

Transcendentalism Unit Test

Reading Comprehension

Directions Read the following selection. Then answer the questions that follow.

Transcendentalism is an intellectual movement that developed in the United States in the nineteenth century. Henry David Thoreau was an important transcendentalist.

from Wild Fruits by Henry David Thoreau

- 1 Most of us are still related to our native fields as the navigator to undiscovered islands in the sea. We can any afternoon discover a new fruit there which will surprise us by its beauty or sweetness. So long as I saw in my walks one or two kinds of berries whose names I did not know, the proportion of the unknown seemed indefinitely, if not infinitely, great.
- 5 As I sail the unexplored sea of Concord, many a dell and swamp and wooded hill is my Ceram and Amboyna. Famous fruits imported from the East or South and sold in our markets—as oranges, lemons, pine-apples, and bananas—do not concern me so much as many an unnoticed wild berry whose beauty annually lends a new charm to some wild walk or which I have found to be palatable to an outdoor taste. We cultivate imported shrubs in our front yards for the beauty of their berries, while at least equally beautiful berries grow unregarded by us in the surrounding fields.
- 11 The tropical fruits are for those who dwell within the tropics. Their fairest and sweetest parts cannot be imported. Brought here, they chiefly concern those whose walks are through the marketplace. It is not the orange of Cuba but rather the checkerberry of the neighboring pasture that most delights the eye and the palate of the New England child. For it is not the foreignness or size or nutritive qualities of a fruit that determine its absolute value.
- 16 We do not think much of table fruits. They are especially for aldermen and epicures. They do not feed the imagination as these wild fruits do, but it would starve on them. The bitter-sweet of a white-oak acorn which you nibble in a bleak November walk over the tawny earth is more to me than a slice of imported pine-apple. The South may keep her pine-apples, and we will be content with our strawberries, which are, as it were, a pine-apple with “going-a-strawberrying” stirred into them, infinitely enhancing their flavor. What are all the oranges imported into England to the hips and haws in her hedges? She could easily spare the one, but not the other. Ask Wordsworth, or any of her poets who knows, which is the most to him.
- 23 The value of these wild fruits is not in the mere possession or eating of them, but in the sight and enjoyment of them. The very derivation of the word “fruit” would suggest this. It is from the Latin *fructus*, meaning “that which is *used* or *enjoyed*.” If it were not so, then going a-berrying and going to market would be nearly synonymous experiences. Of course, it is the spirit in which you do a thing which makes it interesting, whether it is sweeping a room or pulling turnips. Peaches are unquestionably a very beautiful and palatable fruit, but the gathering of them for the market is not nearly so interesting to the imaginations of men as the gathering of huckleberries for your own use.

30 A man fits out a ship at a great expense and sends it to the West Indies with a crew of men and boys, and after six months or a year it comes back with a load of pine-apples; now, if no more gets accomplished than the speculator commonly aims at, if it simply turns out what is called a successful venture, I am less interested in this expedition than in some child's first excursions a-huckleberrying, in which it is introduced into a new world, experiences a new development, though it brings home only a gill of berries in its basket. I know that the newspapers and the politicians declare otherwise—other arrivals are reported and other prices quoted by them—but that does not alter the fact. Then I think that the fruit of the latter's expedition was finer than that of the former. It was a more fruitful expedition. What the editors and politicians lay so much stress upon is comparatively moonshine.

39 The value of any experience is measured, of course, not by the amount of money, but the amount of development we get out of it. If a New England boy's dealings with oranges and pine-apples have had more to do with his development than picking huckleberries or pulling turnips have, then he naturally and rightly thinks more of the former; otherwise not. No, it is not those far-fetched fruits which the speculator imports that concern us chiefly, but rather those which you have fetched yourself in the hold of a basket from some far hill or swamp, journeying all the long afternoon, the first of the season, consigned to your friends at home.

45 Commonly, the less you get, the happier and the richer you are. The rich man's son gets cocoa-nuts and the poor man's pignuts, but the worst of it is that the former never goes a-cocoa-nutting and so never gets the cream of the cocoa-nut, as the latter does the cream of the pignut. That on which commerce seizes is always the very coarsest part of a fruit—the mere bark and rind, in fact, for her hands are very clumsy. This is what fills the holds of ships, is exported and imported, pays duties, and is finally sold in the shops.

50 It is a grand fact that you cannot make the fairer fruits or parts of fruits matter of commerce; that is, you cannot buy the highest use and enjoyment of them. You cannot buy that pleasure which it yields to him who truly plucks it. You cannot buy a good appetite, even. In short, you may buy a servant or slave, but you cannot buy a friend.