

Walking by henry david thoreau

Literature



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Walking Henry David Thoreau, in his essay "Walking", explores and conveys his deep appreciation of nature and our need to protect that province. The winding path of nature leads us to the natural and into the wilderness. It is here that we discover our wildness. It is in this wildness that our sense of adventure, invention, and curiosity take its root. When we travel away from the buzz of the city and take the road less traveled, we are able to see the cathedral of the design, unworn by the weathering of civilization. Thoreau lets us know that our instincts can be trusted. We can walk with no destination, armed only with a sense of direction to weigh us down. "

"Walking" is a celebration of the discovery of the life that resides in all the places we seldom look.

Thoreau's tale of walking through woodlands that go without end is a testament to the journey we make through life, and keeps alive the possibility that it can remain filled with infinite beauty, variety, and change. Yet, he warns us of the dark nature of man and his avarice for greed and material wealth. He challenges the concept of private property when he laments, "To enjoy a thing exclusively is commonly to exclude yourself from the true enjoyment of it". The loss of public land and personal places, crossed by highways that eliminate the corners where no other man has been threatens to erode our expression of the true nature of man and our wildness. We need to be vigilante in our guard against placing self-imposed limits on our mobility and our opportunity to go walking.

"Walking" is a symbol of our innate nature to reach out into the unknown with a curious notion and a child's awe. The geometry of a well-ordered landscape will not allow for the spontaneous beauty that gushes forth from one lone wildflower. We need the untamed space, the pristine environment,
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and the unmown grass of an open meadow to feel alive. The structures of civilization have cut the planet into bite size pieces hemmed off against access, paved over and hidden. Thoreau is alerting us to the coming threat of the loss of our environment and with it the loss of our freedom and our nature.

"Walking" is a process of suspending previously held notions and begs the reader to cast aside their expectations. Even our knowledge can be our greatest burden when laden with the undue weight of self-importance. Thoreau asks us to humble ourselves to our limited knowledge when he inquires, "... for what is most of our boasted so-called knowledge but a conceit that we know something, which robs us of the advantage of our actual ignorance?". It is in the acceptance that we do not possess real knowledge that allows our mind to experience the world around us with amazement and learn of its mysteries.

Thoreau's journey through the essay is an expedition through the wilderness of life. It begs us to treasure the spiritual forces that we are endowed with and asks that we not squander that precious gift on short sighted and ill-informed destinations. As we are presented with everlasting change and infinite alternatives, he reminds us to let our feet make our decisions. Our nature, driven by wildness, is better fit to find a direction than our bias, opinion, or social traditions. Coming to the realization that we can trust our senses and rely on our intuition, without boundaries and fences, is all the knowledge we require to take our first baby steps into the world of the natural as we make our way down the path and just go "Walking".

Bibliography

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Thoreau, Henry D. " Walking." Thoreau Reader. 7 Aug. 2005. Thoreau Society. 23 Mar. 2006 .