

Society and writers

Literature



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Throughout the history of literary work, every author has created their own original type of writing. Each author uses many techniques such as sensory language and symbolism. These strategies help the writer to develop the writer's voice. During the Transcendentalism/American Renaissance period of literature, prose, fiction, and non-fiction used examples to define and clarify. The events and circumstances occurring in the United States at the time influenced their writing. Much like the poets of this time, Ralph Waldo Emerson used events occurring daily as well as literary elements to influence his writing. One of Emerson's most famous works of literature was his essay on self-reliance. Emerson writes using persuasive rhetoric to convey his logical ideas of the dangers of conformity that faces mankind and the importance of being an individual. "Whoso would be a man must be a nonconformist. He who would gather immoral palms must not be hindered by the name of goodness, but must explore if it be goodness." Emerson is stating that if a man truly wants to become an individual that he must question every orthodox belief that faces him and he must decide what he believes to be true, not what the masses think to be true. Emerson writes in this persuasive rhetoric to try and convince the reader of the potential dangers of conformity as society will harm the individuals. "Society everywhere is a conspiracy against the manhood of every one of its members." Emerson states how that man must be self-reliant and trust themselves and trust the way God made them in order to an individual. "Trust thyself: every heart vibrates to that iron string." Through this Emerson is making a direct appeal to the reader that they too fall into the category of those who must trust themselves to make the right decisions. Emerson's use of his persuasive style of rhetoric to convey his transcendental ideas is

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matched by his use of literary devices to convey his theory of the importance of life. Emerson uses literary devices such as metaphors to convey his theory of the importance of self-reliance and the dangers of conformity. " Envy is ignorance; the imitation is suicide". This simple parallelism is used to show that man is what he puts into himself and not what others make of him. Emerson wrote another essay titled " Nature". In this writing piece Emerson used personification in one of the very first lines. " Nature says, -- he is my creature, and maugre all his impertinent griefs, he shall be glad with me". This connects humanity with nature as if we exist as equals, as if we were dependent on one another. In this writing piece, Emerson also uses rhetorical questions to make us think and reflect upon ourselves throughout his writing. " Why should not we also enjoy an original relation to the universe? Why should not we have a poetry and philosophy of insight and not of tradition, and a religion by revelation to us, and not the history of theirs? " These questions challenge and encourage the reader to compare ourselves to generations of the past. Ralph Waldo Emerson uses many literary elements in his writing to enhance his work. Emerson's work, through his use of style and literary elements, allowed him to craft his work into an original and powerful work of art. Around the same time as Emerson, another writer by the name of David Henry Thoreau began to create writing pieces that are still known to this day. Thoreau mainly wrote about nature and what he thought of it. In order for Thoreau to write so much on nature he had to be familiar with it. His knowledge of the woods and fields, of the rivers, the ponds, and swamps, of every plant and animal was outstanding. Emerson even stated, " His power of observation seemed to indicate additional senses." Thoreau wrote a book titled Walden (1854) in which the theme of it

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was the relationship to the order and beauty of nature in the human mind. This book consists of records of Thoreau's stay at Walden Pond. Thoreau's love and devotion to nature and his writing was a key to his excellence in writing. Henry David Thoreau also felt that individualism was a great necessity to his writing style. One of Thoreau's most famous writing piece was titled "Civil Disobedience". During this time period, the Mexican War was occurring. Slavery was also legal and very prominent in the South. Thoreau was motivated to write Civil Disobedience in part by these events occurring. Thoreau admired direct, vigorous, economical prose. For him, the importance of content far outweighed that of style. He avoided overemphasis on form at the expense of content. Romantic writer that he was, he cared little for observing the formalities of established literary genre. He wanted every word to be useful, to convey meaning, and he had no interest in the purely decorative. "As all things are significant," he wrote, "so all words should be significant." Thoreau felt that the very act of genuine expression elevated the written word: "A fact truly and absolutely stated is taken out of the region of common sense and acquires a mythological or universal significance." Although Thoreau avoided obvious artifice, his highly crafted writing is anything but artless. Thoreau was a versatile writer, capable of expressing stark reality in strong language and of conveying delicate detail. His work is characterized both by directness of style and by the suggestion of far more than appears on the surface. Thoreau applied himself to translating what he observed of nature and humanity into words. He wrote; "If the heavens of America appear infinitely higher, and the stars brighter, I trust that these facts are symbolical of the height to which the philosophy and poetry and religion of her inhabitants may one day soar."

Thoreau's use of symbolism in this writing section makes the reader think about how something can stand for more than what it really is. In Thoreau's piece titled "Walden", Thoreau uses metaphors. He writes; "but to brag as lustily as chanticleer in the morning, standing on his roost". Thoreau also uses rhetorical questions in his writing as well. "The life which men praise and regard as successful is but one kind. Why should we exaggerate any one kind at the expense of the others?" This question makes the reader stop and think about what he could really mean. Thoreau was able to capture his reaction about events occurring during this time period in his writing. He used literary elements to help him develop many pieces of writing that captures the essence of who he was and what he stood for. Throughout history, writers have been using literary elements in their writing pieces. Emerson and Thoreau were very strong writers that used events occurring as well as literary elements in their pieces. Their writing style was influenced by the events taking place during their lives. Emerson and Thoreau are two, well known writers that used very different and very similar techniques in their writing to make it their own.