

# [Walden – henry david thoreau](https://assignbuster.com/walden-henry-david-thoreau/)

He reduced his material needs by living simply, so that he would not have to spend much time supporting a lifestyle that he did not need or care about. The story that came out of his two year experience is a great essay that touches on the importance of self-reliance, the virtue of simplicity and the unity between man and nature. “ Economy” The first chapter of Walden by Henry David Thoreau, “ Economy”, introduces the readers into Thoreau’s rhetorical persona in ways that connect and mend into the overarching themes.

Thoreau states that he wrote Walden while he lived alone in the woods in a self-built home on the shore of the Walden Pond in Concord, Massachusetts. He explains his justifications for setting out a life of solitude near Walden Pond using carefully crafted rhetorical devices. He uses parallelism to compare his town people to islanders, or ‘ Brahmins’, who were “ sitting exposed to four fires and looking in the face of the sun” or “ hanging suspended, with their heads downwards, over flames” (Walden, 4). He uses the doings of Brahmins as an equivalent to the things his fellow villagers put themselves through to get by in their society.

He also alludes to Hercules to describe his people, “ Hercules were trifling in comparison with those which my neighbors have undertaken; for they were only twelve, and had an end. ” (17). By comparing the work of Hercules, being intensive yet finite, to the villagers never ending struggle, Thoreau gets the point across; his villagers have it hard all their lives with little to show for it! These examples show one of the main reasons for setting out solo and to write this book was to expose the how ceaseless work and the obsessive desire for the acquisition of material goods can consume their lives.

He uses hyperbole and personal beliefs on abolishment of slavery to further stress the importance of becoming free from strict conformity to society as he states “…but the slave and prisoner of his own opinion of himself, a fame won by his own deeds. Public opinion is a weak tyrant compared with our own private opinion. What a man thinks of himself, that it is which determines, or rather indicates, his fate“. He makes it clear that only a free thinker can change their life from a droning grind. He uses oxymoron/ alliteration to further imbed his beliefs by saying “ The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation.

What is called resignation is confirmed desperation…” (27). In this quote he exemplifies the consequence of accepting the way society wants the villagers to work and strive for material luxuries. This is another reason Thoreau set out to Walden, to prove that one does not require excessive products to live an enlightened life. He later proves that nature can provide all human necessities and more. Another reason Thoreau decides to set out is to seek simplicity. He remarks “ Our life is frittered away by detail” (91). This amplifies his previous ideas of simplicity and the illusion of what human necessities are.

He informs the reader that unessential items are obtained through endless, mistaken labor that halt the progress of mankind. Instead, he believes that only four necessities are truly needed to survive. They are food, fuel, clothing and shelter, all in which are already provided by nature. This set of reasons for the narrator to leave his town really shows his character. Thoreau is very liberal. He refuses to search for deeper meaning to his life from traditional means. Being very skeptical towards the early consumer, industrialized culture jumpstarted his willingness to live off of nothing to gain knowledge of self-reliance and worth.

The transcendentalists’ influence on Walden gave him a very positive outlook on the potential of human kind. He believed that nature favored humans, and through a close relationship with nature, people could progress as intelligent beings. It is this philosophy that Thoreau adapted to drive him to write this book. His affection for nature contrasts that of his fellow species. He is always expressing his discontent towards people not using the gift given to them by nature, and can’t understand how they could possibly work themselves to their graves for material possessions when nature offers so much to give for free. Where I Lived, and What I Lived For” Constructing his new home, Thoreau expresses heavy use of logos to show his understanding of economy by recording all of his expenses and earnings. Even when his life is boiled down to bare necessities, it still doesn’t hinder his expertise in mathematics and the understanding of economics. He also shows his skill cooking and crafting furniture, using an analogy “ I had three chairs in my house: One for solitude, two for companionship, and three for society. ” (93). He says this to point to his use of the stools to make life easier and also to read and write with, all necessities.

He begins to restate his previous ideas: The crippling side effect of luxuries, lack of individuality in thinking, and the irony of sacrificing ones own life to hard labor for needs that are simple to maintain. Describing heat as the ultimate necessity gained from food, clothing, shelter and fuel, Thoreau gives ideas on how to maintain a balance of heat to be kept ‘ comfortably warm and not “ unnaturally hot; as I implied before, they are cooked, of course a la mode. ” (31) as his pun refers to the luxuriously rich. Instead of spending ones life obtaining more luxuries, he recommends spending it on self-improvement.

He uses this metaphor to help visualize his point. “ Why has man rooted himself thus firmly in the earth, but that he may rise in the same proportion into the heavens above? -- for the nobler plants are valued for the fruit they bear at last in the air and light, far from the ground, and are not treated like the humbler esculents, which, though they may be biennials, are cultivated only till they have perfected their root” (33). By comparing humans to rooted plants, Thoreau paints an image of his theme that the quality of life is what’s important, not the quantity of things one can obtain in it. I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived. “ (41). This antithesis really shows why Thoreau did the experiment and why he carried it out for so long. He discovered the nurturing hand of Mother Nature; she gave him shelter and sustenance yet at the same time showed him valuable aspects of life. He also discovered true freedom. This freedom he never knew in his town, the freedom that no one knew in that town.

His only job was to tend to mother nature, whom already given him more than he could ask for. The narrator expresses relief for living in the woods, because had he not, the outcome would have been regrettable. On top of learning for others, Thoreau expresses his desire to lead a simple life yet quickly follows with an ironic metaphor that expresses profound qualities. " I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life…” (42). This represents his joy and total convergence with nature, intoxicating him with what nature has to offer and to pursue the knowledge of the wilderness that’s being presented to him.