

Closely read and annotate for the rhetorical choices Thoreau makes to convey his message about the value of walking in nature.

S
P
A
C
E

C
A
T

In the June 1862 issue of *The Atlantic Monthly* magazine, American author and philosopher Henry David Thoreau published his essay "Walking." The essay is considered to be a classic expression of American transcendentalism, a nineteenth-century philosophical, literary, and social movement that was skeptical of conventional social institutions and fearful of the changes wrought by industrialism. Transcendentalists such as Thoreau extolled self-reliance and encouraged a profound engagement with the natural world, which they sought to preserve in its pristine state. Read the passage carefully. Write an essay that analyzes the rhetorical choices Thoreau makes to convey his message about the value of walking in nature.

1 When we walk, we naturally go to the fields and woods: what would become of us if we walked only in a garden or a mall? Even some sects of philosophers have felt the necessity of importing the woods to themselves, since they did not go to the woods. "They planted groves and walks of Platanes," where they took *subdiales ambulationes* in porticos open to the air. Of course it is of no use to direct our steps to the woods, if they do not carry us thither. I am alarmed when it happens that I have walked a mile into the woods bodily, without getting there in spirit. In my afternoon walk I would fain forget all my morning occupations and my obligations to society. But it sometimes happens that I cannot easily shake off the village. The thought of some work will run in my head and I am not where my body is—I am out of my senses. In my walks I would fain return to my senses. What business have I in the woods, if I am thinking of something out of the woods? I suspect myself, and cannot help a shudder, when I find myself so implicated even in what are called good works—for this may sometimes happen.

sycamore trees ←

public promenade or walkway →

sun walks →

2 My vicinity affords many good walks; and though for so many years I have walked almost every day, and sometimes for several days together, I have not yet exhausted them. An absolutely new prospect is a great happiness, and I can still get this any afternoon. Two or three hours' walking will carry me to as strange a country as I expect ever to see. A single farmhouse which I had not seen before is sometimes as good as the dominions of the King of Dahomey. There is in fact a sort of harmony discoverable between the capabilities of the landscape within a circle of ten miles' radius, or the limits of an afternoon walk, and the threescore years and ten of human life. It will never become quite familiar to you.

former name of the current Republic of Benin ←

¶ 3 Nowadays almost all man's improvements, so called, as the building of houses, and the cutting down of the forest and of all large trees, simply deform the landscape, and make it more and more tame and cheap. A people who would begin by burning the fences and let the forest stand! I saw the fences half consumed, their ends lost in the middle of the prairie, and some worldly miser with a surveyor looking after his bounds, while heaven had taken place around him, and he did not see the angels going to and fro, but was looking for an old post-hole in the midst of paradise. I looked again, and saw him standing in the middle of a boggy stygian fen, surrounded by devils, and he had found his bounds without a doubt, three little stones, where a stake had been driven, and looking nearer, I saw that the Prince of Darkness was his surveyor.

→ like the underworld River Styx in Greek mythology; gloomy

¶ 4 I can easily walk ten, fifteen, twenty, any number of miles, commencing at my own door, without going by any house, without crossing a road except where the fox and the mink do: first along by the river, and then the brook, and then the meadow and the wood-side. There are square miles in my vicinity which have no inhabitant. From many a hill I can see civilization and the abodes of man afar. The farmers and their works are scarcely more obvious than woodchucks and their burrows. Man and his affairs, church and state and school, trade and commerce, and manufactures and agriculture, even politics, the most alarming of them all,—I am pleased to see how little space they occupy in the landscape. Politics is but a narrow field, and that still narrower highway yonder leads to it. I sometimes direct the traveler thither. If you would go to the political world, follow the great road—follow that market-man, keep his dust in your eyes, and it will lead you straight to it; for it, too, has its place merely, and does not occupy all space. I pass from it as from a bean-field into the forest, and it is forgotten. In one half-hour I can walk off to some portion of the earth's surface where a man does not stand from one year's end to another, and there, consequently, politics are not, for they are but as the cigar-smoke of a man.

Once you've

- closely read and comprehended the literal meaning of the text,
- colorcoded with highlighters the text for elements that help you understand SPACE-CAT, and
- written in ink some notes in the margin for each of the elements of SPACE-CAT ...

... use the Rhetorical Analysis thesis frame to craft a single-sentence thesis statement about the rhetorical choices Thoreau makes to convey his message about the value of walking in nature — below: