

The Thoreauapist

Scene 1: Walden Pond

(The narrator walks across the stage slowly from the side with both chairs to the side with one chair, holding a piece of cardboard that says the year, 1854.)

(Thoreau enters behind the narrator)

Thoreau: Ah yes, the profound joy of solitude. The partridge is chirping, Walden Pond is as deep as ever, and her surface reflects a brilliant blue today. Ah is that a wood-

(Thoreau spins around abruptly, hits the wall, and gets knocked out.)

(The narrator walks across the stage from the side with one chair, dragging it onstage, and holds up a sign reading the year, 2024)

Narrator: And suddenly, Thoreau woke up in a therapy office in the modern day!

(The secretary walks in from the side with two chairs, clumsily dragging in the chairs, and sees Thoreau on the floor of the office.)

Secretary: Good morning Dr. Thoreau! Are you ready for your first therapy session?

(Thoreau gets up from the floor.)

Thoreau: What is this blasphemy! Why are the natural rays of the great sun replaced by the dull artificial light? Therapy? What is that? Another superfluous invention of man?

Secretary: Seems like you fell off the sofa quite hard Dr. Thoreau. All you have to do is walk in there and give people advice. They're counting on you!

Thoreau: Well, if I have a singular strength, it would be providing my opinions on the problems of modernity.

(walks with secretary offstage)

Scene 2: The Couple

(Mary and Lydia on the "couch" in the middle of an extremely convoluted and very stupid argument, that is probably about money, attitude, and gravity.)

(Thoreau walks into the room and watches the argument- he loves gossip. Thoreau interrupts the argument when the preestablished keyword "**vacuuming**" is said.)

Thoreau: What is the meaning of this tomfoolery? People, as hateful, as greedy as always, and when they give way to others, it's only because of vanity. Hence, what advice shall I give during this therapy session?

Couple (L): We've been married 2 ½ years and we can't agree on anything from money to what's for dinn-

Couple (M): That's because you are incapable of seeing reason!

Couple (L): Can you please help u-

Thoreau: Enough! Humans are clearly not made for each other. Oh, ages ago I was once innocent and in love myself with the beautiful Ellen Sewall. But she rejected me, and I never found love again.

Couple (L): That's so sad!

Couple (M): Are you really the best person to be giving relationship advice?

Thoreau (cutting them off): To be in a relationship is to engage in the evils of the body and ignore matters of the soul, and reflects merely a mortal desire for sensuality. Purity is impossible in a relationship. My advice is to terminate this merging of spirits, and to spend less time in the company of each other. Be chaste, though you evidently know nothing of this virtue.

(Thoreau flips through Walden like it's the DSM-5)

(Couple makes comments to each other – do **you** know what he's talking about? I have no clue! Why did we come here? etc.)

If you would be chaste, you must be temperate. What is chastity? How shall a man know if he is chaste? He shall not know it. We have heard of this virtue, but we know not what it is. We speak conformably to the rumor which we have heard. From exertion comes wisdom and purity-

Couple (M): I told you we should have gone to the other therapist! This one is terrible, he knows nothing about relationships! You can't get anything right!

Couple (L) : Choosing Dr. Thoreau was the first thing we agreed on in months! It's not my fault!

(Couple storms off in opposite directions, still arguing)

Thoreau: Such stupidity! How has man not grown for almost two centuries that he cannot open his mind for some of my most helpful sensibilities? Well, I suppose human's vile nature develops as they mature, so what reasonable queries do you youngsters have?

Scene 3: Audience Volunteers

(Ms. Ludes raises her hand or stands up)

(Thoreau grabs beans)

Ms. Ludes: (something along the lines of 'I'm stressed about how to improve Mass Academy for the students', but we'll let her phrase it how she wants)

(Thoreau is walking down to Ms. Ludes while she talks, and ends up standing behind her, facing the audience. Thoreau can cut Ludes off at a natural stopping point after he gets down to her.)

Thoreau: Finally, a person of great reason. Well Ms. Ludes, from what I've seen of your school it is most excellent. Unlike so many common schools, schools for infants only, you do not have the problem of having all of the branches and none of the roots. I am particularly impressed by your study of languages – translation is a sin unlike any other, and foreign languages are a most important pursuit. I also quite approve of the way students go to work with their hands, and not only with their heads.

However, you mentioned that you are stressed, and I do not wish to ignore this. I would like to prescribe you beans for your ailments - they were beans cheerfully returning to their wild and primitive state that I cultivated, so they will serve you well. (Thoreau hands the beans to Ludes) You may also wish to give beans to your students. It seems that stress is a common theme among the inhabitants of the Academy.

Scene 4: The Mass Academy Student

Secretary (walking in): Thoreau, it is time for your next client. I'm bringing them in now. Oh, it's another person from Mass Academy.

(Mass Academy student walks onto the stage reading a notebook which is FULLY covering their face. The secretary has to guide them so they don't bump into things. It's comical.)

Thoreau: Ah, another fellow seeker of knowledge. Tell me, what is your incompetent complaint?

Mass Academy student (VERY stressed): Well, I don't have a STEM project, I signed up for every extracurricular, I play sports at my sending school, and I have an average of 2 hours of sleep for the past week! I can barely eat lunch, let alone read books or see my friends in my free time! I can't cope with this! What can I do? (hands on head, visibly agitated)

Thoreau (emphasizing the irony of the fact he was listening to gossip and now he's telling them to avoid socializing): Simplify, simplify, simplify! It sounds as if your problem is just a general failure to live in the proper way. Often socializing can detract from one's proper pursuits. I have heard this complaint many a time, when I go to the village to hear the people's gossip.

Student: But socializing is the only time I'm not stressed!

(Student checks their watch repeatedly)

Thoreau: Nonsense! To be in company, even with the best, is soon wearisome and dissipating.

Student: Well, I guess reading novels is also helpful- (starts crying when Thoreau cuts them off)

Thoreau: You read nothing that will properly educate you! Novels are nothing but trash and will not contribute to your spiritual enrichment. I would advise you to find some time for solitude in nature. There can be no very black melancholy to him who lives in the middle of nature and has his senses still, after all.

Student: (stops crying) Nature? ¿Por qué? I can't do my STEM project there! I need modern technology!

Thoreau: Is that Spanish I heard? Finally, an admirable quality in one of these modern youths. The evils of translation are many, and the benefits are few. If one does not read in the original language, the entire meaning is lost. However, the most memorable classics are written in Latin and Greek by the ancient such as the Odyssey or the Iliad. Hence, I suggest you learn these tongues to truly absorb the true knowledge of man.

(Student is visibly becoming more stressed by the second – fidgeting, head in their hands, etc.)

Student: What? More languages to learn? I've read them both in English-

Thoreau: Translation removes the essence of those legendary epics! I assure you, my friend, it'd be well worth your time. Clearly not everyone at this fine establishment shares my correct opinions. Where is that Sra. Wildfong when you need her?! (Anh – **emphasize** this last line)

Student: (checking laptop) This session is running long, I've got to check Canvas- What? Eight missing assignments?!?!)

Thoreau: Enough! Vacate my office immediately. I have heard enough.

(Student walks out sobbing)

Scene 5: The Rapper & The Arrest

(Rapper walks into the room wearing gold chains and materialism)

Rapper: I-

Thoreau: You're cooked, look at how much warmth you have! The luxuriously rich are not simply kept comfortably warm, but unnaturally hot; as I implied before, they are cooked, of course *à la mode*. Gold chains, leather jacket, obsidian spectacles, you are already roasting in the nine circles of hell! You, sir, represent the literal embodiment of a slave to labor. In fact, I'm perplexed that you even have the time to come to my therapy session!

(Thoreau paces around)

Thoreau (to himself): This is a complete nightmare! The trees have all turned to stones, men cooked by their excessive furnace, and I can't even have a moment of peace without poisonous advertisements luring me to conformity with the slaves!

Thoreau (to rapper): Regardless, my service is not for charity, one thousand dollars please, good sir.

Police (offstage): Police, open up!

Rapper: (runs offstage)

Thoreau: Ah, the failings of the modern legal system. What is the purpose of this?

Police (walking onstage): We have an arrest warrant here for Mr. Thoreau. It's for tax evasion – **again**. You're coming with us. You have the right to remain silent. Anything you say can and will be used against you in a court of law. You have the right to an attorney. If you cannot afford an attorney, one will be appointed for you.

(Drags Thoreau offstage)

Secretary: Oh, that Thoreau. Always getting into nonsense. I swear that man barely has his **own** life together; how he's even qualified to give life advice I'll never know.

(END.)