

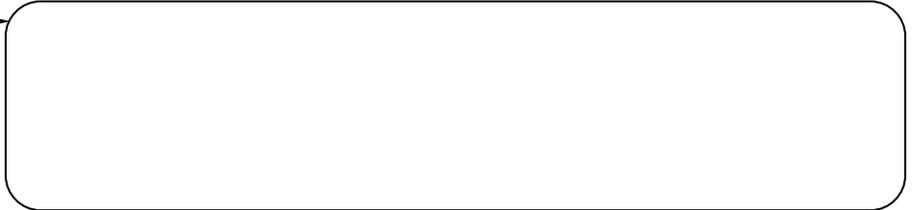
Basic Characteristics of American Transcendentalism:

- 1.) Transcendentalism, essentially, is a form of idealism.
- 2.) The transcendentalist "transcends" or rises above the lower animalistic impulses of life (animal drives) and moves from the rational to a spiritual realm.
- 3.) The human soul is part of the Oversoul or universal spirit to which it and other souls return at death; therefore, every individual is to be respected because everyone has a portion of that Oversoul (God).
- 5.) This Oversoul or Life Force or God can be found everywhere - travel to holy places is, therefore, not necessary.
- 6.) God can be found in both nature and human nature (Nature, Emerson stated, has spiritual manifestations).
- 7.) Jesus also had part of God in himself - he was divine as everyone is divine - except in that he lived an exemplary and transcendental life and made the best use of that Power which is within each one.
- 8.) "Miracle is monster." The miracles of the Bible are not to be regarded as important as they were to the people of the past. Miracles are all about us - the whole world is a miracle and the smallest creature is one. "A mouse is a miracle enough to stagger quintillions of infidels." – Whitman
- 9.) More important than a concern about the afterlife, should be a concern for this life - "the one thing in the world of value is the active soul." – Emerson
- 10.) Death is never to be feared, for at death the soul merely passes to the Oversoul.
- 11.) Emphasis should be placed on the here and now. "Give me one world at a time." – Thoreau
- 12.) Evil is a negative - merely an absence of good. Light is more powerful than darkness because one ray of light penetrates the dark.
- 13.) Power is to be obtained by defying fate or predestination, which seem to work against humans, by exercising one's own spiritual and moral strength: emphasis on self-reliance.
- 14.) Hence, the emphasis is placed on a human thinking.
- 15.) The transcendentalists see the necessity of examples of great leaders, writers, philosophers, and others, to show what an individual can become through thinking and action.
- 16.) It is foolish to worry about consistency because what an intelligent person believes tomorrow, if he/she trusts oneself, tomorrow may be completely different from what that person thinks and believes today. "A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds." – Emerson
- 17.) The unity of life and universe must be realized. There is a relationship between all things.
- 18.) One must have faith in intuition, for no church or creed can communicate truth.
- 19.) Reform must not be emphasized - true reform comes from within.

Name: _____

You have read the above points on Transcendentalism. Below each term, write your understanding of the concept as it relates to Transcendentalist philosophy and in the box, illustrate that understanding:

Transcendentalism



Oversoul



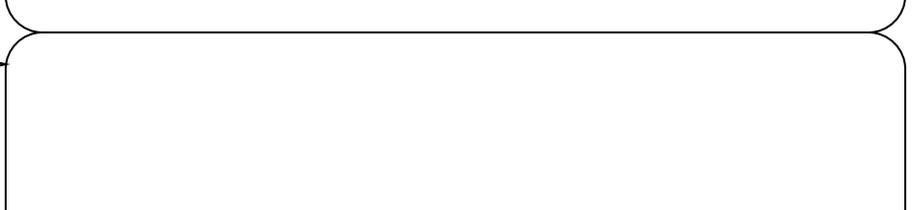
consistency



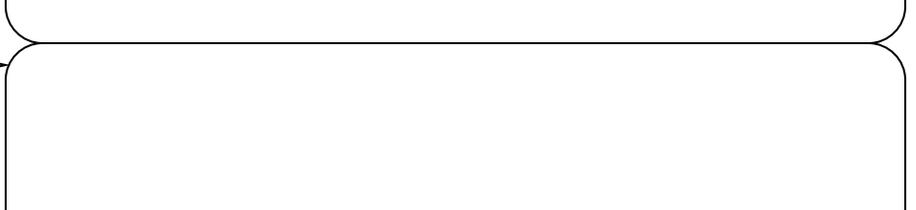
idealism



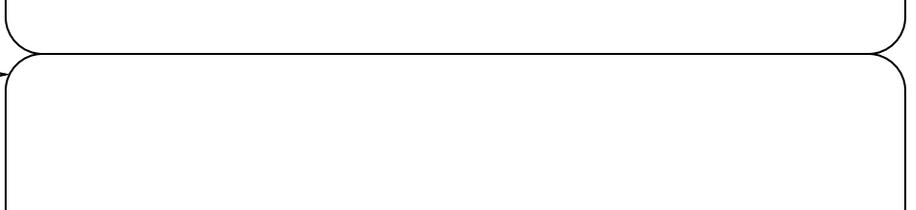
evil



self-reliance



nature



power

