

American history: emerson and whitman

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In a democracy Emerson wrote that man does not buy his rights and pay for his privileges. He has every right to speak up on an issue and does not need to pay the government to do so. Likewise he does not need to pay to cast his vote in an election. In a democracy man observes rules because doing so is the proper thing. He can not buy his way out to be exempted from obeying laws. The young will benefit from the fruits of democracy because the old shall have had their time.

If the youth is able to use their God-given gift of “ piquancy and charm” they would make the older generation “ very unnecessary. ” They would know how to take care of themselves and secure their future. Democracy for Whitman is where people are able to go about their daily lives without fear, “ the machinist rolls up his sleeves, the policeman travels his beat, and the gatekeeper marks who pass. ” Obviously, the people are the ones who enjoy the fruits of democracy as it allows them to pursue their business in the best and legal means without doing harm to others.

According to Emerson it is easier to conform or to adapt to what the collective society stands for, but to be truly independent one must hold on to what he believes in despite overwhelming opposition. He has only his conscience to trust as to what is right and what is wrong. This attitude is what will spell the big difference “ between greatness and meanness. ” Whitman was more poetic in his take of independence. He said that it is when one has the “ best of time and space, was never measured and will never be measured.

” It meant that when a man is given the opportunity to do what he wanted, given the freedom to use it the way he thought fit is Whitman’s take on <https://assignbuster.com/american-history-emerson-and-whitman/>

independence. Emerson believed that for man to be self-reliant he must first know himself, love his strengths and accept his weaknesses. While nature abounds with what can feed, clothe, and shelter man, he must tap and work on them by his own sweat or labor. Man is so endowed by God that there is nothing he can not do if he tries. Whitman likened self-reliance to travel. He showed a friend what there is to see in places near and far, and the road to take.

The analogy could very well mean life in general. He can only be with the friend at some point but the rest will be up to the friend. He told his friend that “ he must travel it for himself. ” In life there are questions which answers “ he must find out for yourself. ” On cultural independence, Emerson challenged old traditions of the Church, to obey without question. He maintained that it was one’s conscience that he must listen to and not dead institutions and irrelevant societies. Whitman had a different approach with institutions, he was more for maintaining the status quo.

Whitman wrote, “ I accept reality and dare not question it, materialism first and last imbuing. ” As for the spirit of social experimentation, Emerson opposed philanthropies of giving college grants, building half-way homes, alms-giving and organizing charities to the undeserving and regrets every cent and dollar doled out, despite the “ obligation to put all poor men in good situations. ” As for the issue of the slavery and the plight of the Blacks in Africa, Emerson said that “ love afar is spite at home. He was for ensuring the welfare of one’s own before one can be so concerned with those of others.

As for Whitman he welcomed, fed and cared for a runaway slave. He treated everyone equally, be they “ the wicked or the righteous. ” Emerson was among the American Transcendentalists and Romanticists from New England, who believed in the power of the mind which God had use to reveal the truth. He listened to the “ voice of the mind. ” Whitman was a Romantic writer especially with his association of the commonplace to Nature, like “ the grass is itself a child, the produced babe of the vegetation. ” Emerson approached Nature in the context of Man.

He referred to “ the nonchalance of boys as a healthy attitude of human nature,” and “ pretty oracles nature yields us are the face and behavior of children, babes and brutes. ” Whitman did not separate man, animals, the grass, the flowers, the fishes and the birds as he treats them all as Nature. He told of the activities of each without distinction of man and animal, bird or fish, flower or grass, “ the wolverine sets traps, the young fellow drives the express wagon, the wild gander leads his pack. ” Works Cited Emerson, R. W. “ Self-Reliance. ” Whitman, W. “ Song of Myself. ”