

Mr. Francis
American Literature II

Thoreau's Experiments Response

Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862) addresses many of the same ideas as Emerson, but his discussions tend to be grounded in far more concrete or autobiographical elements. Loosely speaking, Thoreau's time at Walden and his night in jail can be construed as social experiments designed to demonstrate or test Emerson's abstract Transcendentalist ideas.

You have two options† for this response paper:

1. In Walden (1854), Thoreau conducts an experiment to demonstrate that traditional ideas about people's needs are often overstated. Address Thoreau's hypotheses, tests, data, and conclusions in the context of your lifestyle. How does your attitude regarding maintaining your heat compare?

2. In Resistance to Civil Government (1848,1849), Thoreau describes his willingness to spend a night in jail as a consequence of his protest against what he believes is an unconscionable war with Mexico. Address a cause for which you have been or would be willing to make a similar personal sacrifice. Establish your criteria for protest.

Your challenge: To incorporate ideas from Thoreau's experiences into a discussion of your own life. You must use several concrete details and pieces of quoted text from Thoreau.

Length guidelines: 200-350 words. Do not exceed two pages.

Format guidelines: All submissions must be double-spaced with a Courier New font and one-inch margins all around.

Assessment: Your response will be assessed pass/fail based on how adequately and appropriately it addresses the prompt.

Submission guidelines: Late submissions will not be accepted. Please upload to turnitin.com by 7:59 a.m. on the assigned due date.

Any assistance in completing this assignment should be noted in your declaration (including your classmates, the instructor, on-line resources, any printed material, etc.). Please carefully keep track of your sources, as students who choose to expand this assignment for this marking period's major assignment will be required to include a works cited list. I will not tolerate academic dishonesty.

† Your instructor reserves the right to assign the other option for your next response paper.