

Living in isolation

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Living in Isolation Americans have become accustomed to a society where consumerism, technology, and the ambition of possessing material goods have become the basis of living. American writers and visionaries such as Henry David Thoreau, Chris McCandless, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and other poets have challenged this occurrence by taking it to the next level and, by doing so; have thrown light upon this endemic. Thoreau argues this by isolating himself from society in Massachusetts near Walden Pond and writes his own work *Walden* which exists as his own declaration of independence, where he conducts a personal social experiment and lives alone for two years. Chris McCandless, a visionary who wants to get away from ordinary life, travels two years to Alaska with no money, food, or transportation after his car dies. Emerson writes the essays *Self Reliance* and *Nature* regarding the understanding of life through avoiding conformity and self-consistency. All authors contend with the idea of society as it is to the point of isolation, even to the point of death in McCandless's case. Thus, Thoreau's beliefs about life, conveyed in his work *Walden*, do consist of merit regarding one's over involvement in technology and pose the theory of ultimate simplicity, but a line should be drawn in the over-simplicity of one's life, proven in the movie *Into the Wild* with the unfortunate ending of Chris McCandless. Ralph Waldo Emerson, a nineteenth century American philosopher and essayist, expresses his ideas regarding society as a whole. He writes the essays *Self-Reliance* and *Nature* to express his thoughts on the topic. In *Self-Reliance*, he conveys his idea of trusting oneself in that every human is a genius. He writes that everyone owns their individual thoughts and perceptions. He also writes that society has infringed on one's thoughts and has taken away the

genius of man. Society has taken away and persuaded man's thoughts and only children who have not experienced the reality of life have their own independent thoughts. Emerson writes, " A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds, adored by little statesmen and philosophers and divines. " Emerson argues that when a man forms a pattern in his life he disregards his own nature. In Nature, he speaks to everyman, creating a different perspective and common ground that man must allow nature to " take him away, and society can destroy a man's wholeness. " These ideas laid out by Emerson give many other American visionaries ideas. Walden, a self-written journal by Henry Thoreau, also delves into the concept of getting away from society and living a simplistic life. Thoreau decides to buy land in the woods two miles away from the nearest village, that Emerson himself owns, build a simplistic shack and live there for twenty-six months. Thoreau writes, "" I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life... I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life... and, if it proved to be mean, why then to get the whole and genuine meanness of it. " He lived there for two years and learned to simplify, simplify. He writes that man ought to be fully present in everything, that people can better their lives simply by wanting to. He desires to really live life simplistically by taking away all the luxuries, living on the bare-minimum, and not going through the motions. In the conclusion he criticizes conformity saying, "" If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer. Let him step to the music which he hears, however measured or far away." In secluding oneself from society and finding who he or she really is, man finds happiness and

self-fulfillment. In the future, an extremist pushes Thoreau's ideas to the next level by traveling even further into isolation. Chris McCandless, after graduating from the prestigious Emory University, establishes the decision to desert his family and travel across the country and live in Alaska in isolation from society. He bases this excursion on the principles of Thoreau. Like Thoreau, McCandless sees the wilderness as a purer state, a place free of the evils of modern society, where someone like him can find out what he is really made of, live by his own rules, and be completely free. Before his journey, he lived in a house where his parents fought and lied to him and his sister. McCandless states that the previous four years of college he pursued to fulfill an "absurd and onerous duty: " to graduate college. Shortly after