

Essays & Lectures Study Guide

Essays & Lectures by Ralph Waldo Emerson

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Plot Summary

This is a collection of the works by one of the great thinkers of the nineteenth century. This man is also significant in that he represented a relatively new form at the time in which he writes. He is an American scholar. At this point, the United States of America is still young enough as a nation for this to be an exciting new tradition. As is the case with children, while worthy of respect, there is sometimes a problem with taking them seriously. Here, one of the Americans has done some thinking and writing. Will the other Americans, and even the Europeans take the man's work seriously?

Emerson was a philosopher, among other things. Many of the earlier writings in the book are actually written versions of public speeches that he gave. Within these, he addresses the working world - especially when his speech is directed towards a graduating class. He also includes some discussions of morality, ethics and the work place during these times. The spiritual situation of America as a nation is but one of Emerson's main themes. Readers may remind themselves that the appropriation of the term "America" for the country, when this is also the name of a continent, can be viewed as both legitimate and as dubious.

There is more than one type of work in this book. First there is a set of lectures. These are followed by two series of essays. Each is self-contained and able to read as a complete work without the rest. The author covers a broad range of topics, ranging from metaphysics and politics to more detailed descriptions of what makes America unique. Emerson's thought and the education that support it are shared in a manner that has a natural feeling.

After surveying virtues through essays on Representative Men, the author proceeds on to a lengthy discussion of the English. There are nineteen essays on aspects of the lives of the English. This is followed by a section devoted to analyzing guides for behavior. The work ends with another sizable body of short literary pieces. These are grouped together as Uncollected Prose. In totality, this work provides readers with an extensive survey of Emerson's philosophy. It also doubles as an excellent cultural history for the nineteenth century. Emerson has proven to be viewed in the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries as one of the great American minds of the nineteenth century.



Book 1, Nature, Addresses & Lectures : Chapter 1, Introductions & First Lectures

Book 1, Nature, Addresses & Lectures : Chapter 1, Introductions & First Lectures Summary and Analysis

There is a double Table of Contents for this mammoth book. The first of these is being used to describe the work in one respect. What has been called "Book 1" here is in reality the way the first of the two Table of Contents describes the entire book. The chapter designates materials found under this first general heading in the second Table of Contents. Readers soon discover that this first set of documents is actually speeches in their written format. Emerson had enough of a reputation to be granted or invited to give speaking engagements to graduating classes of colleges. Another group of his speeches are presented to the Free Masons. Due to the secrecy of this society, it is not possible to make an exact interpretation of this fact. The symbols of the organization are those of a skilled trade, a group that would take in apprentices, perhaps. Masonry is certainly an important skill within the construction industry. Emerson's lectures have been graciously shared with people outside of the organization who may have felt either painfully left out or who feared that there was something dastardly involved within the esoteric chambers of the Masonic Temples.

The author introduces the nineteenth century as having been especially Retrospective and Philosophic in nature. After the sizable Introduction of forty-seven pages, there is an essay on the American Scholar. This is a distinctive category. He has done this to assert Americanness within the greater international and historical context. As a nation, the USA had completed its first century. From this viewpoint, the cultural project of having its very own intellectual tradition was new. When compared with the European situation, the country appeared new and young. For many, the first decades may have been surrounded by doubt - will these pretentious colonialists be able to create a stable nation? Now, in the nineteenth century, there may be a new or renewed sense of confidence that the nation is viable. His characterization of the nineteenth century as particularly Philosophic is not disclaimed by the Europeans; however, their preoccupations are different. Within Europe itself, the British, while feeding into the same international view as the Continent, have its own unique flavor, just as the French are so distinct from the Germans in their philosophical views. The Europeans were focused upon the concept of "modernity" during this same time that America was asserting itself as a nation capable of developing its own perspective and of sharing this with the rest of the world. Emerson's articulation of the American view, of an American view proceeds, and this topic carries throughout the book.



Book 1, Nature, Addresses & Lectures : Chapter 2, The American Scholar

Book 1, Nature, Addresses & Lectures : Chapter 2, The American Scholar Summary and Analysis

During the first Lectures, the author presents some of the main ideas of his thoughts. One of these is that the nineteenth century is Philosophic and Retrospective. Another is that there is a new form: the American Scholar. Emerson writes briefly about the Thinking Man. He shows how this archetype has been transfigured by the written word too often into "the bookworm". He explains to readers that he believes this Thinking Man culturally turns into the Scholar. This makes the speech well suited to graduating classes. One of his speeches is directed towards graduating clerics. As such, it makes perfect sense when he brings up morality and character and the intellect. He asserts that character is worth more than the intellect. He also acknowledges that Understanding and Reason and the Logical all have a special relationship to one another. He acknowledges that the intellect and the character and morality have long sought to have a relationship. However, he directly counters the idea that Plato and Hegel over in Germany have presented: that the spirit of humanity is precisely a formulation derived from the intellect of humanity. Hegel writes that Spirit is an especial form of Mind. Plato and Aristotle both wrote of God's relation to the human mind; the role of the psyche in human spiritual life. Emerson counters this idea when he claims that the moral character of an individual is not derived purely from intellectual activity. In fact, Emerson writes that the practitioners of faith and religion are always separate from those who are true devotees of philosophy. This is a Protestant statement and in that sense very American. Every reader who has noticed that the philosophy of Aristotle has been taken in by the Roman Catholic Church and thoroughly reviewed by Thomas Aquinas - the Saint Philosopher - sees that Emerson's comment is specifically Protestant in attitude.



Book 1, Nature, Addresses & Lectures : Chapter 3, Man the Reformer

Book 1, Nature, Addresses & Lectures : Chapter 3, Man the Reformer Summary and Analysis

The author is striving to encourage the new clerics in their endeavor. "The test of true faith, certainly, should be its power to charm and command the soul, as the laws of nature control the activity of the hands, - so commanding that we find pleasure and honor in obeying," (p. 84). During the speech he tells his audience about the trials and rewards he foresees in the daily doing of their work. He includes a brief discussion of genius in Literary Ethics, which was also presented as a public lecture. In summary: the principles of his thought emerge: "the resources of the scholar...are...coextensive with nature and truth...He cannot know them until he has beheld with awe the infinitude and impersonality of the intellectual power," (p.96). "To be as good a scholar as the Englishmen are; to have as much learning as our contemporaries; to have written a book that is read; satisfies us," (p. 101). During his speech entitled Literary Ethics, he says again, "If you would know the power of character," and he also cites that genius is a quality that emerges spontaneously in the world.

The Method of Nature is the title of the next speech. This one was delivered in 1841. "Gentlemen...The scholars are the priests of that thought which establishes the foundations of the earth. Now matter what is their special work of profession, they stand for the spiritual interest of the world...in a country where the material interest is so predominant as it is in America," (p. 115). Emerson obviously thought highly of this class of people. The information that comes through regarding the nineteenth century here at times presents itself in a hodgepodge manner. One of the developments taking place both in Europe and in America was the implementation of mass scale public education. This led to a regulation of educational standards and increased the portion of the population that was educated. This entire effort had to be coordinated with industrialization and the simple reality of what it meant to separate family members and to further distribute labor through division and specialization. The author then switches over to defining "genius" for the sake of the readers. "And what is Genius but finer love, a love impersonal, a love of the flower and perfection of things, and a desire to draw a new picture of copy of the same?" (p. 129). This question of what genius is also appeared through poets such as William Blake over in England during the same century.



Book 1, Nature, Addresses & Lectures : Chapter 4, The Reformer, The Conservative & the Transcendentalist

Book 1, Nature, Addresses & Lectures : Chapter 4, The Reformer, The Conservative & the Transcendentalist Summary and Analysis

In *Man the Reformer*, Emerson writes about the division of labor again. He is addressing Mechanics' Apprentices in this semi-public lecture. Somehow, he couches a discourse on the division of labor along with Christianity and manual labor. What he does is acknowledge that manual labor has its virtues and can be one of man's greatest joys. At the same time, he carries on to express his agreement with the sentiment that the division of labor has improved efficiency within the society to an unprecedented level. The rewards of this are excellent. This essay is followed by *Lecture on the Times* - also delivered at a Bostonian Masonic Temple in 1841. Here, he shows his adeptness with principles. Time is divided into the Past and the Future. Life exists in the Universal and in individuals. This is not the same all the time. There are Universals that individuals can fully participate in, whereas there are others than no one individual can fulfill. A case of this is "Man," as Emerson defines the Universal. Here, everything that humans have accomplished, or that the male adults have achieved, is grouped and united such that all of this has been done by this Universal Man. Not any single one of the men has been able to do all of this, but individuals have made significant contributions towards the sum total of what has been accomplished. In *The Conservative*, the author furthers a schema he had begun earlier. Past, Memory and Understanding are united as one side of this. Future, Hope and Reason come together on the other side of the same issue. Emerson then waxes poetic by writing creative imaginary conversations between some of the planets. The planet Jupiter is created by Saturn, but this only occurs because of Uranus. Later on, Jupiter slays Saturn. Here, the son has avenged himself by killing of his father, and in this case Saturn is not only the actual planet with all the rings and numerous moons - this darker, weaker "Sun" of our solar system...Nothing like the Sun and yet, so very much like it. Saturn is used here by Emerson as another name for Time - Chronos, Saturn.



Book 1, Nature, Addresses & Lectures : Chapter 5, Final Lectures & More

Book 1, Nature, Addresses & Lectures : Chapter 5, Final Lectures & More Summary and Analysis

There are two further lectures in this Book 1. There is the Transcendentalist and The Young American which comes after it. The first of these was also given at the Masonic Temple in Boston in 1842. This one runs from pages 193 - 209 inclusive. Emerson states that the transcendentalist is a form of idealist. He goes on to recouch a conception that has existed for thousands of years. The materialist believes in facts and in the powers of the senses. The idealist believes in the precedence of the consciousness, of mind, of idea. This view can be found in Plato: Emerson here does not note that both Aristotle and Jesus Christ taught that the two are inseparable and cannot be found except in their conjunction though each can be called one and the other. This separation is false, and in that respect is on the same level as the difference between the head and the foot: under normal conditions these are inseparable areas of one body which can still be named as if separate and can be understood independently of one another in certain limited ways. Emerson does not share this view. He articulates this further, explaining that the materialist and the idealist see the world with different attitudes. Further, this tension regarding materialism and idealism was fueled by Descartes and more recently by the Romantic poets such as Blake, and also by the well ordered Protestant Christian minds such as Gottfried Wilhelm Hegel. "The idealist takes his departure from his consciousness, and reckons the world an appearance. The materialist respects sensible masses, Society, Government, social art, and luxury, every establishment, every mass, whether majority of numbers, of extent of space, or amount of objects, every social action. The idealist has another measure, which is metaphysical, namely, the rank which things take in his consciousness...Mind is the only reality." (p. 195). For anyone wondering about 'depth' of a subject - this is it - this is the metaphysical rock bottom, or spiritual ontological ground. From the answer to this question springs a myriad of philosophy and the approach to science, to the sensory, to knowledge, to the world.



Book 1, Nature, Addresses & Essays : Chapter 6, The Young American

Book 1, Nature, Addresses & Essays : Chapter 6, The Young American Summary and Analysis

This is the final lecture, and the last writings of the first book. This one was presented to a library association in 1844. The author begins by writing about the significance of the railroad and of other roadways. The development of the nation's infrastructure has great importance for the condition of the nation, and of the economy. Distribution systems rely upon these. Their neglect is something that undermines the nation's stability and security. Emerson then makes some effort to explain how this American perspective influences or directs the progress of the young men of the country. He cites the rise and fall of patriotism and how it affects him. The importance of trade needs to be noticed rather than overlooked. Emerson writes that the nobility of the highest levels of society have made trade possible, and hence the lifestyles of so many have been improved. He criticizes the American government: "Government has been a fossil; it should be a plant. I conceive that the office of statute law should not be to express, and not to impede the mind of mankind. New thoughts, new things....I pass to speak of the signs of that which is the sequel of trade....an economical success seemed certain for the enterprise," (pp. 222, 223).

Emerson writes again of the educational system. He explains that women, especially mothers, have advocated the presence to value the poor - possibly because as a rule of thumb, those born do not come into the world with a bag of money attached to them. Public education is about uplifting the masses. The economics of the whole can be improved since industrialists have a better chance of being supplied with assistants who already have some idea of what to do. Here, Emerson writes about another level of American society. He writes of the Communities. It is these gatherings of people that he most wants to credit with the civil advancement of education that includes all the economic classes. In some cases the education may end up being wasted, but the purpose is to improve everyone and to make it so that the best can be found, like the treasures found in mines: brought up to serve the people through their greatness.



Book 2, Essays - First Series : Chapter 7, Essays 1 - 3

Book 2, Essays - First Series : Chapter 7, Essays 1 - 3 Summary and Analysis

There is a new, short Table of Contents. The Essays are titled and listed with the Roman Numerals. They are listed as follows: I History, II Self-Reliance, III Compensation, IV Spiritual Laws, V Love, VI Friendship. So far during the summary the lectures were covered in a way to emphasize the depth of certain points. In this instance, each will be covered evenly with few details provided regarding each one. This is done simply to help create a fuller image for the readers of what the entire book is really like. The first essay is twenty-two pages long. It is headed up by a title page with four lines of poetic verse beneath the title. There are two couplets to this four lined poem. The other side of the same page has another four lines which stand apart: "I am owner of the sphere, / Of the seven stars and the solar year, / Of Caesar's hand, and Plato's brain, / Of Lord Christ's heart, and Shakespeare's strain." (p.236). This page has no number actually printed upon it. Emerson espouses one of the many debatable philosophical ideas that are around. This one is also very powerful: it is that there is but one mind. As such, every man - and for that matter, every woman and child, all partake of the one same mind. There are philosophers who are certain that there are multiple minds just as there are multiple bodies of humans and of other creatures upon the Earth, although these are all also clearly interconnected.

Next, Emerson writes that thoughts all precede actions and events: all of life is premeditated. II Self-Reliance: Here he asserts that individuals should watch their own thinking. Beyond this, individuals do best to recognize and respect their own thoughts, and genius emerges, Emerson explains. He writes that too frequently a man may treat his own thinking dismissively only to see his rejected ideas return to him in the works of a known genius. "Whosoever would be a man must be a nonconformist. He who would gather immortal palms must not be hindered by the name of goodness. Nothing is at last sacred but the integrity of your own mind," (p.261). III Compensation: There are two stanzas, of fourteen lines each prior to the onset of the actual essay. Unlike the previous set of writings, these are actual essays rather than being the written forms of speeches and lectures.



Book 2, Essays : Chapter 8, Essays 4 - 6

Book 2, Essays : Chapter 8, Essays 4 - 6 Summary and Analysis

IV Spiritual Laws: Emerson writes that people can trust themselves and their mental reflection - considerations of the past and review of the history show that this is the case. "There is less intention in history than we ascribe to it," (p.306). Emerson's comment directly refutes the claim made by Hegel and by other theologians and philosophers that the events of history are directly purposive. Not only that, but they are indicative of an unquestionable and inexorable spiritual evolution. God directing world, set in motion...just as a baby will grow into an adult as long this process is not forcibly and unnaturally ended - the world will turn and society will develop such that all will be saved and humanity will be drawn ever closer to perfection. These ideas coexisted at the time that Emerson wrote his direct refutation of this idea.

V Love: "I was as a gem concealed; / Me my burning ray revealed," Koran. This essay begins on page 327 and runs for ten pages. He admits that there are those who have called him cold-hearted, due to the rarefied perception that his position as an intellectual causes. This leads into a discussion about how much he, just like every other man - or woman for that matter, admires love very much.

He repeats classical anecdotes about a boy and a girl playing together; there is antagonism, extra charm, intense closeness, then sudden distance. This is the stuff from which romance may spring forth. VI Friendship: Here the theme of love continues. Rather than romantic love, an intimate variant of it is friendship. Despite cases of the two being one and the same, this essay is more devoted to the peaks of nonsexual love, which is also of tremendous important in the lives of people of all ages. "We have a great deal more kindness than is ever spoken," (p.341). Emerson describes how much affection there is among humanity. It floats around like a rarefied ether; at times it is intense and noticeable, other times it is more subtle. Regardless, there is kindness and affection around and accessible in general. Emerson means for people to notice this, as it is a wonderful aspect of life. Emerson reveals more of himself: "I confess to an extreme tenderness of nature on this point," (p.343).



Book 2, Essays : Chapter 9, Essays 7 - 12

Book 2, Essays : Chapter 9, Essays 7 - 12 Summary and Analysis

These contain a number of essays listed in the first Table of Contents as the First Series. The author writes clearly. His work is sophisticated and his language evidently that of the more educated classes of people. Early on in Prudence, Emerson writes, "Our American character is marked by more than average delight in accurate perception," (p.361). One of Emerson's main contributions to the international intellectual world is this: he articulates Americanness in a manner that has not ever been done before. This is a sign of the early growth of the nation's culture and progress. The next essay is Heroism. Among gentlemen, civilities abound. "The characteristic of heroism is its persistency". All men have wandering impulses, fits and starts of generosity. But one chooses your part, abides by it, and does not weakly try to reconcile oneself to the world. He recommends trust - this includes self-trust and trust of other men, and advises people to trust their hearts.

Essay IX Over - Soul. This essay begins on page 385. He writes of the Unity of consciousness, and how Time and Space are subject to consciousness and not only the other way around. "The growths of genius are of a certain total character," (p.389). During this discourse, Emerson also assures people that in his view the human soul is the totality of that individuality in personality, character and actions. "The faith that stands on authority is not faith." Here, he writes that the rise of dependence upon authority for guidance is matched by a decline of faith. Essay X: Circles: He writes that the power of love is immense and that knowledge of an individual's limitations often justify displeasure or rejection. God is mentioned many times during this essay. Emerson refers to God within a Christian traditional context and beyond such a context. Essay XI: Intellect: "Every substance is negatively electric to that which stands above it in the chemical tables, positively to that which stands below it....but the intellect dissolves fire, gravity, laws, method, and the subtlest unnamed relations of nature, in its restless menstruum," (p.417). He writes of the importance of Truth in this essay, and of how each individual's mind has its own approach, even when covering the same material. XII Art: Emerson keeps the attention on the soul and the spiritual progress throughout this essay, showing how art can be a means and an expression of this as a variant of religion and science.



Book 3, Essays - Series 2 : Chapter 10, Essays 1 - 4

Book 3, Essays - Series 2 : Chapter 10, Essays 1 - 4 Summary and Analysis

These have their own Table of Contents and are listed with roman numerals for ease of identification. The poet opens with a ten line poem in one stanza on one side of the title page and another four lines of poetry on the opposite side. Emerson begins to write using the symbolism of astronomy, astrology, myth, and poetics to describe another aspect of his metaphysical viewpoint. The universe has three children: Jove - Jupiter, Father God, Knower and Pluto - Spirit, Doer and Neptune - Son and Sayer. Emerson views the three of these as equals and each is a sovereign. Neptune is the poet. For the poet, nature is a symbol and so all things are able to function as symbols. He mentions Orpheus and the Bards of Britain, showing his desire to unify his present moment with these potent traditions. Emerson views this as liberating, and observes that books are limited in their powers to be of use. He describes America, "Our logrolling, our stumps and their politics, our fisheries, our Negroes, and Indians, our boasts, and our repudiations, the wrath of rogues, and the pusillanimity of honest men, the northern trade, the southern planting, the western clearing, Oregon, and Texas, are yet unsung," (p. 465).

Essay II Experience: Twenty-one lines of verse with rhyming couplets open the way to this essay. The author blends the works of the mind with those of the senses into an interplay of the factual and ideation. "Never mind the ridicule, never mind the defeat: up again, old heart! - it seems to say, - there is victory yet for all justice; and the true romance which the world exists to realize, will be the transformation of genius into practical power," (p. 492).

Essay III Character: Ten lines of poetry precede - "This is that which we call Character, - a reserved force which acts directly by presence, and without means...but character is of a stellar and undiminishable greatness," (p. 495). "Character is this moral order seen through the medium of an individual nature," (p. 498). Later, he explains that everything in the world has a bipolar nature: that is both a positive and negative pole. He writes that events are the negative end, while the spirit of the events are the positive pole.

Essay IV Manners: Emerson writes that people continue to be incredibly ignorant of how half of world's populace lives. He writes extensively about the gentleman - what one is, and how his behavior is clearly indicative of morally superior behavior.



Book 3, Essays - Series 2 : Chapter 11, Essays 5 - 8

Book 3, Essays - Series 2 : Chapter 11, Essays 5 - 8 Summary and Analysis

Essay V Gifts: Here the author writes of the effects of giving gifts and of receiving them. He writes that magnanimous people are difficult to give to. He writes that giving is good, and that it is proper for people to give according to their natures; hence, the painter gives a painting, the furniture maker a stool, the farmer gives corn. Love is a great gift. The essay concludes with the author describing how nice it is that humans are no longer bought and sold - that the impossibility of being bought or sold is a wonderful situation.

Essay VI Nature: this essay runs from pages 541-555. "Here we find nature to be the circumstance which dwarfs every other circumstance," (p. 541). The author refers to two of the most famous angels: Uriel and Gabriel. He writes that despite the falsity of so much of religion, churches - like the sciences and philosophy - are inquiring into and seeking the truth. This endeavor, he writes, is one to which no sane individual can be indifferent. He makes an intriguing point that a subjective orientation in interest in objective knowledge is what turns ordinary sciences into those oriented to their relations to individuals - astronomy to astrology, anatomy to palmistry.

Essay VI Nature: Emerson writes of the difference between water when it is satiated by true thirst, and wine taken in by someone who is not thirsty. Essay VII Politics: There are twenty-six lines of poetry as preamble to the essay. "Gold and iron are good," is the first line. He writes that the main political parties exist irrespective of their leaders and yet, he claims that each party is "corrupted" by the personalities of the leadership. Later, he claims that there is a relation to law and the dispensation of justice and the leadership.

Essay VIII: Nominalist and Realist. He writes that he thinks it is bad when the geniuses of the nation are not able to do anything, and worse still that the society actually makes it harder for these people instead of nurturing and empowering them. He writes that they are often admired but left too distant from others, and when found normally have utterly typical primary needs - the need for love and affection, and the need to function with respect to the demands of adult life. He then writes of the diversity of gifts: citing primarily the artistic and the intellectual.



Book 3, Essays - Series 2: Chapter 12, New England Reformers

Book 3, Essays - Series 2: Chapter 12, New England Reformers Summary and Analysis

This is a transitional lecture, between the second series of essays and the set of essays of "Representative Men". The New England Reformers was first presented as a lecture before an organization called "the Society in Armory Hall" (p. 591). He writes of a myriad of social reform movements and projects that are active during the time - 1844. These include: socialism, abolitionism, Bible study, anti-marriage movement (due purely to its being viewed as a source of numerous social evils), and more. He writes that he favors all acts of reform. He tells an anecdote of how one man took a specific stand about slavery - he was anti-slavery out of his own conscience. When threatened with excommunication by the church, he created a public act of excommunication of the church from him instead.

Representative Men is a section including seven entire lectures. These will be covered briefly, to highlight some of the most salient details. Each is named for a man who has become an emblem of "education and culture". In other words, those familiar with them will derive a sense of pride, however mild, from having knowledge of this person and the ideas he is most famous for promulgating. I Uses of Great Men. He writes that among the exceptional intellectual men, there is normally also found some especial form of the imaginative faculty. He moves on to something a bit more esoteric: "I...I admire great men of all classes," (p.625).

II Plato; or, the Philosopher. Emerson brings readers into the new greater context when he writes, "Among books, Plato only is entitled to Omar's fanatical compliment to the Koran, when he said, Burn the libraries; for, their value is in this book. These sentences contain the culture of nations," (p. 633). This is an unexpected beginning. He obviously respects the Muslims and proceeds to tout the wordliness of Plato, claiming that wherever anyone is from, Plato's thought will seem to have originated where he or she is. Plato and the Bible - including the Jewish Old Testament - continue to thrive as a deeply entrenched part of the thinking of the people of America. "The Same, the Same: friend and foe are of one stuff. What is the great end of all, you shall now learn from me. It is soul - one in all bodies, pervading, uniform, perfect, preeminent over nature," (p. 639). Emerson shares his awareness of some of the traditions of knowledge that literacy and education have preserved through the ages.



Book 3, Essays - Series 2: Chapter 13, Plato & Swedenborg

Book 3, Essays - Series 2: Chapter 13, Plato & Swedenborg Summary and Analysis

The incredible impact of Plato shows in their being two essays in this section devoted to his philosophy. The author does not engage in the battles that include Christianity - Jesus Christ's teachings actually agree more with Aristotle's thought in many ways - especially when it comes to the living soul, but may be reminiscent of Plato's in that consciousness - ideas and forms which are abstract principles are legitimately said to be real, although they do not exist in the same manner as do rocks. He claims that through Plato it becomes known that virtue can know both virtue and vice but vice is inherently a lack of self-awareness. During this essay, Emerson periodically reminds readers of the importance of science and the benefits of improved technologies.

III Swedenborg; or, the Mystic. Emerson claims that the poets are of the highest class of people, granted that the other kinds of people are simultaneously present in the society.

Emanuel Swedenborg was born in Stockholm, Sweden in 1688. Emerson writes that his life was thoroughly normal. He alludes both to exceptional minds and to those which are more or less balanced. Emerson believes that there are great minds which are to be cherished despite a lack of balance, but in an earlier essay during Series 2 he made it clear that he also values the well balanced minds highly. As for Emanuel Swedenborg: he was extraordinary. He was blessed with an avid interest in mines and metallurgy which has proven to be to the general advantage of everyone. Once an adult and knowledgeable, he shared this knowledge through writing, in addition to making many practical applications with it there in Sweden, or at the service of European nobility. He also solved other problems and is famous for having come up with an effective, implemented plan for moving a number of boats across some ground. Later in his life, he moved to London, England and turned to religious writing. It turns out that while he was pursuing the sciences it became known that Swedenborg also had "the sight" along with a great deal of religious knowledge. In contrast to the descriptions of the Europeans of that age as having been short-lived, Swedenborg lived to an age viewed as a reasonably long life even today: eighty-five years. He never married and was delightfully well-known for being a gentle fellow as well as being kind to children. Emerson makes it clear that all of us are fortunate that Emanuel Swedenborg has lived.



Book 3, Essays - Series 2: Chapter 14, Montaigne, Napoleon, Goethe

Book 3, Essays - Series 2: Chapter 14, Montaigne, Napoleon, Goethe Summary and Analysis

These are three other "giants" of European society after the Renaissance. In the first of these Emerson writes of life's principles and circumstances using the analogy of their being two sides to a coin. Thoughts of one are truly connected with thoughts of the other. One example he uses to show his meaning is how a financially successful career man is also living in a "bought and sold" manner thanks to what he will do to continue to be financially included. "Infinite and Finite; Relative and Absolute; Apparent and Real," (p. 690) further clarifies this. Later, he states that people confide in those who are their peers. Emerson's writes of Montaigne, that when France was rife with internal strife, Montaigne was able to keep his own estate defenseless without any harm coming to him at all, but so great was the friendship towards him throughout the land, that other lords brought him their precious belongings for safekeeping. His gates were left open.

V Shakespeare; or, the Poet. Emerson explains that in the London theatre there was a mass of treasured manuscripts for a great many historical plays. These had been amended, adjusted, altered here and there, now and again so much that their original authorship was no longer discernible. Emerson emphasizes that Shakespeare thrived when the poet was serving a largely illiterate society. He reports that this indicated that the author could bring together ideas from every source without fear of anything from his audience. "Did the bard speak with authority?" (p. 715). Shakespeare has written about himself; apparently there is no better biographer - at least, not according to Ralph Waldo Emerson.

VI Napoleon; or, the Man of the World: This begins with the antagonism between the conservative and liberal trends in society. He moves on to "two o'clock in the morning courage" (p. 735). This is a moral vantage point and a true capability. Emerson writes that Napoleon had this.

There are actually nineteen essays of this book; the first two of which are devoted to England. These are followed by Land, Race, and Ability, each of which makes for an excellent overview of Britain as she had grown to be known during the nineteenth century. After this are Manners, Truth and Character. Presently, Truth and Character will be focused upon for brevity with depth. Chapter VII Truth begins with an explanation that the Teutonic peoples have a sense of unity not found by the Latin nations. Further, he explains an awareness that cunning seems to be supplied in nature as a virtual substitute or balancing factor to strength.



Book 3, Essays - Series 2: Chapter 15, The Truth & Character of the English

Book 3, Essays - Series 2: Chapter 15, The Truth & Character of the English Summary and Analysis

Chapter nine is Cockayne; then there is Wealth - the English of the nineteenth century enjoyed displaying their wealth when they had it; the late twentieth century middle-class English tended to hide it, if only to protect themselves from jealousy or to prevent inflaming the envy of others. Aristocracy follows: deteriorating feudalism coexists with democratic trends. Chapter XII Universities: "The logical English train a scholar as they train an engineer," (p. 877). Chapter XIII Religion: It is significant that the priests tended to come from the same of close classes to the people served. He claims nineteenth century England follows the Old Testament but seems oblivious to the New Testament.

XIV Literature: There is a simplicity often called "down to earth" that pervades the nineteenth century English culture. This cultural attitude shows in the style of their literature. This is followed by XV The "Times" - the source of news for the people. Emerson calls it a great explanation of the English point-of-view in history, including being strongly against the French Republic of 1848 and strongly in favor of Napoleon's French regime. Stonehenge is next. Emerson visited Stonehenge with a Mr. C., who he describes as influential thinker of his era. He describes the monument. The appearance of it was anticlimactic. There is not much to it. At the same time, there is something incredible about it - in its simplicity, it has endured millenia, when many other artifacts of mankind have not. Emerson gives the nineteenth century definition of it as a temple. When he questions a local he learns that at Summer Solstice the light shines through in a special way. For some this fact remains a source of awe, for others it is on the same level as the sun dial, or buying homes with windows that have southern exposure to be sure to catch the Sun just the right way.

Essay XVII Personal: Emerson writes that making friends with others there in Britain radically increased the level of enjoyment he had. Essay XVIII Result: He points out that they abolished slavery in Britain while this continued to be legal in the United States in 1844. The English mind is very practical and adept at turning whatever they learn to good and immediate use. Emerson here writes that the English are as a horse in a field, who is so slow as to be passed by even the elderly nags but then, given compelling conditions, will outdo the very best of them. Emerson claims that this seems to be their nature, and cannot be explained by any single element of English society. Individuals are valued in English society, and the expression of the unique identity is encouraged in nineteenth century England, even to the point of indulging in specific whims. The final essay in this group is Speech at Manchester.



Book 4: The Conduct of Life : Chapter 17, Fate & More

Book 4: The Conduct of Life : Chapter 17, Fate & More Summary and Analysis

"A man's fortunes are the fruit of his character," (p. 963). "History is the action and reaction of these two, - Nature and Thought," (p. 964). While leaving a great deal else unsaid, this tells readers a great deal. Fate here is finally also defined by the phrase Beautiful Necessity. If Power: In contrast to fate, the first principle in this essay is that rather than luck, there are laws of nature - one of these pertains to how discipline nurtures skill while nature - belonging to fate, delivers talent. Human endeavor is the intentional use of these laws to "making luck". Emerson writes of how an exceptionally bold man may take a ship to New England with his energy whereas a lesser man may do fine within his constraints but the limits of his courage and vigor will keep him closer to home, say, within Europe. In this regard, he asserts that an individual's tasks occur in accordance with who that individual is. This follows directly and in conjunction with the description of the English attitude towards character. Also, immediately prior, Emerson wrote that events emerge from individual people as a direct consequence of their individual characters. Emerson claims that health is the first wealth and that some people are simply of a type that require adventures. He then writes of a strange man who has blended traits of the criminal with those of a most desirable and honorable citizen. Active and helpful in the civil life, helping insure the roads are well kept up and yet simultaneously a leader of criminals. There is something about this that is associated with the pure nature of the savage and of the adventurer. Emerson writes that he believes the evils of such a person can be cured without destroying or ruining the individuality. One way of handling this involves intentionally channeling a person's vigor. Here is where a society can get professional athletes, vigorous laborers, police and soldiers - all professions where the use of energy is relatively great and the vigorous individual can flourish without damaging society for the lack of proper direction of that same precious energy.

The rest of the essays of this section are as follows: Wealth, Culture, Behavior, Worship, Considerations by the Way, Beauty, and Illusions complete this book. Within the text, each of these have been written so that they can stand alone. At the same time, each flows into the other, and the educational effect is cumulative as well as extensive. Emerson does a wonderful job of clarifying specific concepts while showing various ways in which they appear within the context of the American culture. While tying the principles to real world examples, the author also puts them into cultural and even international context.



Book 4, The Conduct of Life : Chapter 17, Fate & More

Book 4, The Conduct of Life : Chapter 17, Fate & More Summary and Analysis

There are thirty-seven separate pieces assembled in this final book. These include brief essays and also letters - epistles. They were written within the years 1840 - 1844. The first piece is about Christian Communion as a rite. Emerson opens the issue by introducing readers to the reality of the history of controversy connected with this. Along with this, he describes just a few of the different ways this ritual has been conducted over the course of the centuries. Emerson also includes that some Christian denominations, such as the Quakers, have ceased using the rite altogether, feeling that it has either become outmoded or that it has been so embroiled in religious politics that the value of it has been decimated or devastated. Emerson quotes Scriptures and asserts that only Luke suggested that this event serve as the basis for a religious commemorative rite and it turns out that he was the only original disciple who was not present at the original Lord's Supper.

On page 1143, there is something decidedly different. This one is a note called The Editors to the Reader. There follow three essays focused upon distinct aspects of literature, especially poetry. Poetry has been a steady influence throughout the course of this book. As previously noted, the essays of the first and second series all have at least one piece of poetic verse at the fore of it. Poems also occur elsewhere, at times within the essays themselves. However, here in Uncollected Prose, there is no item of poetry set into place prior to the bulk of the writing.

During another section, Emerson's preoccupations are once again revealed. "But beyond his delight in genius, and his love of individual and civil liberty, Mr. Lando has a perceptions that is much more rare, the appreciation of character. This is the more remarkable considered with his intense nationality," (p.1183). Each of these - distinguishing features of a nation's people as such, as a people, and character and genius are all main focii of the author's writings throughout the entire manuscript. There is a piece called prayers that starts off with Pythagoras. There are letters. The shortest pieces are only half a page in length. These show the diversity of what the author has been able to do. The assemblage of the Uncollected Prose is clearly appropriate and contrasts without any difficulty to the rest of the work.



Characters

Ralph Waldo Emerson

This is the book's author. He is an eminent thinker of the nineteenth century. Throughout the book, he espouses many of his own views and values about the world. He was a highly respected man. Much of his life centered around Boston, Massachusetts. It is not possible to present his entire philosophy within this small section. After all, there is a reason why his ideas have been presented throughout his numerous works. He was relatively prolific, which is why the compendium is immense.

During the course of the work he presents much of his philosophy. He also sets up his work to be understood within the greater global context so that the differentiations between the European Scholar and the American Scholar are spelled out for posterity.

Joel Porte

This is an editor. He is listed as being responsible for writing many of the notes. He has also been important in selecting which materials go into the book. This man is a twentieth century scholar. The book was published in 1983. While there is no guarantee that this man is still alive, there is a decent probability that he is, depending upon how old he was when he wrote the notes for this book and lifestyle factors.

Emanuel Swedenborg

This is an important thinker frequently mentioned by the author. Readers familiar with him will obviously experience this differently from those who do not know him. There are references to him throughout the work. There is an entire essay devoted to this man. He is referred to during hundreds of pages prior to the essay named for him. He was born in 1688 in Stockholm, Sweden. He was incredible: he specialized in mining and metallurgy related sciences. His secondary interest, which he pursued after he turned fifty years old was religion and theology, at which he also excelled. Although he never married nor had any children, this man was known as being a gentle fellow and very kind and safe to be with children. Apparently he also had the so-called second sight.

God

God is here used to indicate the Creator, Sustainer and Destroyer of the universe. For the purposes of simplicity the entity is referred to as He. He is written of in relation to the religions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. God is mentioned repeatedly, as part of various discourses including matters of doctrine, metaphysics and the politics of religious rites. Emerson treats the existence of God as a matter that is taken as a well known fact. As far as it is known, the political authorities in the USA at the time would



not have mandated that he believe in God or write as if he did out of censorship. The impression that Emerson gives is that he is a believer - given that his philosophy includes that there is just the one Universal Mind he operates on the basis of this being God's Mind.

Jesus the Christ

This entity is discussed in multiple parts of the text as part of larger discussions relating to the branch of Judaism that he founded known as Christianity. He is written of as the incarnate son of God, and the Messiah of the Jews prior to the arrival of the prophet Mohammed and the development of Islam. Emerson refers to the Koran, in which Jesus does play a role. His role and function are not described in the book as matters of dispute. Emerson does acknowledge a variety of conflicts among Christians about doctrines and rites and how these relate to distinctions between Catholic and Protestant denominations of Christianity. This man is actually alive, at least in his spiritual body, although this is confusing for many and unbelievable to many others as his public execution by crucifix is also well-known. However, prior to the crucifixion, this man was known to have brought at least two people back to life despite having died, and he preached the doctrine of resurrection as part of his Judaism.

Plato

This is one of the ancient Grecian philosophers. He introduced the idea that there is an independent realm of "ideas" and of "forms". This relates to articulating abstraction, and the principles that are found in multiple examples of events and experiences. There are two essays in the first half of the book that are devoted to him. While limited within the modern context, this philosopher has continued to influence contemporary thought as one of the first thinkers who is viewed by modern philosophers as being more than an almost comically incorrect museum piece.

Aristotle

This is the other most prominent ancient Grecian philosopher. He was younger than Plato and served both as a prominent student and as a rival of the older man's. He is mentioned a small number of times during the first three hundred pages of the text. He is typically mentioned in association with both Plato and some Catholic saints such as Augustine and Aquinas. He was a Macedonian by nationality, but spent a great deal of life in Athens, Greece except when politics forced his removal from the area.

Milton

This is the famous novelist. He is mentioned during a Lecture on the Times on page 160 of the edition used to create the summary. He is mentioned more than once. Emerson treats him as a background figure whom it would be ordinary to know.



Columbus

This means Christopher Columbus, the sea-farer who secured funding from the Spanish Crown. Emerson writes of his venture to seek the Americas. He writes that Columbus did this based upon a rational speculation that the size of land of Europe and the amount of sea suggests that for a round world, there must be a balancing factor to the planet's land masses. This occurs during the essay, The Young Americans.

Pythagoras

This is another ancient Greek. What makes Pythagoras so distinctive is the following: 1) Music and mathematics were an integral part of the man's philosophical teachings, 2) an entire school was devised that bore his name, 3) the contributions of many people of the Pythagoreans were always attributed to Pythagoras. There are aspects of the thought of this philosopher that have not been overturned at the present stage of history.

Socrates

This ancient Grecian, Athenian soldier is also included. This man is mentioned repeatedly during several of the First and Second series of essays. He was most famous for his use of what is called the Elenchic method - this is a system of questioning which reveals ignorance, knowledge and the manner of thinking of an individual. He was actually a poor man who hung around professional instructors and tried to get what teaching from them he could. Plato wrote of him, which is the main reason anyone has ever heard of him.

Shakespeare

There is one essay entirely devoted to this man, and he is mentioned elsewhere in addition to this. Emerson uses him to serve as representative of the Poet and of the Bard in the English and Eurocentric worldview. Eurocentricity is limited and legitimate in its perspective. Emerson emphasizes that Shakespeare worked within the context of a very rich tradition in England and that the reality that his audience was largely illiterate meant that distinctions between sources of information garnered for use in any given play might not be separated by the audience.

Montaigne

This is a Frenchman, long deceased. He is famed for having fared well and for having lived in peace during a heated portion of the feudal times in France and Europe. There is an entire essay devoted to him as one of the Representative Men in a section of the book that marks the halfway point. When practically everyone else had grown so



defensive as to turn their estates into fortifications, Montaigne did not behave that way and he was not attacked. Emerson observes that his reputation as a thoroughly honest and trustworthy man was incredibly powerful in that region during his lifetime.

Napoleon Bonaparte

This is the French General who unified large tracts of Europe. He was so popular that many foreigners were delighted to become part of his trail of conquest and to be able to claim him as their very own leader. The English at first supported his political leadership of France when they would not support a more democratic French Republic. There is one essay dedicated to him during the section entitled Representative Men.

Goethe

This famous German author has an entire essay devoted to him in the book. Time constraints caused further details about him to be left out of the summary. One of his most translated and popular works is Faust - where modern man reorients his visions of God and the Devil and the battles of good and evil. His work shows the innovative tendency of the modern European man joining up with pre-existing traditions in the culture. Outside of the essay in which he is the main figure, Goethe is little mentioned during the remainder of the book.

St. John

This is the Roman Catholic Christian saint. He is mentioned during the essay entitled The Lord's Supper which is the first piece of the Uncollected Prose at the tail end of the book. He does not appear elsewhere in the book.

St. Augustine

This is one of the first of the Roman Catholic saints. Emerson brings him up during the essays on the philosopher Plato. Augustine follows Plato in a line of important thinkers to have the legacy of coping with some of the disparate and unifying principles of metaphysics. Augustine is only referred to during the book in this context.



Objects/Places

Free Mason Temple

This is one of the locations where lectures were given by Ralph Waldo Emerson. While the Free Masons are widespread as an organization, the audience that he typically addressed was located in Boston, Massachusetts during the beginning of the 1840s. There are no details provided about these places, other than the name of the city, state and nation. They are only mentioned as a place where Emerson did public speaking engagements.

England

England is a nation located northeast of the Continental United States. There are well over a dozen essays dedicated to England and the English in the book. This may well be because the American colonies were primarily controlled by England - although this use of the term America is ambiguous enough that it can be easily misleading. Readers will tend to know that the United States of America is the nation meant, but given the number of nations in the Americas - the truth is that the English did not control "the Americas" but only vast tracts of North America - and even then, it is a well known fact that the French controlled a large part of the Canadian Eastern territories.

London

This is a major city in England. It is located in the south central region of the country, but is not coastal. The author refers to it repeatedly in his discussion of England, including those of his visits to the country. London is the nation's capital. A large river serves to connect this city to the coast, while securing it with extra protection from direct beach landings at the coast. This gives England some added military protection from both France and Germany; this location has been very helpful through the centuries.

History

While not an object in the usual place, one of the purposes of the book is to put history into perspective. The reason for this is that history holds a powerful place within the human understanding, both individually and on the mass scales. Behaviors that only make sense in some contexts emerge: human behavior during a war might well not be uniform to that which occurs in an atmosphere of complete peace. History is time seen from behind. The purpose of it is contextualization in the hopes that this will facilitate understanding, just as it is possible to tell flour from salt on sight, but it helps if you know what you are dealing with if there is realistic hope of making such a distinction.



Philosophy

While not an object in the usual sense it is a field. As such it comes into play throughout much of the book. This involves inquiry into some of the most pressing and challenging questions humanity has ever faced. Philosophy is often set against theology, but the two participate in much of the same core concerns regarding the nature of God, life and truth. Philosophy is the parent, or ancestor of other fields of knowledge, including all of the sciences which have themselves branched off. Much of the book includes and involves philosophy.

Culture

This is something which is defined in more than one way by the author. It is best viewed as a powerful medium that has a direct and indirect complex of influences upon every living mind. Culture includes everything from language/s used and accents, to the sum total of the legislation and political organization of a location. American culture, English culture, and these in relation to European culture are Emerson's focus during the book.

Stonehenge

This is an ancient monument mentioned in the book. There is an entire essay devoted to this. It has at least one calendric aspect - that there are stones designed so that Summer Solstice light will make a line of light that does not occur at any other time of the year. This monument is made of a type of stone noteworthy for its consistency. The rock is uniform in its structure after the manner of granite.

Universal Man

During one his more philosophic phases, Emerson refers to this abstract figure. Every individual is a form of this. Emerson explains because this is the case, each individual has direct access to all experiences possible to the human soul. Primarily discussed in the essay entitled History, the universal man recurs periodically throughout the book.

Egypt

This is a nation of North Africa that has served as a boundary marker between the Europeans and the Africans and the Arabians. It has a great river that fueled a flourishing natural delta. The agricultural wealth that occurred fed a cultural richness and power felt by a large portion of the world. This nation is mentioned for its role in history prior to the life of Jesus Christ far more than it is mentioned with its relevance to nineteenth century Europe in a direct manner.



Olympus

This is a mountain in Greece. High places have long been associated with the gods in a polytheistic world and with God in a monotheistic world. The finer air and greater privacy along with the clarity afforded by the journey make mountain tops great locations for meeting or talking to gods. Olympus is still famous for having been the home world for the deities of the Grecian peoples of the city-states two to eight thousand years prior to today. It is mentioned by Ralph Waldo Emerson because of this.

Character

This is an important topic of the book. Character is not discussed completely in just one place in the book. Rather, character comes to the fore now and again. Early on it emerges - it is part of the definition of the American Scholar, it is integral to morality - to virtue and to vice. Character is the whole justification for the Representative Men being used as such. This same notion carries over well into the essay called the Uses of Great Men. What character is, how to describe it, and why it is so important is a matter Emerson willingly takes up again and again.

Moods

These are another real, perceivable but not tangible. Moods are total conditions influenced largely by an individual's emotional state. Moods are the nature of the thoughts and emotions and the types of actions that proceed from the physical health, the emotion and the mind's efforts and activities.

Oregon

This is one the Pacific Northwestern states of the USA. It is approximately one thousand miles south of British Columbia's southernmost border. It is one of the last to join the union. It is referred to briefly in the book and is not prominent.

Scotland

This is the small nation directly attached to England's northern border. This nation is mentioned more than once, but is not predominant during the discourse. Scotland has been subjected to the English. They often simultaneously benefit and suffer from their connection to England. They are a Celtic nation, but also have extensive access to English.



Ireland

Ireland is also mentioned in a number of places. This small island nation is the largest island near to England. During tribal ancient times, this may well have been far enough away, but in the era of airplanes and boats, Ireland's main disadvantage is its proximity to England. In reality, it is probably closer to the truth that the only reason Irish weren't subjugated by the Germans is thanks to their proximity to England. This is a Celtic nation.

Wales

This is the other nation on the same island as England. Wales is a western land; it shares two borders with England and two with the sea. Wales is mentioned here and there in reference to a larger discussion of character of the English. The real claim to fame for the Welsh is that these Celts were not subjected to Roman rule, as were the English - or the proto-English, but they have been subjected to English dominion with the same kind of mixed feelings found among the Scottish and Irish.

The Ode

Emerson mentions this on page 928. It is a type of poem. Poetry is another strand in this work. While there is only essay devoted to the Poet, there are poems from beginning to end of the book. Most of these contain rhyming couplets. Correct meter is used for the poems, but none of them push for the extremes of complexity found in the others.

The Poet

Emerson has dedicated one essay to this topic in the book. The poet is also a bard. This is a person who he claims is revered in society when the needs for survival are being met, typically by others. He writes that it is a high status position. The editors and Emerson both have also included an amount of poetry, which is large for a work of nonfiction prose - poetry is perhaps two to five percent of the entire gathering of documents.

Rome

This is the city famed for a few things. First, it was a city founded by the son of the god Aries by a vestal virgin: along with thousands of soldiers working under him. Rome grew - miraculously able to spread its power to the size of an international Empire - pretty impressive for a municipality. The city of Rome is famed for having been the capital of the Empire named after it. Later, the city of Rome became of the capital of Christian church, later called Catholic. The city of Rome continued to flourish in the shadow of

this ancient tradition at the time of Emerson's writing, and in 2009 the very same city with the identical name is still bustling as a contemporary municipal center, albeit dwarfed compared to the height of its expansive powers.

Nature

This is the sensory, especially the living world, to the full extent of our knowledge, taken as a whole. Emerson mentions nature as a great resource and also as something which must be struggled with, at least on occasions - training for the controlled use of impulses given by this nature are the most often referred to in reference to Emerson's writings.



Themes

Philosophy

Part of Emerson's project during the course of this immense volume is to provide a clear account of his philosophical views. Fortunately, he includes an international level of discourse whereby distinctions between the American preoccupations of the nineteenth century have been compared with those of the British and again contrasted to those of the Continental philosophies abounding at the time. Emerson's lived reality is that of Christian America and he reveals a rather in-depth knowledge of theology as part of his philosophical and intellectual knowledge base.

Metaphysical questions have great significance here. The answers and the approach to such problems has a direct impact and influence upon the multiple sciences as well as the arenas of philosophy and theology. One of these is the question of whether or not there is a God, and another is the question regarding the human soul and what this is and how it relates to philosophy and to the mind. If all of the minds on Earth are emanations of the one Universal Mind of which God is the source, then it may be possible to derive knowledge. Here, knowledge is in fact, divine in its source. This is different from the implications that knowledge is a creative manufacturing of the organizational faculties of the human mind. In the latter case, knowledge can be still be useful, but the truth of it has become removed from the absolute and cannot be legitimately claimed to have divine origins at all. If knowledge is not divine but merely a work of man, then it has a far lower place within theological contexts than it has if it is in fact divine truth. In the case that science and mathematics and music are divine knowledge then science is the handmaiden or even consort of theology. This would or could clearly affect the way an organized body of churches will relate to the works of science, and influences the attitudes found among the scientific community about theology and God. Obviously, a Catholic bishop will feel that it is a better vested interest in a physicist who is reading the mind of God than in one that is striving to use science to refute the existence of God.

Emerson espouses philosophy throughout the text in an entirely integrated manner. There are essays in which the prevailing occupation is that of philosophical inquiry and others in which the purpose is more for the clarification of culture. While Emerson is not uniformly viewed as being exclusively a philosopher, he is viewed in at least some circles as being one of America's nineteenth century philosophers. Emerson was a Protestant Christian and an advocate of science. Knowledge of the truth was made possible in part by the human power to access the mind of God. There was a greater imperative to create an American perspective and to elucidate the basic principles of nineteenth century American thought than to espouse a specific school of philosophy. This was the American position relative to the Europeans - this nation was less than a century old, and was in the process of self-definition and hoping to be able to be stable and to be taken seriously by the Europeans who had the advantage of centuries of written thought and characterization within the international community.



Educational Material for the International Community

Part of Emerson's project was to educate his audiences. As an intellectual he did this within the broader framework of the international community. It is for this specific reason, along with the desire for domestic service, that Emerson writes in relation to the Europeans. Europe is the uncle of America, and as the nation's elder has set a multitude of precedents for finding the primary principles of a nation's attitudes, cultural and philosophical preoccupations within any given era. Since, the vast majority of American cultural and intellectual education has been acquired from or through Europeans, it stands to reason that Emerson would think about his work in relation to this context.

Much of Emerson's writings are very obviously intended to be shared. The lectures could be used for an educational series within academic institutions as well as being conducted for groups such as the Free Masons. These would mainly serve students of philosophy and theology. The series Representative Men could also be used as a stand alone item in the form of a single book or booklet. These together as a package would best serve as a cultural history and overview of just some of the virtues available to humanity.

Emerson writes of the American Scholar. He does this specifically for the purpose of serving both American and international needs. In the case of the domestic situation, this is done as part of the healthy development of the American psyche. While abstract, having a means of identifying as an American is something special and something that will better permit having proper perspective on what it is to be American within a global context. Emerson also devotes several essays to defining the English. He does this from the perspective of being an outsider. This provides the English themselves with an excellent point of contrast; they may readily choose to agree or to disagree with Emerson's description of the English.

These differing means permit the author to create a set of works which can contribute to the whole body of knowledge. Emerson's work is very much designed to be part of the intellectual tradition; while it may be easy to take this for granted, it is important to realize that Emerson has created writings that fit right in. This is actually an excellent feature of his work, and this greatly assists their ability serve as educational materials for the international community.

American Culture & Philosophy

Emerson has made himself a spokesman for America - here the nation is meant even though the name actually fits two continents. This may be one quality of America: the assumption that this means the United States of America and not any of the other American nations, of which there are a great many. Another feature of American culture is the Protestantism. This exists in great varieties along with Roman Catholicism and even the Eastern Orthodox Church - which is the Catholic Church from the Eastern Roman Empire, rather than the church from the Western Roman Empire. The Puritans



are one of the most famous founding sects of Protestant Christianity in America. Emerson writes relatively often of the Quakers, especially as they are the Christian sect responsible for eradicating slavery - first from Pennsylvania and were behind the movement that eventually made slavery illegal throughout the United States. Another basic feature of the American culture is touted abroad: Americans are both spiritual and materialistic at the same time. Their avid interest in their business leading to wealth and new fangled devices - items of technology, progress and convenience go hand-in-hand with the proliferation of Protestant churches and the simultaneous survival of the Catholic religion within the same cultural atmosphere.

Emerson writes about the American Scholar. While this only appears as one of the essays for its main point, this idea permeates the rest of the writings. Emerson enjoys writing about the qualitative distinctions created by nationality. Obviously, the American Scholar is what he [or she] is called - a scholar whose cultural milieu is America. Perhaps the boldest and most essential feature of this is the recognition of culture as a major pervasive influence on the thoughts and behaviors of people. This is really a brave act of humility, with respect to aspirations of grasping the absolute truth. While science seeks a clear headed objectivity, so to do the humanities, but the limitations are different. Self-awareness can be both easier and harder for individuals, and this continues to be the case within the context of a greater culture. This articulation of a perception inclusive of culture has major advantages. It helps readers to learn to see themselves within the context of historical perspective. In a way it dwarfs the ego, for it shows how much of the individual ego may be nothing more than a drop of cultural fluid. This is the case for the temporal location as well as for the culture. As such, Emerson stands as much for the nineteenth century as he does for the Americans. So, while a source of pride, Americanness for Emerson is something that can fortunately be characterized.



Style

Perspective

The author is a representative of the nineteenth century. In this respect, being a representative simply means that Emerson lived during that century and therefore participated fully in the energies of that era. Emerson is an American. Part of his work is to define the American Scholar conceptually as well as in fact. In this regard he was very important in his ability to create an abstracted character that was still based upon the realities of American life. Emerson was a well educated man and something of a gentleman by American standards. While this included a number of class issues, it is also true that there are elements of class divisions that are identical to those found in other nations but also distinctions which are unique to the nation in which they occur. In other words, the nineteenth century American gentleman is not in every way identical to the British gentleman or to the Continental European gentleman.

Emerson is clearly a well educated man. He shares insights based upon his knowledge of religion and philosophy. Here, during the course of the book, it grows ever clearer that he has rather extensive knowledge in these areas. Largely a side-effect of the American commitment to the religious life, Emerson's articulation of metaphysical thought is more in line with the theological traditions than the philosophic, although he clearly partakes of both.

Emerson's personal life is not discussed during the book. There is no mention of the existence or absence of wife and children. He does acknowledge that even in writing, the contents of published works do change when the audience is apt to have both women and men in it. The fact that the author is one of the free mason's indicates that he may have had some air of mystical or occult about him. He was an advocate of science and realism as well as a believer that there is but one Universal Mind and that is God's. This is but one example of the practical importance of Emerson's metaphysical efforts. Emerson respects the empirical sciences and its methodology but does extensively overtly rely upon it for the espousal of his views.

Tone

The tone of the writing is primarily engaging and informative. A large portion of the writings are lectures that have been presented to small audiences - perhaps as few as found in a school's classroom, but doubtfully more than two to three hundred people per speaking engagement. The written speeches and lectures are clearly designed to be thought provoking yet friendly. He is well mannered and polite. Emerson has dared to face these tough philosophical questions, and to do his best to actually come up with answers to them. He provides a fairly organized assemblage of these.



For readers who are used to this, Emerson's work is simply another honorable and honest effort. For those less familiar with philosophy and theology, to do such a thing is not as easy as it may at first appear. Rather than refusing to attempt anything so difficult and instead of doing a bad job of it, Ralph Waldo Emerson has actually been able to formulate and to share and express a comprehensible perspective.

There is more to the project than that. Emerson is clearly educating members of the public. The audiences for the live appearances may have been narrow, but over the course of the century that followed, Emerson's writings have become nationally and internationally famous. Their successful publication has permitted millions to learn more about his ideas. In this manner, whether formally affiliated with the same institutions or not, people can take in what Ralph Waldo Emerson has to say on a number of topics, including history, philosophy, theology, science and human progress. One of the pleasant features of Emerson's writing is that readers can be confident in his benevolence. While people should naturally be able to take this as granted, it is well worth noting.

Structure

The total book is large, and very lengthy running to 1,311 pages including the Notes on the Text and leaving a little bit more. There are two separate types of subdivisions to this massive work. There are eleven main separations, including both introductory and conclusive materials. There is a secondary Table of Contents in which those divisions already mentioned are connected and described in greater detail.

For example, what is but one entry in the first Table of Contents unfolds in the second to reveal a series of seven essays, followed by four addresses, followed by the written versions of lectures, of which there are five. This is the form of the second Table of Contents. In this respect much of the work is in the nature of a map, with a simplified miniature and a more expansive complete view.

Another feature of the organization of the book in its entirety is that it has been ordered chronologically. There are portions of the book where there is a recasting of this chronological order. For example, the early lectures are laid out in chronological order. Then, at the tail end of the book, the Uncollected Prose is also set out in chronological order, which causes some repetition and overlap because it has been set forth separately.

The book is ordered with essays intended to be read and in other cases works written that were very obviously designed as public speeches. Readers can clearly tell the difference between the two forms, although in many ways they are identical in their nature and function. The series of Representative Men is designed as an excellent set. These are well suited to being able to work as a short educational work in and of themselves. These would do very well as a part of a course in culture, history or history of ideas.



Quotes

"And finally, is not the true scholar the only true master? But, the old oracle said, 'All things have two handles: beware of the wrong one.'" p. 54

"Cicero, Locke and Bacon were only young men in libraries, when they wrote these books." p. 57

"Character is higher than intellect. Thinking is the function. Living is the functionary. The stream retreats to its source. A great soul will be strong to live, as well as strong to think." p. 62

"Mr. President and Gentlemen...the American Scholar...The spirit of the American freeman is already suspected to be timid, imitative, tame." p. 70

"The test of true faith, certainly, should be its power to charm and command the soul, as the laws of nature control the activity of the hands, - so commanding that we find pleasure and honor in obeying." p. 84

"By trusting your own heart you shall gain more confidence in other men." p. 89

"The resources of the scholar...coextensive with nature and truth...He cannot know then until he has beheld with awe the infinitude and impersonality of the intellectual power." p. 96

"To be as good a scholar as Englishmen are; to have as much learning as our contemporaries; to have written a book that is read, satisfies us." p. 101

"Gentlemen...The scholars are the priests of that thought which establishes the foundations of the earth. No matter what is their special work or profession, they stand for the spiritual interest of the world...in a country where the material interest is so predominant as it is in America." p. 115

"The love which lifted men to the sight of these better ends, was the true and best distinction of this time, the disposition to trust a principle more than a material force." p. 162

"Time is the child of Eternity." p. 168

"...so deep is the foundation of the existing social system, that it leaves no one out of it...you are under the necessity of using the Actual order of things...But you are betrayed by your own nature..." p. 186

"The idealist takes his departure from his consciousness, and reckons the world an appearance. The materialist respects sensible masses, Society, Government, social art, and luxury, every establishment, every mass, whether majority of numbers, of extent of space, or amount of objects, every social action. The idealist has another measure,



which is metaphysical, namely, the rank which things take in his consciousness...Mind is the only reality." p. 195

"I am owner of the sphere, / Of the seven stars and the solar year, / Of Caesar's hand, and Plato's brain, / Of Lord Christ's heart, and Shakespeare's strain." p. 236

"Whosoever would be a man must be a nonconformist. He who would gather immortal palms must not be hindered by the name of goodness. Nothing is at last sacred but the integrity of your own mind." p. 261

"There is less intention in history than we ascribe to it." p. 306

"We have a great deal more kindness than is ever spoken." p. 341

"I confess to an extreme tenderness of nature on this point." p. 343

"Our American character is marked by more than average delight in accurate perception." p. 361

"The growths of genius are of a certain total character." p. 389

Essay XI: Intellect: "Every substance is negatively electric to that which stands above it in the chemical tables, positively to that which stands below it...but the intellect dissolves fire, gravity, laws, method, and the subtlest unnamed relations of nature, in its restless menstruum." p. 417

"Our logrolling, our stumps and their politics, our fisheries, our Negroes, and Indians, our boasts, and our repudiations, the wrath of rogues, and the pusillanimity of honest men, the northern trade, the southern planting, the western clearing, Oregon, and Texas, are yet unsung." p. 465

"Nevermind the ridicule, never mind the defeat: up again, old heart! - it seems to say, - there is victory yet for all justice; and the true romance which the world exists to realize, will be the transformation of genius into practical power." p. 492

"This is that which we call Character, - a reserved force which acts directly by presence, and without means...but character is of a stellar and undiminishable greatness." p. 495

"Character is this moral order seen through the medium of an individual nature." p. 498

"Here we find nature to be the circumstance which dwarfs every other circumstance." p. 541

"I forget the clock. I pass out of the score of relation to persons. I am healed of my hurts. I am made immortal by apprehending my possession of incorruptible goods.. Here is great competition of rich and poor...I admire great men of all classes." p. 625



"The Same, the Same: friend and foe are of one stuff. What is the great end of all, you shall now learn from me. It is soul, - one in all bodies, pervading, uniform, perfect, preeminent over nature." p. 639

"Among books, Plato only is entitled to Omar's fanatical compliment to the Koran, when he said, Burn the libraries; for, their value is in this book. These sentences contain the culture of nations." p. 633

"Did the bard speak with authority?" p. 715

"two o'clock in the morning courage" p. 735

"The logical English train a scholar as they train an engineer." p. 877

"A man's fortunes are the fruit of his character." p. 963

"History is the action and reaction of these two, - Nature and Thought." p. 964

"But beyond his delight in genius, and his love of individual and civil liberty, Mr. Lando has a perceptions that is much more rare, the appreciation of character. This is the more remarkable considered with his intense nationality." p. 1183



Topics for Discussion

What is so special about the American Scholar?

Does Emerson believe that there are separate minds or that all human minds are emanations of one consciousness?

List three basic differences between American and European philosophies of the nineteenth century.

Which was your favorite chapter of the summary and why?

Comment on Emerson's naming two angels during the first series of essays.

Is Emerson Christian? Defend your answer.

How does Emerson discuss the difference between Catholics and Protestant Christians in the book?

Discuss your own feelings and opinions about Emerson's use of old nomenclature for ethnic/racial distinctions. Tell whether or not you are offended, and why you are or are not against the use of these old terms. Negro - meaning black, or African-American, Indian - meaning Native American.

What is Emerson's view of women? Indicate evidence of how you determine this.

Which is your favorite of the Representative Men and why?