

from *Walden, Life in the Woods* (Henry David Thoreau)
Mrs. Spain/English 10

Free to Be...

How would you respond to a friend telling you that he or she is dropping out of society and going to live along in the woods for a couple of years? You will explore this question as you read Thoreau's *Walden*. Before reading, I want you to think about the following statements, and indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the statements:

*Everyone should follow his or her own true calling.

Agree Strongly 3 2 1 0 1 2 3 **Disagree Strongly**

*People who build their own houses and grow their own food are happier than other people.

Agree Strongly 3 2 1 0 1 2 3 **Disagree Strongly**

*Living a solitary life would be depressing.

Agree Strongly 3 2 1 0 1 2 3 **Disagree Strongly**

*Animals, insects, and plants are not nearly as interesting as human beings.

Agree Strongly 3 2 1 0 1 2 3 **Disagree Strongly**

from Walden, or Life in the Woods (pp. 215—228)

By Henry David Thoreau

***Read the following sections: Economy, Where I Lived and What I lived For, Solitude, and Conclusion**

1. Point of View: What does Thoreau mean when he says that it is “always the first person who speaks?” (p.217) Do you agree?

2. Point of View: (p.220-par.2) Based on this paragraph, what do you think Thoreau hopes to find in his solitude in the natural world?

3. What do you think of Thoreau as a writer and his personality? Do you think his message is still valid, or do you think it is irrelevant?

4. What does Thoreau mean when he repeats, “Simplify, simplify” (p.221)? Do you think he has a point?

5. How would you **summarize** Thoreau's thoughts on technological progress (pp.220-221), based on what he says about railroads and other inventions of his time? Do you agree? Why or why not?

6. What do you think Thoreau means in his final paragraph by the words, “Only that day dawns to which we are awake.”

1. Point of View: What does Thoreau mean when he says that it is “always the first person who speaks?” Do you agree?

All writers express their opinions whether or not they use first person. Even if they are writing fiction, writers can't avoid slipping in their own views.

2. Point of View: Based on this paragraph, what do you think Thoreau hopes to find in his solitude in the natural world?

Through solitude (being alone) Thoreau hopes to understand the forces of life-to understand himself and society clearly. He is following Emerson's advice: “To go into solitude, a man needs to retire as much from his chamber from society.”

3. What do you think of Thoreau as a writer and his personality? Do you think his message is still valid, or do you think it is irrelevant?

Yes, I still think his message is valid-even in a world where our culture is so materialistic. To me, it is the realization that *things* don't make us happy or successful, but the people and relationships we have are our true measure of happiness and success.

4. What does Thoreau mean when he repeats, “Simplify, simplify”? Do you think he has a point?

He is saying that we should cut the clutter from our lives and live simply. Yes, he does have a point. Life would be easier if we weren't always obsessing over THINGS! Like Notorious BIG said:

I don't know what, they want from me

It's like the more money we come across

The more problems we see

5. How would you summarize Thoreau's thoughts on technological progress, based on what he says about railroads and other inventions of his time? Do you agree? Why or why not?

Thoreau doesn't trust technology-that it controls us instead of serving us. Agree-once a particular technology has been discovered, everyone ends up being forced to use it to keep the pace with everyone else.

6. What do you think Thoreau means in his final paragraph by the words, “Only that day dawns to which we are awake.”

We can truly see all the world offers us when we are committed to living a full life-to live without regret.