

# Transcendentalism (1830-1840)

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"The New England Renaissance"

There is a time in every man's education when he arrives at the conviction that envy is ignorance; that imitation is suicide; that he must take himself for better, for worse, as his portion . . .

Ralph Waldo Emerson

## How Transcendentalism Started

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## What Transcendentalists Believed

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# Emerson's "Nature"

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After reading *Nature* by Emerson, brainstorm a metaphor to describe his major philosophy.

1. What does Emerson mean when he describes himself as a "transparent eyeball?"
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Think of another metaphor to describe the idea:

Illustrate this idea below:



## Emerson's "Self-Reliance"

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After reading *Self-Reliance* by Emerson, answer the following questions in complete sentences.

1. According to the first paragraph, what conviction does every person eventually adopt? What does this mean in your own words?

2. According to Emerson, how do we only "half express" ourselves?

3. What metaphor does Emerson use to describe a heartbeat? What does this mean?

4. Emerson thinks that, to be a man (or woman) in society, is to be a what? What does Emerson think about foolish consistency?

5. How does Emerson support his claim that "to be great is to be misunderstood"?

# Learning on Their Own Terms

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Md. School With No Curriculum Challenges Conventions of Modern Education

By Nick Anderson  
Washington Post Staff Writer  
Monday, April 24, 2006

Between Rollerblade aerials and rail slides, Justin Reed described how he landed at a school that lets him do whatever he wants all day long.

He burned out on high-powered Eleanor Roosevelt High School in his home town of Greenbelt. Lost interest in the college track. Despised cafeteria food. By 11th grade, he was ready to drop out.

"I just really hated school, and Roosevelt brought that out of me," the 19-year-old said one spring afternoon next to an iron handrail that doubled as a launching slope. "Being told what to do and what to learn. Having to do homework. Grades. Grade levels. Everything that this school stands against."

Justin will graduate in June from the highly unconventional Fairhaven School with a diploma that may require explanation to a college or future boss. He took no tests in his three years at the private school, received no grades and had no course requirements. But he played electric guitar, read and wrote poetry, made friends and got the last laugh on lunch. "No more tater tots!" he said.

Fairhaven, in a wooded nook of Prince George's County near the Patuxent River, challenges the assumptions of every public and private school that measures success with test scores and prizes academic rigor. It is an educational anomaly in the super-competitive Washington area: The school day here is unscripted.

Seventy-two students ages 5 to 20 run the school with a staff of eight adults. Students follow no curriculum other than curiosity and whim. Sometimes they seek out a class or workshop, but they are not compelled to take English, geometry or any other subject. Often they just hang. For this, their parents pay \$6,680 a year per student, less for siblings.

Is Fairhaven even a school? What is a school?

"The question, too, is what is an education?" replied staff member Mark McCaig. "What is an educated individual?"

The answer could lie in the fiction, philosophy and history lining the school's bookshelves. Or in the way children play on a seesaw, swing, stage or computer when no one is telling them what to do. Or in their own words.

"I judge whether my day is productive by how much I learn, how much I've got done, and whether I do something worth doing," said Alison Everett, 17, of Annapolis, a student there for four years. Among other recent pursuits, she played a fire goddess in a student show spun from Maurice Sendak's "Where the Wild Things Are," studied algebra to bone up for the SAT (tests are not entirely out of mind here) and pounded tall drums with a friend outdoors.

Destiny Shugrue, 11, of Bowie, in her first year at the school, said: "I hang out, draw, go on the computer, play a few games. Just be myself. I actually read a lot. Every morning I get up saying, 'Yay, I'm going to school!' "

There is a price for defiance of academic custom. Students at Fairhaven earn no course credits toward a state-recognized high school diploma. Without conventional transcripts, graduates who aim for college rely on SAT scores, essays, letters of recommendation and interviews.

But those concerns do not deter Fairhaven. Conceived by an assortment of parents who had taught their children at home and others in search of educational alternatives, Fairhaven opened in 1998 with 33 students on 12 isolated acres along Queen Anne Road in the Upper Marlboro area. It is one of more than 30 no-curriculum schools patterned after one founded in 1968 in Massachusetts -- the Sudbury Valley School.

Virginia has one Sudbury school in Lynchburg and another forming in Louisa. Pennsylvania and Delaware have one each. Others are scattered across the country and in Europe, Canada, Israel and Japan. The schools are an experiment in educational democracy. The youngest student's vote on any policy equals the longest-serving staff member's.

"Ours is a place for children," said Daniel Greenberg, 70, a co-founder of the original Sudbury school, who still works there. "We begin with freedom -- personal freedom and respect for personal rights." Education, he said, is "an opportunity for a child or an adult to develop a path toward a meaningful life. The question is: How is that done best?"

## **Opening Doors**

There is little way to evaluate Fairhaven except on its own terms. The school is not accredited by any independent organization. The school has awarded 16 diplomas over eight years and has seven diploma candidates. To receive one, students must spend at least three years at the school and be 16 or older. They must also write and defend a thesis on how they have taken responsibility for becoming effective adults. An assembly of students, staff and parents votes on awarding diplomas. No one has ever been rejected.

Three graduates have gone on to four-year colleges: Sarah Lawrence College in New York, Ursinus College in Pennsylvania and the Art Institute of Chicago. Some have gone to community college. Other alumni include a professional skateboarder, a waiter and a librarian.

Thor Jensen, 20, Class of 2005, said Fairhaven taught him how to learn. Now, Ursinus professors find he raises his hand all the time. "I learned how to be interested and engaged in what I'm doing," he said, "so I can continually obtain new information and increase my understanding of how the world works."

Ben Umstead, 22, Class of 2001, graduated last year from a Los Angeles film school. He said his Fairhaven diploma has never been an obstacle. "The general reaction is pretty much, 'Huh, that sounds interesting. Tell me more.' "

Justin Reed, in this year's graduating class, is an aspiring rock musician. His mother said Fairhaven restored Justin's love of learning. "It had really been beaten out of him," Jan Reed said. Now, she said, Justin studies poets such as Allen Ginsberg and is flourishing as a writer. "What I would like to be able to deliver to my child, and every child, is the education they need, and the education they desire, and really open that up for them," she said.

Jan Reed is principal of Mount Rainier Elementary. It's a public school in Prince George's.

## A Few Potential SOL Prompts – Which Should be Much Easier Now

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After reading the article on Fairhaven, brainstorm for the following SOL prompt. *Warning: I have slightly modified the prompt to more fit our purposes.*

*Slightly modified:* Some schools do not follow a traditional curriculum that focuses on homework, quizzes, and tests. Instead, students are given a long-term assignments and must produce their own learning goals. Do you believe this style of learning is a more effective way for a teacher to evaluate student learning than traditional grades? Take a position on this issue. Support your response with reasons and examples.

**Outline** your response below:

Claim:

Topic Sentence 1:

Evidence #1:

Analysis #1:

Evidence #2:

Analysis #2:

Topic Sentence 2:

Evidence #1:

Analysis #1:

Evidence #2:

Analysis #2:

# Walden Guide

During his stay at Walden, Thoreau expressed his life philosophy. As you read, note his main ideas and the evidence he uses to support them. Then evaluate his ideas and evidence by comparing them with your own life experiences.

Thoreau's Idea	Thoreau's Example	My Experience

## Other Notes

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Civil Disobedience QuickWrite: Get Arrested

Our society right now has no shortage of protests where people get arrested. What is one issue you feel so strongly about...you'd get arrested for it?

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# On Resistance to Civil Government: Civil Disobedience

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Answer the following questions to understand the next play we will read.

1. What is the paradox that opens the essay? How is it a paradox?
2. Why did Thoreau spend a night in jail? What was his reasoning for doing what he did (or didn't) do?
3. To what does he compare lawmakers who create taxes that hinder the American people?
4. What does Thoreau think about a democracy that rules by the majority?
5. Instead of this majority rule, what should decisions be based on?
6. What is the only "agent" of the government he comes into contact with? What's the awkward conflict here?
7. What paradox does Thoreau describe about his imprisonment behind thick walls and iron bars?
8. Describe his cellmate. What constitutional right was violated that his cellmate didn't know about?
9. How did his opinions of his fellow townsmen change after getting out of jail?
10. In his final paragraph, what is the point he is trying to make about democracy?
11. What influences of Emerson's thoughts can you find in "Resistance to Civil Government?"

12. Comment on how Thoreau's main points in this essay relate to the points of Gandhi and Martin Luther King. What influences of Thoreau can you find in Gandhi's writing?

13. Overall, what does it mean in our society today to be civilly disobedient?

# The Night Thoreau Spent in Jail

Gather evidence for your essay as you read.

Direct Quotation (#)	Context (for your lead in)	Importance/Analysis


# The Social Experiment Project

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Thoreau went to the woods for many reasons, but most of all, he went to the woods to find a “higher truth” by shunning his high-brow education, selling his possessions, and connecting with the Oversoul. He considered this a grand “experiment,” and in that same way, you must create your own experiment where you try to answer a question about yourself, or all of humanity.

During this assignment, you will undergo the English teachers’ scientific process™ by developing a question, generating a hypothesis, testing it, and sharing your results. The question you attempt to answer over the course of this project could be quirky, interesting, or life-altering... *just don’t get in trouble conducting your experiment.*

## Step 1: Ask a question you want to answer about society

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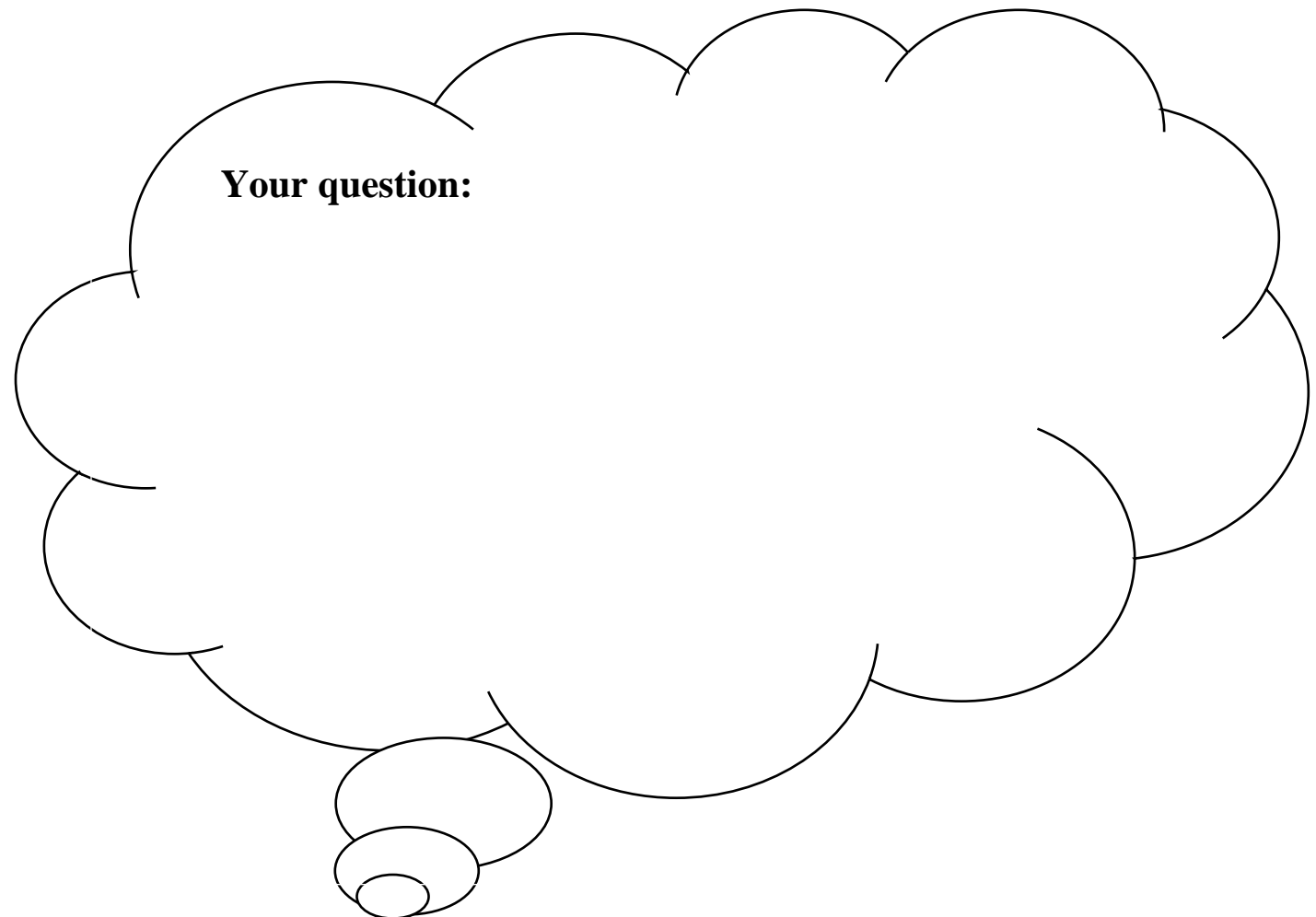
Simply put: what do you want to find out? About yourself. About your community. About everyone. Think of a common behavior that seems questionable, think of a societal norm that seems odd, think of a piece of advice that never made sense to you – how could you put that idea to the test?

Does age affect a student’s ability to study for long periods of time?

Is music preference a factor in determining personality?

Do all females like the door being held open for them?

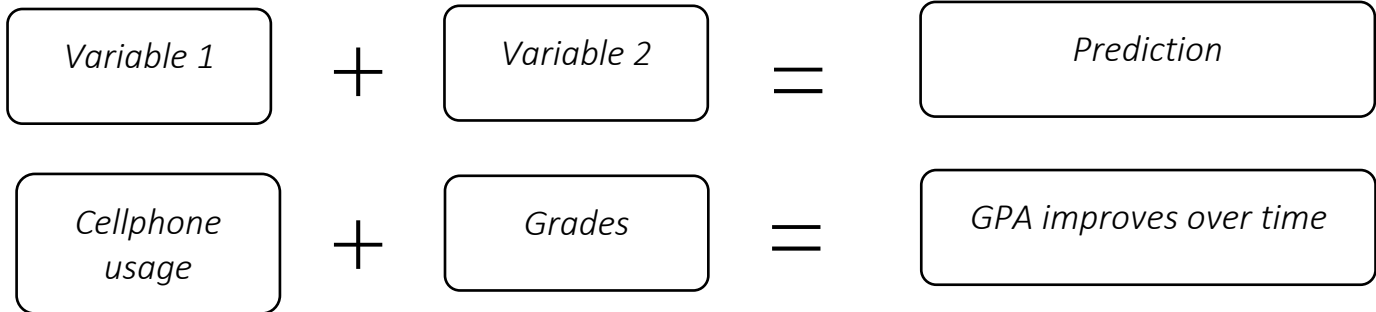
Does eating a breakfast increase students’ grades in school?



## Step 2: Hypothesize about what the answer may be

Now that you have a question formulated for your experiment, you have to make sure that it is testable. One way to do that is start making some predictions, a type of hypothesis, about what you think the outcome of your tests may be. If you can't make a prediction, then it's probably not something that is able to be observed through an experiment, and therefore probably not a good idea for this project.

In order for satisfy the assignment, you must be able to observe the cause and effect relationship between two variables.



Example: ***If*** I designate the time of 5:00PM to 6:00PM as “social media time,” and only use social media during that hour, ***then*** my grades will improve significantly ***because*** no time will be wasted at school, and I will spend more time on studying and homework.

Variable 1	Variable 2
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Prediction
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...now put it all together

### Step 3: Design the experiment

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How are you going to test your hypothesis? In order to accurately observe your results, you need to think of a process to undergo each time to make sure the results are standardized. What will the step-by-step procedure be (you do not have to use all ten)?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

### Step 4: Conduct the experiment and share

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Do it. Take pictures. Have fun. Don't break stuff. Compile your question, hypothesis, procedure, pictures, and results into a PowerPoint presentation. It just needs to be a few slides that "tells the story" of conducting your experiment.

In order to communicate the important details more efficiently and effectively, take pictures during the experimentation process and include them to tell a story of your journey. Your visual aid should not just be text, but should adhere to professional standards of design. A good rule to use as a starting point is that you should only have one sentence per slide, anything more and your audience starts to lose focus. Visit the following websites for more information on how to improve your presentation design:

- <http://www.slideshare.net/jessedee/you-suck-at-powerpoint>
- <http://lifehacker.com/how-can-i-make-my-powerpoint-presentations-amazing-507552122>

Presence and Poise	How comfortable are you speaking?
Presentation Design	How engaging is your accompanying presentation?
Experiment Conclusions	How interesting are the conclusions you draw?

### Step 5: Reflect on the results

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Write a one page reflection. This should be fun to write. Fun to read. Be careful to avoid the pitfalls of just trying to prove what your hypothesis predicted, but report accurately what the results show.

Length	Is it one page?
Style and Mechanics	Does it flow nicely, even if more informal?
Content	Does it recap the hypothesis and reflect on the results?
Organization	Is it organized logically to report your findings?
Critical Thinking	Do you synthesize interesting ideas from your experiment?