

# Analysis of emerson's "nature"



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In his essay "Nature," Ralph Waldo Emerson exhibits an untraditional appreciation for the world around him. Concerned initially with the stars and the world around us, the grandeur of nature, Emerson then turns his attention onto how we perceive objects. "Nature" seeks to show humanity a new form of enlightening the human spirit and urges the formation of a strong link between man and the Universal Spirit. Emerson sees nature as an inspiration for people to grasp a deeper understanding of the spiritual world.

Emerson begins his essay by observing the omnipresence of nature, which garners respect from the observer. However, nature always seems distant, indifferent. Emerson then puts forth the idea that not everyone can observe nature, that one must have the capacity to appreciate, to feel awe and wonder, like a child would who does not try to understand but only appreciate. He personifies nature as a woman by giving it human emotions and actions, such as "Nature never wears a mean appearance", and also that the "wisest man could never lose curiosity by finding out all her perfection." The experience with nature that Emerson describes is truly sublime, magical and yet indescribably beautiful.

Using stars as symbols of the universe, Emerson states that we take stars for granted because they are always present in our lives, no matter where we live. He then moves on from commenting on the faraway stars and begins to discuss the immediate landscape around him. He creates a bond between the stars and the landscape, furthering the theme of a chain linking everything in the universe. Emerson then makes a claim that the person who is most likely to see the whole of nature is the poet, distinguishing the poet from other people. He says that poets can see nature plainly, not

superficially as many people do. Instead of using theories of the past that Emerson says need to be discarded, the person who yearns to see must reveal their inner child, accepting nature as it is rather than attempting to manipulate it into something it is not.

Emerson's referral to the Universal Being, which he identifies with God, is what is now identified as transcendentalism. Every object in nature requires an animating life force, through which, Emerson believes that they are linked. Emerson claims that he is nothing, but he sees all. He concludes his chapter on nature by stating that Nature does not have a personality that it alone devises. Humans, he says, give nature the human characteristics we perceive it to have.

In the following sections, Emerson relates the idea of nature as an instructor to man and how man can and should learn from nature. Nature is a divine creation of God and through it men can learn to be closer to Him. He refers to nature's beauty as the qualities of nature that have medicinal and restorative powers for humans. The special beauty of nature has a strong ability to relieve the stress and anxiety that many humans suffer from. Emerson points out that a person who passively loses himself in the landscape will be rewarded by nature's regenerative powers, whereas a person who consciously seeks out such healing will be tricked by nature's illusions.

In Emerson's section on the relationship between nature and language, he draws the comparison between words and the objects they represent in nature, and that these objects signify spiritual realities, and nature

symbolizes spirituality. He illustrates nature as the interpreter between people, supplying the language that people use to communicate with. For example, he says that all people recognize that light and dark figuratively express knowledge and ignorance. The theme of universal understanding is emphasized further when he claims that each individual shares a universal soul linking that person to all others. Emerson claims that the relationship between the mind and matter is not fancied by some poets, but stands in the will of God, and so is free to be known by all men. The world will become an "open book" from which all can read.

Emerson then goes on to tackle the difficult question of subjective truth and the impossibility of verifying the truth of external reality. The average person doesn't want to know what he thinks is real might be an illusion. However, whether or not nature exists as something distinct remains definitively unanswerable.

After analyzing "Nature," one can see that Ralph Waldo Emerson has a distinct, undeniable love for nature and the sublime. He believes that all enlightenment of the human nature, that all knowledge, that the relationship between God and humans, transcends through nature. Also, all ills and evils in the world may be traceable to this lapsing away from close attention to spiritual truths that comes from nature. Emerson theorizes that each person is a microcosm, a small universe corresponding to the macrocosm of the natural world. His greatest complaint is that we gain a limited knowledge of nature because we too readily mistake understanding for reason. Nature is the inspiration through which humanity begins to understand, not reason with, the natural world.