

New England - Transcendentalism

I. American Reform

A. Extraordinary Growth

1. Population doubles (again)
2. New territories (westward expansion -NW, SW)
3. Change toward industrial growth
4. People held back by poverty and lack of education

B. Causes for Reform

1. Dissatisfaction with Present

2. Optimism for future

- a. science and technology

C. Benefits of Technology

- Agriculture (reaper)
- Transportation (railroad, canals)
- Communication (telegraph)

D. Social Costs / Negatives of Tech.

- Skilled labor replaced by machines and unskilled labor
- often women and children
- mill towns (low pay, bad conditions)

E. Reform Groups

- Utopian communities sought to create a perfect society

F. Educational Reform

- Public Education-all states by 1860
- Adult Education-Lyceum

G. Women's Rights and Slavery

- Women had very few rights before this period. Jobs as teachers opened up doors. Right to vote primary concern
- Slavery still most divisive issue. Abolitionists in North spark debate

II. Literature

Growth of literature - new technology, bigger population

1836-Publication of Nature by Ralph Waldo Emerson

A. Transcendentalism (still a type of Romanticism)

- True Knowledge goes beyond book learning and our senses-comes from intuition - the highest power of the soul)
(this is where the name of movement comes from - it transcends the senses)

B. Inner soul

- Everyone can experience God firsthand
- Imagination / creativity an expression of soul
- Nature and man share a universal spirit (Emerson called it the "oversoul")

C. Nature as a symbol

- God is present in everything, so everything is important
- Nature most important because it can teach us lessons
- Thoreau's Walden is the supreme example of transcendentalism

D. Self Knowledge

- Nature's Primary importance is to teach us about ourselves
- Much about human personality doesn't make sense
- beginning of psychological insight

E. Achievements

- Relating all people to natural world and their own inner world
- Stimulated thought which inspired others

F. Anti-transcendentalism

- Brahmins - intellectuals centered around Harvard) not affected
- Whittier and Dickinson not a part of any movement
- Anti - Melville and Hawthorne
 - Believed in the possibility of sin/ evil in mankind

Review Questions

1. Give two examples of the spectacular growth in this time period.
2. What two developments helped to bridge the vast distances of our expanding country?
3. In what ways were workers affected by new technology?
4. What were the three main areas of reform, and which was the most divisive?
5. Why would this period be called the American Renaissance?
6. Why is intuition so important to transcendentalists?
7. What essay by which writer started the trans. movement?
8. Who were the Brahmins?
9. What two authors were considered anti-transcendentalist?

