown in their works; i.e., politics, nature, religion.
2. Research and report on another American transcendentalist.
3. Create a list of modern-day transcendentalists.

## RELATED RESOURCES



### Captioned Media Program

- Romanticism and Revolution #8884
- Thoreau's Walden #3415





## World Wide Web

The following Web sites complement the contents of this guide; they were selected by professionals who have experience in teaching deaf and hard of hearing students. Every effort was made to select accurate, educationally relevant, and "kid safe" sites. However, teachers should preview them before use. The U.S. Department of Education, the National Association of the Deaf, and the Captioned Media Program do not endorse the sites and are not responsible for their content.

- **AMERICAN TRANSCENDENTALISM WEB**

<http://www.vcu.edu/engweb/transweb/>

Includes definitions, roots, influences, literary texts and other information pertaining to the American transcendentalism movement.

- **THOREAU, WALDEN AND THE ENVIRONMENT**

<http://www.walden.org/>

Contains sites including one on Thoreau's writings and philosophies and another which focuses on land preservation and the Walden Woods ecosystem.

- **THE WORKS OF RALPH WALDO EMERSON**

<http://www.rwe.org/>

Includes a biography, photos and quotes of this author. Site's goal is to eventually have Emerson's complete works available online for printing or downloading.

- **MARGARET FULLER: A MAN'S MIND AND A WOMAN'S HEART?**

<http://www.worldlymind.org/fuller.htm>

Contains a biography, chronology of her life and works and other resources found on the Web.