

Transcendentalism



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Jess Ms. K Accelerated English 10A 26 November 2012 Transcendentalism Final Paper Eras pass, cultural views die out, and society evolves. While this occurs, we still have transcendental views, which are from the mid 1800s, in society whether we realize it or not. Transcendentalism is a group of ideas in literature and philosophy developed in the 1830s and 1840s. It protested against the general state of culture and society. The idea was that spiritual reality transcends the scientific and is knowledgeable through intuition.

Transcendentalists were idealistic, optimistic, and believed people already had everything they needed in life. In our culture today transcendental views are still expressed through media like the song “ Live Like We’re Dying” Kris Allen, the movie “ My Sister’s Keeper,” and the song “ You’re Only Human” by Billy Joel. “ Live Like We’re Dying” by Kris Allen is one example of transcendentalism in media today. This song fits transcendentalism because it is all about living everyday like it is our last, so we are sure to live life to its fullest. Live Like We’re Dying” is rally for people to not waste a minute of their lives and to be productive. Allen writes about how people only have so much time in their lives because they don’t live forever; as humans, who have a limited amount of time, it is necessary to use every second of it without regrets. Allen sings, “ So if your life flashed before you, what would you wish you would’ve done... Looking at the hands of time we’ve been given here This is all we got and we gotta start thinkin’ it Every second counts on a clock that’s tickin’ Gotta live like we’re dying” (Allen).

This supports Allen’s cry to society that we can all use our time wisely and live like we’re dying (Allen). In the short story “ Rip Van Winkle” by Washington Irving the main character, Rip, avoids his life and ends up

sleeping away twenty years. Irving writes, “ Foe Rip Van Winkle was old and gray, and twenty summers had passed away - - Yes, twenty winters of snow and frost - Had he in his mountain slumber lost...” (Irving). This is showing what can happen when we waste our lives; we end up unfulfilled and unsatisfied.

An aphorism, or truth about life, that was written by Ralph Waldo Emerson, “ insist on yourself; never imitate” (Emerson) is a prime example of being ourselves and choosing what we want to do, so we will have fulfillment in our future. The movie, “ My Sister’s Keeper” also had transcendental influences. In the movie, Anna is brought into the world to be a genetic match for her sister, Kate, who is suffering from acute promyelocytic leukemia, or cancer in the blood and bone marrow.

When asked to donate one of her kidneys, Anna refuses and sues her parents for medical emancipation. Before the case is closed, we find our Kate asked Anna to sue their parents; also, Kate gets a burst of energy and trying to live her life while she can, goes to the beach with her family dies before the case is decided; we later learn Anna won. The film ends with the family at their new annual vacation, Montana, Kate’s favorite place in the world. In going to the beach Kate enjoys her life while she still can; she lived deliberately.

In the short story “ Walden” by Henry David Thoreau, Thoreau tries to live intentionally, to front only the essential facts of life, and to see if I could learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived” (Thoreau). Both Kate and Thoreau wanted to live their life with their choices and spend time while they still have time to spend. A final piece of media influenced by transcendentalism is the song “ You’re Only Human”

by Billy Joel. This portrays transcendentalism because it says we are only human so there will be bumps in the road of our lives but to stay positive and optimistic.

Similarly, the song represented both of their characteristics. In the short story “Walden”, Thoreau writes, “I have several more lives to live, and could not spare any more time for that one” (Thoreau). This is like the song because it is about moving forward no matter what is in the past like a, “second wind” (Joel). Also an aphorism by Emerson says, “life only avails, not having lived” (Emerson). This means that everyone should live their own life, for people are only truly happy when they make decisions with confidence rather than fear. These all relate because they describe living life rather than running from it. “Live Like We’re Dying”, “My Sister’s Keeper”, and “You’re Only Human” all provide examples of transcendentalism in our media today. Some people say transcendentalists were the first hippies, they’re right. Transcendentalists were something of their own, much like hippies. Coming out of a time period with strict views on society, transcendentalists were extremely iconoclastic. They did not conform to ordinary rules. Transcendentalists like Thoreau, believed in civil disobedience, a concept foreign traditional people. These are all important ideas to carry over into our modern era, for they help the individual in ways other things cannot.