

# Transcendental features in into the wild

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Where does true happiness come from? Most people would say that they would be happiest if they were rich, maybe if they had their dream job, or if they lived in a castle or mansion. Others may say that happiness comes from family and friends. However, writers like Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau seem to agree that transcendentalism plays the biggest role in attaining true happiness.

Transcendentalism is the idea that man should be one with nature, and should waste no time attempting to fit into society. One movie does a stellar job of representing this concept. The theme that the movie, (Penn Sean, director. Into The Wild. 2007), carries is that true happiness can only be found in nature, away from society.

True happiness can only be found in nature, away from society. That theme is supported heavily by Into The Wild because of all the times the characters are shown to be truly happy when they're out in nature, relaxing and having genuine fun with one another. This can be seen when Chris meets Sonja and Mads, who are cooking almost completely naked and listening to music, and ends up having a fun time just hanging out with them. Normally, in society most people would've looked at them and tried as hard as they could to avoid them, but because Chris wasn't interested in following the rules set by society, he joins them and ends up enjoying himself.

One might argue that true happiness can be found in the suburbs just as often if not more often, but Chris's family shows to be extremely unstable, likely due to their need to fit in with society. This is shown in one of the flashbacks to Chris's old life, when his parents are screaming at each other

frantically about Christmas and money, then Chris's father starts pinning down his mother and getting violent with her. The viewer can tell that Chris's father isn't a bad person at heart, but the obstacles he faces as he tries to go with society prove to have taken a huge toll on him, making him cold and dismissive. Even when Chris just talks about living his transcendental dream, he becomes engulfed with happiness, but he makes some good points as well. When he's in the bar with Wayne, he talks about his dream of living out in the Alaskan Wilds, and then brings up the fact that because of society, people are sick, they're horrible to one another, they constantly judge, and that keeps them from living a full life. This matters because, in his dream world, where society is a thing of the past, there's no one to judge him, no one to tell him he's crazy, and no one stopping him from living this best life. This is why *Into The Wild* represents themes of transcendentalism so well.

Emerson and Thoreau have also contributed a great amount to conveying the theme that true happiness can only be found in nature, away from society. In the short story, (Thoreau, Henry David. *Solitude*. 1854), Thoreau stresses that if people were to just live with nature, instead of trying to be the picture perfect citizen, they would achieve true happiness. This can be seen when he says, "What do we want most to dwell near to? Not to many men surely, the depot, the post office, the barroom, the meetinghouse, the schoolhouse, the grocery, Beacon Hill, or the five points where men most congregate, but to the perennial source of our life, whence in all our experience we have found that to issue, as willow stands near the water and sends out its roots in that direction. This will vary with different natures, but this is the place where a wise man will dig this cellar..." (222). This means

that he believes people spend too much time in the places that cause them distress in order to meet the daily quota of being a member of society. In another short story, (Emerson, Ralph Waldo. Nature. 1836.), Emerson gives his take on the every day man. He conveys a message that most people aren't aware of the beauty that surrounds them in nature. This is shown when he says that, " To speak truly, few adult persons can see nature. Most persons do not see the sun. At least they have a very superficial seeing.", (206). What he's trying to say is that, adults are so consumed by work, bills, shopping, and all the pressures that come with society keep them from realizing how much better it would be if they were to adopt a transcendental lifestyle. Emerson and Thoreau do a stellar job at presenting the theme of true happiness coming from nature, away from society.

Therefore, anyone who looks closely enough can tell that happiness comes from the smell of pine trees in the morning, it comes from the burst of light that rushes you as soon as it climbs over the top of the forest just so that it can welcome you to a new day, and most of all, it comes from the realization that you're a part of something great. People who obsess over things like they're 7 digit salary, their antique paintings, and their fancy cars should be concerned with what that does for their own being. Those who realise the importance of family should be more focused on making them truly happy and teach them to seek something greater than just fitting in. People like Emerson and Thoreau, who caught on early no doubt lived the best version of their lives, because true happiness can only be found in nature, far away from so