

Ideas That Changed

Trace how Transcendentalism began, spread, and left a mark.

SS.8.A.4.15 "Examine the causes, course, and consequences of literature movements (e.g., Transcendentalism) significant to this era of American history."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB As you read, underline causes of Transcendentalism, number actions that show how the movement spread, and circle its consequences. These marks will help you trace how an idea became a movement and affected American life.

The Transcendentalist Movement

- ① In the 1830s, many Americans lived through rapid change. Factories expanded, cities grew, and reform debates about slavery, education, and women's rights became louder. Some writers and thinkers believed that churches, political parties, and old European traditions did not always provide the best answers. Influenced partly by European Romantic ideas, they argued that each person could use conscience, observation of nature, and personal experience to seek truth. These conditions helped begin Transcendentalism in New England.
- ② Ralph Waldo Emerson became a leading voice after leaving the Unitarian ministry. In essays and speeches such as "Self-Reliance," he urged people to think independently. Henry David Thoreau tested similar ideas by living simply near Walden Pond and later writing about it. Transcendentalists met, published journals, and gave lectures, which carried their ideas beyond a small circle of friends. They did not all agree on every issue, but they shared confidence in the individual and the natural world.
- ③ The movement affected both literature and reform. Writers used essays, poems, and stories to explore self-reliance, nature, and moral choice in a distinct American voice. Some followers joined efforts against slavery or for women's rights, believing conscience should guide action. Thoreau's refusal to pay a tax he believed supported the Mexican-American War led to his essay "Civil Disobedience." Long after the movement's peak, that essay influenced people in later generations who used nonviolent protest to challenge unjust laws.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 What two conditions or ideas helped cause Transcendentalism to begin?

2 How did Emerson and Thoreau each help develop or spread Transcendentalist ideas?

3 What methods did Transcendentalists use to carry their ideas beyond a small group of friends?

4 Describe two consequences of Transcendentalism, one for literature and one for reform or protest.

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Write a five-sentence cause, course, and consequence explanation of Transcendentalism. Include one cause, two details about how the movement developed or spread, and two consequences.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

As you read, underline causes of Transcendentalism, number actions that show how the movement spread, and circle its consequences. These marks will help you trace how an idea became a movement and affected American life. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What two conditions or ideas helped cause Transcendentalism to begin?	Rapid social change and reform debates helped create the movement. Thinkers also questioned whether churches, political parties, and European traditions provided the best answers.
2	How did Emerson and Thoreau each help develop or spread Transcendentalist ideas?	Emerson spread ideas through essays and speeches that urged independent thinking. Thoreau practiced simple living near Walden Pond and wrote about his experience.
3	What methods did Transcendentalists use to carry their ideas beyond a small group of friends?	They met, published journals, and gave lectures.
4	Describe two consequences of Transcendentalism, one for literature and one for reform or protest.	It encouraged a distinct American literature about self-reliance, nature, and moral choice. It also influenced reform efforts and later nonviolent protest against unjust laws.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Rapid change and reform debates helped cause Transcendentalism. Writers such as Emerson used essays and speeches to call for independent thought. Thoreau explored similar ideas through simple living and writing. The movement shaped American literature by focusing on nature and moral choice. It also influenced reformers and later nonviolent protests against unjust laws.

Accept accurate cause, course, and consequence connections drawn from the passage. In the open response, look for five sentences that include all required parts and explain how the movement's ideas led to effects.