

**PRACTICE ESSAY FOR AP TEST  
COMPARING THOREAU'S WORKS**

Henry David Thoreau fitted many passages of his journal into the final text of *Walden* virtually word for word; others, he revised significantly. Carefully read the passages below, the first being from Thoreau's journal and the second passage being from *Walden*. Then, in a well-developed essay, discuss the changes in technique that you see. In your essay you should consider such aspects of his writing as tone, syntax, organization, language, and selection of detail.

I

July 6. I wish to meet the facts of life - the vital facts, which are the phenomena or actuality the gods meant to show us - face to face, and so I came down here. Life! Who knows what it is, what it does? If I am not quite right here, I am less wrong than before; and now let us see what they will have. The preacher, instead of vexing the ears of drowsy farmers on their day of rest, at the end of the week,-for Sunday always seemed to me like a fit conclusion of an ill-spent week and not the fresh and brave beginning to a new one,-with this one other draggletail and postponed affair of a sermon, from thirdly to fifteenthly, should teach them with a thundering voice pause and simplicity. "Stop! Avast! Why so fast?" In all studies we go not forward but rather backward with redoubled pauses. We always study antiques with silence and reflection. Even time has a depth, and below its surface the waves do not lapse and roar. I wonder men can be so frivolous almost as to attend to the gross form of Negro slavery, there are so many keen and subtle masters who subject us both. Self-emancipation in the West Indies of a man's thinking and imagining provinces which should be more than his island territory,-one emancipated heart and intellect! It would knock off the fetters from a million slaves...

II

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. I did not wish to live what was not life, living is so dear; nor did I wish to practice resignation, unless it was so sturdily and Spartanlike 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 mean, why then to get the whole and genuine meanness of it, and publish its meanness to the world; or if it were sublime, to know it by experience, and be able to give a true account of it in my next excursion...

Still we live meanly, like ants; though the fable tells us that we were long ago changed men; like pygmies we fight with cranes; it is error upon error, and clout upon clout, and our best virtue has for its occasion a superfluous and evitable wretchedness. 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 a hundred or a thousand; instead of a million count half a dozen, and keep your accounts on your thumbnail...Men think that it is essential that the Nation have commerce, and export ice, and talk through a telegraph, and ride thirty miles an hour, without a doubt, whether they do or not; but whether we should live like baboons or like men, is a little uncertain. If we go to tinkering upon our lives to improve them, who will build railroads? And if railroads are not built, how shall we get to heaven in season? But if we stay at home and mind our business, who will want railroads? We do not ride on the railroad; it rides upon us...