ROMANTICISM AND TRANSCENDENTALISM
ROMANTICISM

• 1830-1865
• Refers to a set of loosely connected attitudes toward nature and mankind, rather than a specific theme of romantic love.
• Romanticism values **intuition** over **reason**
• Renaissance (rebirth) of American Lit. Didn’t have to follow England.
ROMANTICISM THEMES

• The celebration of self
• Exaltation in the natural landscape
• Scrutiny of the artist’s own personality and imagination.
Romanticism

Gothic Literature
The “dark side” of humanity – exposing fears of the mind. (After Christmas)

Transcendentalism
The “brightness” of humanity. Big questions – what does it mean to be a human?
TRANSCENDENTALISM

• Let’s define it:
  • Root: *scandere* – “to climb”
  • Prefix: *trans*- “over”
  • To transcend is to climb over or go beyond
TRANSCENDENTALISTS AIMED...

- To go beyond the limits of the senses and of everyday experiences by depending on intuition rather than reason or logic.
- So what happens then?
- We discover higher truths and insights.
TRANSCENDENTALISM THEMES

• Free thought/following your intuition
• Non-conformity/Individualism
• Confidence
• Self-Reliance
• Importance of Nature
TRANSCENDENTALIST VIEW OF THE WORLD

• Everything in the world is a reflection of the Divine Soul.

• The physical facts of the natural world are a doorway to the spiritual or ideal world.

• People can use their own intuition to behold God’s spirit revealed in nature or in their own souls.
TRANSCENDENTALIST VIEW OF THE WORLD

• Self-reliance and individualism must outweigh external authority and blind conformity to custom and tradition.

• Spontaneous feelings and intuition are superior to intellectualism and rationality.
RALPH WALDO EMERSON 1803-1882

- Born in Boston, attended Harvard and later became a minister
- Settled in Concord, Mass and established ‘The Transcendentalist Club”
RALPH WALDO EMERSON 1803-1882

• Published “Nature” and “Self-Reliance” — favored individualism and insistence on self-reliance
• Believed in *pantheism* — God is in all things, can be found in nature — all part of the Divine Soul, the source of all good. “Every natural fact is a symbol of some spiritual fact”
RALPH WALDO EMERSON

BORN IN BOSTON MAY 25 1803
DIED IN CONCORD APRIL 27 1882

THE PASSIVE MASTER LENT HIS HAND
TO THE VAST SOUL THAT OER HIM PLANNED.
HENRY DAVID THOREAU – 1817-1862

• Born in Concord, MA, studied at Harvard and was a student of Emerson’s
• Rejected conformity
• “Civil Disobedience” – passive resistance to injustice.
• Went to jail because he refused to pay his taxes & support slavery.

Best. Neck Beard, EVER!
HENRY DAVID THOREAU – 1817-1862

• 1845 – Changed his life. Went to the woods for 2 years and 2 months and kept a journal.
• *Walden or Life in the Woods* is a product of that experience.
  • Got down to the essentials of life; one with nature
  • Faced non-conformity
  • Realized the non-importance of material possessions.
“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.”

— THOREAU
SITE OF
THOREAU'S
CABIN
DISCOVERED
NOV. 11, 1945
BY
ROLAND W. ROBBINS