

from Nature

Make the Connection

Quickwrite

Emerson was exhilarated by nature's beauty and grandeur. In the presence of nature, Emerson felt he was in tune with his better self and in harmony with eternal things. How do you feel about nature? Jot down your thoughts on anything that nature has taught or revealed to you.

Literary Focus

Imagery

In this essay, Emerson the poet helps Emerson the philosopher. Here Emerson shows us scenes of nature that have moved him; he doesn't just *tell* us how he feels. As you read, look for **imagery**, or descriptive language that appeals to your senses. How do the images help you share the writer's experiences?

Imagery is the use of language to evoke a picture or a concrete sensation of a person, a thing, a place, or an experience.

For more on Imagery, see the *Handbook of Literary and Historical Terms*.

Reading Skills

Monitoring Your Reading

As you read these essays, look for key passages that state or suggest a **main idea**. If a statement puzzles you, try to **paraphrase** it, or restate it in your own words. Check the footnotes, and use a dictionary to look up the definitions of difficult words. Above all, read the essay more than once, and be sure to ask questions of the text.

Background

In his introduction to the book *Nature*, from which the following chapter is taken, Emerson offers a clue to his underlying purpose when he encourages his contemporaries to look directly at nature:

Our age is retrospective. It builds the sepulchers [tombs] of the fathers. It writes biographies, histories, and criticism. The foregoing generations beheld God and nature face to face; we, through their eyes. Why should we not also enjoy an original relation to the universe? Why should we not have a poetry and philosophy of insight and not of tradition, and a religion by revelation to us, and not the history of theirs?

In his quest for original religious insight and a uniquely American literary expression, Emerson inspired the American renaissance. In *Nature* he made it clear to those who wished to see that the magnificent American landscape itself could be the basis for spiritual rebirth.

Vocabulary Development

admonishing (ad·män'ish·in) v. used as *adj.*: gently warning.

integrate (in'tə·grāt') v.: unify.

perennial (pə·ren'ē·əl) *adj.*: persistent; constant.

blithe (blīth) *adj.*: carefree.

occult (ə·kult') *adj.*: hidden.

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Vocabulary Practice

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More About Ralph Waldo Emerson

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Keyword: LE5 11

SKILLS
FOCUS

Literary Skill

Understand the use of imagery. Analyze an author's philosophical beliefs.

Reading Skill

Monitor reading by identifying main ideas and paraphrasing.