

# [Was henry david thoeau a true transcendentalist](https://assignbuster.com/was-henry-david-thoeau-a-true-transcendentalist/)

Henry David Thoreau as a Transcendentalist Transcendentalism was a social and philosophical movement that started in New England approximately around 1836. Transcendentalism taught that divinity permeates all nature and humanity, and that every person was capable of reaching a state of spirituality through their intuition as opposed through religious teachings. Henry David Thoreau was said to have been one of the greatest influences of this movement, as well as one of the central figures and leading contributors by using his writings to show people how they can go beyond the world to be in the world and not just of the world. Through many of his works, more specifically Walden, Thoreau divulged into the concept of living without the dependency of material goods and completely giving up ideas of religion and spirituality, as these two things only existed to impede on the happiness of human beings. By living a life of simplicity, a life that was without such an attachment to materialism, and by understanding that spirituality is within a person and not without them, then a person could discover true human happiness. Unfortunately, in a world that depends so much on the quality and quantity of what they have externally, paying very little attention to what is available internally, true human happiness was often easier discussed than it was obtained. The factor that truly make Thoreau a transcendentalist is that he actually did what he had to in an effort to obtain true happiness. Instead of simply preaching to others that all it takes is for someone to live a simple life without all of the material possessions and to live without a need for religion and spirituality, Thoreau actually set out to live a life just like that. In his book, Walden, Thoreau details his life after he built a small cabin on the shore of Walden Pond, Massachusetts (Thoreau). For two years, he lived in that cabin as simply as possible, giving up all pointless material possessions and finding a connection between himself, nature, and what it means to really be happy. Thoreau set out to physically prove that the concept and ideals of transcendentalism could be grasped by anyone. In Walden, Thoreau talks about how he had to rely on himself to plant and harvest his own food, depend on himself for labor, and meditate within nature. Since he lived by himself in the woods near a pond, Thoreau was also without government and a religious institution. All that he had was himself and nature. By being without all of the aspects that only take away from happiness, Thoreau was able to understand that everything he needed- physically, mentally, and emotionally - could be obtained by and through himself, which is the very foundation of transcendentalism. Henry David Thoreau can be considered a true transcendentalist because he not only shared with people the concept of transcendentalism, but he left behind a life of materialism and government and religious institutions for a life that completely lacked it all. He became attune with nature, which helped him to fully understand that happiness and divinity really was within all humans and nature. He took transcendentalism to an entirely different, productive place, where he comfortably lived for two years. Works Cited Thoreau, Henry David. Walden and Civil Disobedience. New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 2003. Print.