

Economy

7-13-24

Walden is a pond in Massachusetts where a very arrogant and narcissistic man lives. His name is Henry David Thoreau. I believe that he has a very high opinion of himself, constantly stating that he is better than the people surrounding him because he is such an intellect. While reading Economy, I went on a roller coaster ride of agreeing and disagreeing with his various statements and thoughts about society.

When Thoreau discussed clothes and our society's obsession with them, I felt a strong connection to this particular topic, thinking back to school and people obsessing over clothes. After reading Economy, I went to a WooSox game with my family and noticed again people having this obsession over clothing with the t-shirt toss. At that exact moment, I was starting to agree more with Thoreau and his opinions.

However, some of his statements about himself being an intellectual and being better than the rest of Concord aggravated me. People around him are noticing this, which is demonstrated by his failure to get elected to his city council. He constantly feels as if he is better because he is wiser and spends his money smarter. He bragged that he only spent approximately \$28 building his house, while others are unsure how much they owe the bank. Another one of his traits that aggravates me is his constant contradicting points throughout the text. At one point he states that we should all live simple and not luxurious lifestyles, and then later on, he states that he plans to build the most luxurious house in Concord.

Where I lived and what I lived for

7-14-24

Yet another essay by Thoreau, this one comprised of narcissistic comments. I found it extremely difficult to agree with some of his ideas, as I did in Economy. He filled this one with closed-minded, egotistical comments, even more than in Economy. However, I was still able to find some that I agreed with, especially regarding nature and our natural world.

The only topic I could agree with was his deep connection to nature and his surroundings.

Through his deep, vivid descriptions, I was able to feel like I was standing there with him on the shores of Walden Pond. In one section, he spent an entire paragraph just describing the birds and how they surround him. He has devoted his life to one of environmentalism, constantly discussing the outdoors and how he loves them so much. However, if he cared about the environment and our use of it, he would be an activist rather than just a philosopher.

I had many thoughts in this chapter that I disagree with, similar to those in Economy. Most of these disagreeing thoughts involve his behavior displayed outward towards people, especially the residents of Concord. He is not a nice person and is arrogant and selfish. He feels that he is better than others just because of his strong educational background and upbringing in a family where an emphasis was put on education, with himself and other family members attending Harvard for college.

7-16-24

Reading

While reading this chapter, I agreed more with Thoreau than in prior chapters. I strongly agree with his take on the importance of books in our society. He believed that books are the gateway to knowledge and some of the classics are beautiful. Books are essential, and the average person can become a strong intellect with reading. However, towards the end of the book, when he begins to make his calls of action towards increasing the education standard and transforming the town of Concord into a space for academics, I start to disagree with that.

His tone was arrogant when he was addressing the importance of education, and I disagree with him. I understand that he would like to make higher education more accessible, but I think he is trying to drive out any uneducated man, which I disagree with. Education is extremely valuable for some, but for many, they could be widely more successful in other, more hands-on fields. My question to him is, why does he disagree with people who choose not to be intellectuals? There were plenty of job opportunities, especially in the nineteenth century, for those who decided not to pursue a higher education. Laborers are essential, and we rely on them for our day-to-day living. I think his thoughts on education can be connected to my prior thoughts on his behavior and ego.

7-16-24

Sounds

This was the first chapter that I didn't have to read in multiple small sections because I couldn't put up with his attitude anymore. This chapter shows his deep connection to nature and its surroundings, similar to "Where I Lived and What I Lived For". In both of these essays, I can feel connected to Thoreau and Walden Pond. In Sounds, he said that he could sometimes hear people passing by on the roads near him, but I wonder how close the road was that he could hear them.

Connecting back to Economy and his contradicting points, he talked about how he had little time to read due to harvesting beans. This surprised me because I thought that if he were such an intellect, he would spend nearly all his time in the cabin reading and expanding his knowledge. His lack of reading makes me wonder if he is as much of an intellect as he claims to be.

A constant feeling I get while reading Walden is feeling connected and like I am there through his vivid imagery. This time, I was reminded of my time in the woods and hearing all the sounds of the wind rustling up to a bear crunching branches. I think he did a phenomenal job conveying what he was seeing and hearing around him. However, I think the message might have been more understood if he had written more straightforward English. In the prior essay, we learned his thoughts on those with less education than him, so I wonder if it was internal to deter the uneducated from reading.

7-18-24

Solitude

Thoreau's love for being all alone in the woods is shown in this chapter; he discusses that he would rather live alone in the woods than back in society. I am a little bit confused about why he is again human interaction. In all his classes at Harvard, he must have learned that humans are social creatures and very bad things can happen if you deprive yourself of interaction with other humans.

These behaviors are unnatural, and I put together a few possible explanations for his behavior to help myself understand where he's coming from. I wonder if he is acting out now because he was forced to be an intellectual as a child. He is exhibiting behaviors you would expect from a 4-year-old who is mad at their parents and wants to live alone without human interaction. I wonder if he was made this way because he wasn't allowed to act like that as a child because he was forced to be a scholar.

I also wonder if his ego is getting in the way, and he feels like he needs to be better than everyone else, so he tries to find a way to be better than everyone in his mind. In many prior reflections, I have talked about his ego and need to be the best. If he felt like he couldn't be the best where he was, I wonder if he wanted to move to a space where he could be the best.

Additionally, if he feels like he is better than everyone because he is putting mental strain on himself, that might also boost his ego, causing him to want to live in solitude.

7-18-24

Visitors

Now, I am more than confused. Earlier, he went on and on about the benefits of solitude, and now he says he enjoys company. I do understand the benefit of light company, but he does talk about the times that his cabin was full, and that goes against the idea of solitude.

I wonder if this is the first sign of the solitude affecting his body. Previously, he said that he failed to get elected to the city council, but now, all of a sudden, he has all of these friends who want to spend time with him. It has been so long since he has had real documented interactions with people that I wonder if he is imagining them. I believe that he could potentially have found one solid friend, which he frequently mentions; however, there are not enough friends to have an entire room dedicated to hosting and not enough to fill his cabin.

One last note about his imaginary friends, he says that he won't provide his guests with food and that he does not think that is his job. I strongly disagree with this. I think that he should provide his guests with some food. I do understand that living in a cabin, food, and resources might be limited, but he can't spare some beans or some other food for his once and a while guests. Even if he can't afford to spare some, maybe he can plant some extra rows of crops next spring.

No matter what, I strongly doubt that he had friends there. Even if he wasn't going crazy and seeing people, I wonder if he made them up when writing. He wrote all about solitude and was embarrassed not to write about any friends at all. He just wanted to leave a perfect legacy for himself, further feeding his ego.

7-20-24

Bean Field

This chapter connected with me; however, it raised some questions about his crop choices. My first question for him is whether he discussed not feeding his guests earlier in the book. I assumed that was due to food constraints and not having enough homegrown food to feed everyone; however, he did discuss how he sold all of this excess food. I understand he needs to make money to survive; however, I strongly disagree with him about selling his excess food and not supporting his friends.

Another thing I was confused about was his choice not to utilize the three-sister crop method of beans, squash, and corn. At this point, the tree sister crop method was widely used because of its benefits to the soil and crops. I would like to have a conversation with him to get his take on why he decided not to grow corn.

Another section of this chapter I liked was when he discussed finding the old Native American grounds while digging for his garden. I thought it was fascinating that they were that high up under the soil, and he could immediately recognize them while noting that they could have been from Western Colonization. I think this is a testament to his education. During this period, he realized that he might not have been the first to take over these Native Lands, and there were potentially other Western Settlers who had previously destroyed the Native Lands.

7-20-24

The Village

While reading this chapter, I strongly thought about how none of this would happen in today's world. Most of this chapter was about people's struggles to find their way around the dense woods and how Thoreau was proud to be able to help them find their way. Now, with modern cell phones and street signs, people rarely get lost. All people have to do is take out their phones and look around to find out where they are.

If he were to live in today's society, he would be extremely disappointed with navigation. He seems to be very proud of his navigation ability and instructions. I think if he were in today's world, he would insist that you don't use your GPS and instead give you random directions on how to get there that make no sense.

I don't want to be too quick to reconnect this to his earlier theme of being wicked egotistical because he has been better in these more recent chapters. I think he is very proud of his navigation and uses this knowledge to constantly boost his ego and make himself feel better about himself.

I think his midnight fishing is interesting. Does the fish avoid interaction with other people on the lake at this time, or is there a legitimate reason? Also, I thought that he didn't eat fish. I am so confused and would love to know more.

7-22-24

Higher Laws

After seeing his take on killing animals, I think Thoreau would be disappointed in modern society. He chooses a life of little meat consumption based on his own ethical choices rather than health. I think if he saw modern animal farms in society today, he would be disappointed by the poor conditions that these animals face. He refuses to kill any animal for food even when necessary, but in today's world, we have huge farms of animals and mass-consume them.

Connecting back to my previous themes of him contradicting himself, I see that he contradicts himself a lot in this essay. He discusses the strong importance of teaching kids to hunt and fish but then discusses that he is against these things. I think he has a hard time separating teaching and practice. He sometimes discusses fishing and eating fish but is very against it. I think he just wants to boost his ego and think better of himself.

This essay provided the potential aspect of Thoreau's belief in a God; leading up to this, I could not tell, as he did not mention anything about religion or a controlling factor. This entire chapter is about the rules that govern society. I wonder if he truly believes in a higher power or what the situation is. Is he just suggesting that humans' morals should be the higher power and we should have self-control?

7-26-24

Brute Neighbors

I thought the small civil war that he described between the ants was interesting; it reminded me strongly of the American Civil War, which had yet to happen. I was surprised at how he discussed the ant war, it almost seemed like he was supporting it, which is not what I would have expected based on his prior neutral and calm standpoints. I wonder what he would have thought of the American Civil War, up to this point, I would have assumed he would not have liked it however, after reading this chapter, I am having second thoughts.

I found his relationship with the other animals in the area odd. He treats them like other humans. I wonder if he is doing this due to a lack of interaction with real humans. If he has no real humans to talk to, he might start talking to animals and not realize what he is doing. I'd like to know if he has considered leaving because of the cabin and his mental state. If he doesn't leave soon, he could be at risk of permanent damage.

He does make frequent notes of one friend, William Ellery Channing; however, it is weird. Therou refers to himself as "Hobbit," which is a little weird because he is self-admitting to his behavior and doesn't want to change it at all. Additionally, this friend joins him on his occasional fishing trips, which surprised me that he talks so much about fishing after admitting that he thinks it is barbaric and not civilized.

7-26-24

House Warming

I was a little confused about the title at the start, but as I went on, it began to make more sense. He is on the journey of fortifying his house for the winter. I thought it was a housewarming party, but he had already moved in. This was my favorite section so far. I loved his details about preparing his house for the winter.

While reading, I questioned why he didn't build the chimney into the house in the first place and why he would wait until winter was approaching. I feel like adding it as an afterthought would be more difficult. Was he not planning to make it this long? I understand he might have been eager to move into the house and escape society, but he shouldn't have put the chimney right when it was getting cold. He knows very well that New England's weather changes year to year, and the first freeze could come early.

I loved the intense imagery of the ice and its first freeze. His imagery made it seem like I was with him in 1850, looking down at the bottom of the lake myself. Additionally, I thought the times that ice froze were interesting. It was freezing earlier than it would in today's world, and he spoke of it freezing over as early as December 16th in 1846.

Towards the end of the chapter, he gives us another glimpse at his egotistical behavior, telling the reader that the one time he felt a spark from his fire had harmed him, he checked, and it did. However, he miraculously extinguished it before it became a big deal. I am not sure about the legitimacy of this and feel he is lying to us again to boost his ego.

7-29-24

The Pond in Winter

This was one of my favorite chapters. It gave me more insight into his day-to-day life, especially in the winter. Until I read this today, it did not occur to me that he had to gather his water. I wonder if he ever encountered an issue finding water due to pond contamination from animals or other contaminants.

When he went in-depth on the struggles of finding the bottom, I thought that was super cool. All of this time, I have been on the fence about his intelligence because of his arrogance, but lately, the intelligence has been shining through more, with him knowing better than the local rumors of there being no bottom to Walden Pond. He was extremely dedicated to finding the bottom of it, especially in different sections. While I was reading, I was wondering if I could go online and find any topographic map that he made, and I was able to find one. I wonder if there would be a large difference if this were compared to a modern map. He spoke a lot about the water levels changing, so I wonder how accurate his depth readings are, especially if he took the measurements over time.

I also gained more respect for him and his hosting skills when he said that when people occasionally fall into the pond, he invites them into his house to warm up and dry off. This goes against my prior thoughts of him being a shut-in, hating the outside world. I am unsure if I will ever fully understand what goes on inside his brain. I would love to see an inside-out movie about his mind. I wonder if he would have emotions different from those of a normal person.

7-29-24

Spring

Again, connecting to a common theme of this book, there is a lot of imagery with everything that is happening in nature. He provided vivid descriptions of everything as little as the sand moving to the geese migrating. He went on and on discussing the ice and its breaking up and the melting of it. Similar to before, he had an immense amount of data and dates about the ice and its natural melting and freezing patterns. I thought the year-to-year variation and its comparison to more recent dates was interesting.

Towards the end of this chapter, I started to have an extremely difficult time following what he was saying and I think he was beginning to go insane. He labeled this essay “Spring” but discussed anything but Spring at certain points. There could be many reasons for his mental state, more than solitude. He just made it through the winter, meaning he was not growing any foods and eating solely on the reserves he had from the summer, I wonder if his foods spoiled and he had some disease. Another potential reason for his behavior could be seasonal depression if he was not getting out into the sun as much and was staying inside, not going anywhere or seeing anyone. Anyway, I think it was beneficial that he decided to leave the cabin and head back to civilization.

7-30-24

Conclusion

I think he is definitely in a better head space while writing this chapter. He made some excellent points about society and the nation as a whole. I thought that these are where some of his best quotes could be taken from, especially on exploring the world and self-exploration. I think that knowing your self-goals is a critical part of life because if you don't know your goals, how do you know what direction to take when you get out of bed every morning? Another message that was conveyed that got me thinking was his take on life, where we should not be held down to one particular lifestyle. Life might have many different callings, and we should not miss out on those because we are too focused on one. I think this life approach is interesting and can connect to all of our transitions to MAMS, we are all turning over into new chapters of our lives with new goals and aspirations. This serves as a key reminder that not everything is forever, and while change can be scary, it is usually beneficial.

After a wild emotional rollercoaster with Thoreau at the end, I believe that deep down, he is a very good man with strong intentions to preserve the world as best as possible. At the start of the book, I hated him and would often think about his arrogance and narcissistic behaviors. I am not sure if he changed or if I reached an understanding with him, but when he was discussing the pond during the winter, I found myself connecting with most of what he was writing, and I began to enjoy the book.

8-6-24

Conversations

I feel relieved that I am not the only one who thinks that reading Walden and understanding it is a hopeless task. I like Bill McKibben's word describing it as "Scripture". I found that extremely true, every time that I would re-read a page, I would find a new interpretation of what he was saying, similar to how people interpret the Bible. As I read this, I learn more and more about his life, and I wonder if I missed something while reading, such as his night spent in jail due to failing to pay taxes. I can see him doing this, though, especially if he felt his tax dollars would be wasted and he was not benefitting from paying them. However, I was slightly surprised because if he is better than everyone else, shouldn't he lead by example? Unless he wanted everyone to stand up and refuse to pay taxes, I feel like he would understand the repercussions.

These after-readings called my attention to a particular aspect of his intelligence that I did not think about until now. Before mass communication was present, he understood its impact, both the positive and the negative. He was worried about all of this during the telegraph era before phones were popularized.

Reading about his calls for forests reminded me of the protections exacted by both President Theodore Roosevelt and President Woodrow Wilson with their reservation of forests and the formation of the National Park Service. I wonder if they were at all familiar with Thoreau's work and influenced by his calls for change. These acts occurred shortly after his death, but after Walden's Publication, however, it was not the best seller it is nowadays. I wonder what impact he had on both of them.

8-6-24

Letter with E. B. White

This letter is odd. I had a hard time following it because I didn't understand his purpose for sending it. He sent this letter while he was approaching Walden Pond but then discussed being there. I am more than confused with the order of all of this, but I do think I am starting to understand it.

I think the parts about him wanting to go live on Walden Pond were interesting, and there were others like this during this period. Now, I think there are a lot more people who want to live in solitude due to the constant feeling of surveillance and connection that was not present then. I can't even mention something around my phone without getting advertisements for it later, which is something that Thoreau and his friends were not dealing with during this time.

After some more research on this letter, it appears that E.B. White would have written this letter after Thoreau's death as they did not live in overlapping periods. This is so odd because he makes it seem like they are friends, referring to him by his first name and discussing other things. It is all a weird situation, and I am not sure why he would write a letter like this, but at the end of the day, he did write *Charlotte's Web*.

I like the respect he paid to Thoreau when discussing his house, the bronze tablet that marked it, and everything else. Additionally, I think it was cool how he wrote down his experience, similar to how Thoreau would with an item, its cost, commentary on why the item was bought, and the total price.

8-7-24

Living Like Weasels

I strongly felt like this essay was trying to represent Thoreau as the Weasel, there were a lot of connecting behaviors between the two. From the opening line of this essay, I ideally knew what the author was referencing by the Weasel. There are connections between the two of them, both living unseen for days and being creatures of the environment. There was also the connection to a pond near the author's house, Hollins Pond, where she refers to the animals around it.

I think that she is hinting at conducting a similar "experiment" as Thoreau living out in the woods undisturbed, living your own way. She says that she wanted to "remember how to live" (*Teaching a Stone to Talk: Expeditions and Encounters* (1982). Dillard (b. 1945). I think that suggests that she went to Hollins Pond to live, but I am unsure if she is committed to the same isolation level as Thoreau. She did do her master's thesis on *Walden*, so she is committed to his style of living and his time in the woods however, making this large step is extreme. She wrote this much later so she would have much more to escape from than Thoreau did. This makes me wonder if others have tried to run away and live secluded with limited contact with society.

8-8-24

Doing Nothing

At the start of this blog post, it discusses the importance of vacations and commercials pleading for people to take vacations because of their natural benefits. I strongly agree with this, often vacation is the way that I clear my mind and feel an escape from the real world. However, sometimes, vacation can add more stress because you have this constant feeling of having to be somewhere at a particular time, or you won't see everything you wanted to see. I think the perfect solution is going camping, even if it is glamping (something my family is practically fond of). Being out in the woods with no plans other than to wake up, sit by a fire, and relax all day is the perfect reset.

I think it is interesting that the author tried to do her own Thoreau, but she failed because she could not step away from her lifestyle. She attempted to do this down in Florida, and I wonder if that caused any of her hardships. She left the Florida beach and returned to Georgia to re-coop and write her blog reflections. I think it is interesting that she discusses the feeling of questioning him before she went out on this experiment, and while she was conducting it, she found herself doing the same activities.

I think it is interesting that she writes about the pace at which we live life and the apparent benefits of slowing down. I think people have focused their lives on being the best in the world, so they work from the day they turn 14 until they are in their 70s when they learn that working isn't worth it. With time, wisdom is gained, and people realize that life isn't all about money, and as long as you have enough to be stable, you should just relax and enjoy life, it doesn't last forever.

Hamlets Blackberry

8-8-24

Right off the start, this passage disagrees with Thoreau's experiment and thinks that with technology, it is nearly impossible. I both agree and disagree with this statement. I think that it is possible to escape if you were to ditch all of your technology and move to a remote land such as Alaska. However, I do get that. In reality, few people are going to do that, and for Thoreau, it would have been much easier to leave people.

The author also chooses to argue the relevance of Walden in today's society. I am torn about how to believe in this because, as I have stated before, I think spending some time in nature in solitude is good for the mind and body, but humans depend on the constant stream of information. If we were to be without any information, we might be confused about how to live our lives. Additionally, Thoreau's intention in the book was to be relevant to society forever, but he could not predict the advancement of technology and the internet.

Interestingly, the author mentions that Thoreau was a technology designer despite his lifestyle as a naturalist. His creations did align with the family pencil-making business, which makes more sense, but I don't think he could agree with chopping down trees to make wooden pencils.

8-12-24

Walden on Wheels

The author discusses buying a van for \$1,500 despite knowing its apparent issues with the tires, among other things. I think that they were just so excited to get out and explore that they were able to look past the issues and just enjoy the flexibility to explore as they pleased.

They used the van to save money on college rooms and bored which I think is genius. All of that costs so much money, way more than necessary. He was able to live in his van and just move around parking illegally and move if people were catching on. At first, I thought that Thoreau might disagree, but then I remembered that he had spent a night in jail because he had refused to pay his taxes.

Another extreme similarity between the two is that they both have to combat living in small spaces and the challenges that come with that. He was also trying to save money and use it wisely, similar to Thoreau. Overall, I found all of these post-reading articles fascinating as others tried to take on Walden's similar lifestyles by experimenting.