

from Walden – Henry David Thoreau

Build Background: Thoreau lived at Walden Pond for two years, two months, and two days in a rugged cabin that measured ten feet by fifteen feet. The cabin, which he built himself, was simple and sturdy, with plastered walls and a shingled roof. He made his own furniture, including a bed, table, desk, and three chairs. At Walden, Thoreau devoted himself to observing the seasons, the animals, the plants and to writing his journals.

<p><i>from Where I Lived and What I Lived For</i></p> <p>I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. What does deliberately mean?2. In your own words, explain why Thoreau chose to leave society.3. What is the connotation of front?
<p>I did not wish to live what was not life, living is so dear; nor did I wish to practice resignation, unless it was quite necessary.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none">4. Read the bolded phrase in this section very carefully. Now read it again (slower). What does it mean?5. One of Benjamin Franklin’s aphorisms that we studied in the last unit is “Dost thou love life? Then do not squander time; for that’s the stuff life is made of.” Read your answer to question #4 again. How does it relate to this aphorism?
<p>I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow¹ of life, to live so sturdily and Spartan-like² as to put to rout all that was not life, to cut a broad swath and shave close, to drive life into a corner, and reduce it to its lowest terms, and, if it proved to be mean³, why then to get the whole and genuine meanness of it, and publish its meanness to the world; or if it were sublime⁴, to know it by experience, and be able to give a true account of it in my next excursion.</p> <p>1. Marrow is the soft tissue insides bones. It also means “the best or most essential part”. 2. Spartan-like means “simple, economical, and disciplined”. 3. Mean, in this context, means “of little importance, worth, or consequence”. 4. Sublime means “noble, of great spiritual or intellectual value”.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none">6. What does put to rout most likely mean in this context?7. Explain this section in your own words. (Be sure to use the footnotes).

<p>Our life is frittered away by detail. An honest man has hardly need to count more than his ten fingers, or in extreme cases he may add his ten toes, and lump the rest. Simplicity, simplicity, simplicity! I say, let your affairs be as two or three, and not a hundred or a thousand; instead of a million count half a dozen, and keep your accounts on your thumb-nail.</p>	<p>8. What does frittered away most likely mean?</p> <p>9. In this context, what does lump the rest most likely mean?</p> <p>10. In this context, what does affairs most likely mean?</p> <p>11. In your own words, explain what this section means.</p> <p>12. The last phrase in this section is an example of hyperbole. Explain. (<i>Hint: In this context, accounts most likely has the same meaning as affairs.</i>)</p>
<p>In the midst of this chopping sea of civilized life, such are the clouds and storms and quicksands and thousand-and-one items to be allowed for, that a man has to live, if he would not founder⁵ and go to the bottom and not make his port⁶ at all, by dead reckoning⁷, and he must be a great calculator indeed who succeeds. Simplify, simplify.</p> <p>5. Founder means "to sink, as a boat". 6. Make his port means to reach the destination. 7. Dead reckoning is a method of navigation used by sailors when stars cannot be seen.</p>	<p>13. What type of weather is most likely to be occurring for a sea to be described as "chopping"?</p> <p>14. How does Thoreau feel about civilized society? What words or phrases led you to this conclusion?</p>
<p>Why should we live with such hurry and waste of life? We are determined to be starved before we are hungry. Men say that a stitch in time saves nine, and so they take a thousand stitches today to save nine tomorrow.</p>	<p>15. What does it mean to say we are starved before we are hungry?</p> <p>16. "A stitch in time saves nine" means it is better to act or deal with problems immediately because if you wait too long things will get worse. That said, what does this section mean?</p>
<p>Hardly a man takes a half-hour's nap after dinner, but when he wakes he holds up his head and asks, "What's the news?" as if the rest of mankind had stood his sentinels. Some give directions to be waked every half-hour, doubtless for no other purpose; and then, to pay for it, they tell what they have dreamed. After a night's sleep the news is as indispensable as the breakfast.</p>	<p>17. What does indispensable most likely mean?</p> <p>18. In your own words, explain how Thoreau feels about society's need for news?</p> <p>19. How can you relate Thoreau's view on our need for news to present day?</p>

