THE NIGHT THOREAU SPENT IN JAIL

JEROME LAWRENCE & ROBERT E. LEE

LIVING LITERATURE SERIES

A PERMA-BOUND PRODUCTION

TEACHER'S GUIDE

GUIDE WRITTEN BY MARY ELLEN SNODGRASS

SYNOPSIS

Opening in July in a prison cell overlooking Concord Square, the play begins with a visit by Lydian and Ralph Waldo Emerson, noted spokesman for transcendentalism and former minister at the Second Church of Boston, to their 29-year-old handyman, Henry David Thoreau. Various overlays of past conversations indicate unsettling facts about Henry's life: First, his mother thinks of him as eccentric. Waldo, too, remembers Henry as his best friend, but the "saddest happy man I ever knew." Finally, John, Henry's younger brother, envies Henry's Harvard education, needles him over his idealism, and casts doubt upon Henry's enthusiasm for Emerson's teachings.

As moonlight rises over Massachusetts, Henry engages his cellmate, Bailey, in conversation and explains why Henry was jailed—for non-payment of tax in protest of President Polk's illegal war with Mexico. Bailey is charged with the more serious crime of barn-burning, which he excuses as an accident after he fell asleep and ignited hay with sparks from his pipe. Henry, outraged that Bailey has awaited trial for three months, summons Constable Sam Staples.

While the prisoners await Sam's arrival, Henry, a former schoolmaster, teaches Bailey to write his name. A flashback recalls that Henry's former school job ended when he failed to please Deacon Nehemiah Ball, local school chairman. The two men were at odds because Henry preferred taking his students on field trips for huckleberries rather than teaching adopted texts. Henry resigned after refusing an order to flog his student. About that same time, Waldo resigns his post as minister and returns to Concord to lecture.

After John and Henry join forces to open a private school, they come under the spell of Ellen Sewell, whose brother Edmund enrolls in their school. After Mr. Sewell removes Edmund, the Thoreaus' enrollment drops to zero; John returns to work in his father's pencil factory. In response to Sewell's rejection of transcendentalism, Henry takes Ellen boating and tries to explain his philosophy. He emphasizes how human beings have violated nature by deforestation and the building of railroads. Ellen replies that she likes railroads.

On one of the six mornings that Ellen joins John at church, Henry scandalizes his mother and the entire congregation by rolling a wheelbarrow past the church. John proposes to Ellen, whose father rejects "either of the Thoreau brothers" as suitors. John perceives that Ellen is not a deep thinker. Henry realizes that Ellen will never stand up to her father's tyranny. Furthermore, she enjoys pursuing both Thoreaus for the sake of the quest alone and not for matrimony.

John later dies of tetanus after cutting himself on his razor. Ellen, in Winthrop at the time, questions Henry about his suffering, inciting an angry outburst at the painful memories of his convulsions. Her sensitive response to John's demise indicates that Ellen *is* capable of understanding the transcendental concept of death.

Henry asks the Emersons to hire him as handyman and agrees to repair a meadow wall and pull weeds. Because "Dr. Emerson has so little time to be a father," Lydian likes the idea of Henry associating with Edward, her son. Waldo ponders appropriate payment, but Henry, who has idolized Emerson since his college days and is pleased for any opportunity to associate with him, rejects pay. Waldo insists on paying Henry a dime per week—the amount Edward receives in allowance. Henry negotiates for a small square of Emerson's woods, which extends to Walden Pond.

For $28.12½, Henry builds a small cabin and plants beans and Indian corn. This meager food, along with fresh-caught fish, supplies his nutritional need. The remainder of his time is spent in loafing and contemplation, which meets his emotional and spiritual need. It is during this period that Sam serves papers on Henry for two years' non-payment of property tax. Henry vociferously refuses to allow Sam to pay the tax for him and fulminates against unjust government and church tithes. Henry goes to jail; a bystander sends for Henry's Aunt Louisa.

At the jail, Henry lists several possible occupations; Sam chooses *carpenter*. Henry's mother and friends react immediately to his voluntary choice of incarceration over support of the Mexican war with tax money. Henry responds to Waldo's challenge over the matter with a challenge of his own: "Waldo! What are you doing *out* of jail?"

Act II opens on Henry pretending to play the jail bars as harp strings. He recalls spending happy times huckleberrying with Edward, who asks Henry to replace Waldo as his father. Lydian suggests that this auspicious arrangement should end, because Henry's presence during Waldo's absence might appear improper to Concord neighbors. Henry's gloving of the hens interrupts their discussion. Lydian returns to more serious matters with advice: Henry should marry to avoid loneliness. Henry reminds Lydian that she is lonelier married to a husband who is often absent and is obsessed with Thomas Carlyle.

The scene shifts to the jail, where Bailey requests Henry as his lawyer, but Henry refuses. Henry's mind wanders back to his meeting with Williams, a runaway slave who visits the Walden Pond cabin on his way to Canada. The

former slave, pleased that Henry trusts him and calls him *mister,* names himself Henry Williams before continuing on his way. The scene jumps to an argument in which Henry tries to convince Waldo to take a stronger stand on the issue of slavery. Waldo remains uncommitted.

At this point, Henry reaches the heart of their differences: Emerson is a strong speaker; Thoreau is a strong believer. Henry accuses Emerson of "singing . . . spineless benedictions." Waldo counters that Henry is content to live in nature and avoid the real world, where issues are never so black-and-white simple.

Henry rings a bell to summon an audience for a free public lecture by Emerson. Lydian arrives in Waldo's place and announces that Emerson is still collecting his thoughts. She understands the differences that divide the two men and asks Henry to give Waldo the freedom to be what he is. Her wisdom silences Henry.

In a nightmare, Henry visualizes a battlescene in which Edward serves as drummer boy, Sam as sergeant, Deacon Ball as general, Waldo as President, Henry Williams as Mexican soldier, and John as American soldier. John falls victim to a burst of rifle fire and collapses in Henry's arms. When Henry awakens from the phantasm, he learns that his aunt has paid his taxes.

At first, Henry refuses to leave the jail. Sam encourages Henry to go and accepts Henry's deal—if Sam will expedite Bailey's trial, Henry will leave. Bailey, grateful for Henry's intervention, promises to visit the "pond place." Henry explains that he is leaving Walden Pond in order to examine other aspects of his life. He marches out into the hot July day to the beat of his own irregular drummer.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Jerome Lawrence (1915-) and Robert Edwin Lee (1918-), both residents of California, have revived an old tradition of collaborating playwrights. Lawrence, originally named Jerome Lawrence Schwartz, was born in Cleveland, received a B.A. from Ohio State in 1937, and did graduate study at the University of California.

He began his career with a varied journalistic background as reporter and telegraph editor of the *Wilmington (Ohio) News Journal,* editor of the *New Lexington (Ohio) Daily News,* continuity editor of KMPC in Beverly Hills, staff writer for CBS, and correspondent in North Africa and Italy during World War II, for which he received a Battle Star and special citation. He established his partnership with Lee in 1942, incorporating their efforts under the name Lawrence & Lee, Inc. in 1955.

Lawrence has involved himself closely with theatrical and cinematic production at the Dublin Theatre Festival, Paramount Studios, Goldwyn, Twentieth-Century Fox and Hal Wallis Productions. He has also taught theater arts at the University of Alberta, NYU, Salzburg Seminar in American Studies, Baylor, Ohio State, and Squaw Valley Community of Writers; and has lectured in numerous foreign countries, including Russia, Japan, Thailand, Egypt, Greece, France, and England.

Lee, a native of Elyria, Ohio, attended Northwestern University, Ohio Wesleyan University, Western Reserve University, and Drake University. Like his partner, he built his career from a number of experiences, including co-founder of Armed Forces Radio, technician and observer at Perkins Observatory, director of WHK-WCLE, radio and television producer, and director of an advertising company, in addition to his work with Lawrence & Lee, Inc. He has taught theater arts at the Pasadena Playhouse College and UCLA.

Together, this team has produced a number of successful theater and television plays, notably *Orson Welles Theatre* (1945-46), *Hallmark Hall of Fame* (1949-51), *Inherit the Wind* (1955), *Roaring Camp* (1955), *Shangri-La* (1956), *Auntie Mame* (1957), and *The Gang's All Here* (1960).

CRITIC'S CORNER

Lawrence expresses the team's keen perception of America's growth in individual freedoms with these words: "We like to be part of our national and international bloodstreams. We often use the past to help illuminate the present." *The Night Thoreau Spent in Jail,* which ran 805 performances on Broadway and over 2000 with the American Playwright's Theatre, strikes a responsive chord with reviewers, who praise its parallels with the Vietnam War era in which it was written. Less favorable criticism notes a lack of strong conflict and contends that Deacon Ball serves as mere comic relief while Emerson shies from direct clash with Thoreau's philosophy.

Two of Lawrence and Lee's plays—*Auntie Mame* and *Inherit the Wind,* which have been translated into more than thirty languages—were filmed by Warner Brothers and United Artists. As tribute to the team's place in American theater, the Lincoln Center Library of the Performing Arts in New York City features a Lawrence and Lee Collection.

GENERAL OBJECTIVES

1. To elucidate stage conventions, especially dream sequence and flashback
2. To orient the reader in the historical and political milieu of the Mexican War
3. To discuss the implications of the fugitive slave laws
4. To explain transcendentalism
5. To discuss the historical and literary significance of the writings of Carlyle, Thoreau, and Emerson
6. To indicate the difference between implicit and explicit events
7. To separate from the dialogue specific quotations from Thoreau's works and to apply them to real-life situations
8. To pinpoint the setting on a map
9. To sample other works by Lawrence and Lee

THE NIGHT THOREAU SPENT IN JAIL

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

1. To contrast the reasons for Bailey's and Henry's jail sentences
2. To characterize Henry's unorthodox educational methods
3. To describe the courtship of Ellen Sewell
4. To consider why Lydian is uncomfortable having Henry near her when Waldo is gone
5. To contrast Waldo's idolization of Carlyle with Henry's idolization of Waldo
6. To describe Henry's relationship with children as well as family
7. To characterize Henry's religious beliefs and doubts
8. To give examples of Henry's practicality and idealism
9. To indicate why Henry must not become too comfortable at Walden Pond

MEANING STUDY

Below are words, phrases, or sentences that have a particular meaning in the play. Explain the meaning of each. Act numbers are provided so that you can re-read the passage from which the item is taken.

1. *But* this man speaks and a hush falls over all of Harvard. And there's a light about him—that comes out of his face. But it's not the light of *one* man. I swear to you, John, it's the light of all Mankind! (I)

   (As a young adult, Henry Thoreau becomes enthralled with Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882), whom he adopts as both mentor and friend. Part of Thoreau's struggle in this play is breaking away from his idol, whom he perceives as clay-footed after Emerson refuses to take a stand against issues that Thoreau champions, such as abolitionism and an end to the Mexican War.

   Emerson, who was fourteen years Thoreau's senior, ran a school for young ladies in Boston and taught at the Harvard Divinity School. At a turning point in his life, Emerson gave up his pastorate at the Second Church of Boston when he could no longer conduct the sacrament of communion in good conscience. He traveled to Europe from 1832-1833, came under the influence of Thomas Carlyle, and developed his own philosophy of transcendentalism based on individualism and self-reliance.

   Having established himself as a popular and cogent public lecturer, Emerson moved to Concord in 1835 and formed a close friendship with Thoreau, Bronson Alcott, Nathaniel Hawthorne, William Ellery Channing, and other transcendentalists. His rejection of traditional religious worship cost him friends and followers, but he overcame setbacks by supporting reformers and publishing essays and poems, which his son Edward published in 1904, followed by Emerson's journals in 1914.)

2. There is an infinitude in the private man! If a single man plants himself indomitably on his instincts, and there abide, the huge world will come around to him . . . .(I)

   (Waldo, a "vital glow still upon his face," summarizes his idea of individuality, which ensnares Henry's romantic leanings while it repulses John, Henry's less idealistic brother. As stated here, Emerson's view of the ideal man is one who stands unshakably on the inner voice or instinct as a means of navigating in the world. As the ultimate reward for this invincible soul, the philosopher foresees a time when the world will alter its less sensible approach and come around to the individual's way of thinking.)

3. But we've got a President who went out and boomed up a war all by himself—with no help from Congress and less help from me. (I)

   (Henry's major disclaimer against paying his tax is his belief that President James Polk has led the United States into an immoral war against Mexico by negotiating for lands west of Texas. His army, headed by General Zachary Taylor, occupied the area from New Mexico to California, thereby inciting attack. On the strength of citizen response, Polk pushed for the annexation of Mexico as well. Northern sentiment, however, saw his act as unbridled imperialism. In the end, Polk's party was defeated in its bid for re-election. He died a broken man.)

4. Transcendental blasphemy! (I)

   (Deacon Ball, an opponent of Emersonian thought, accuses Henry of atheism and blasphemy because Henry believes that humankind is "interrelated to a Universal Mind" *The nucleus of transcendentalism is its reliance on intuition and conscience. To Henry, teaching through direct contact with nature is more valuable than use of adopted textbooks, which Ball insists that he follow. From the transcendental perspective, all human beings are divine and should follow their own dictates to improve the world, via the abolition of slavery, giving the vote to women, halting war, and other ideas shocking to Calvinist doctrine.)*

5. So I resign my position as pastor of the Second Unitarian Church of Boston. (I)

   (With impetus from a sixteenth-century European movement, this simplistic view of the oneness of God led to the organization of a unitarian fellowship in Philadelphia in 1796, but gained greater hold in Massachusetts. James Freeman, an early proponent of unitarianism, revised the Book of Common Prayer in 1785 to remove all mention of the trinity.

   Major schism brought the conflict between unitarians and more traditional protestants into the open. Under the leadership of William Ellery

Channing (1780-1842), the father of American unitarianism, the sect formally defined its position. One of the high points of this new fervor was Emerson's famous address to the Harvard Divinity School in 1838, in which he encouraged the new generation of ministers to "acquaint mankind at first hand with Deity.")

6. In Samarkand, it is not quite noon. (I)
   (An ancient Persian city conquered by Alexander the Great in 329 B. C., Samarkand lies north of the Afghan-Russian border in Uzbek. Henry mentions the city much as people say Timbuktu: "It's as far away from Boston as you can get—before you start coming back *to Boston again.")*

7. You'll shock the clergy if you lock up a carpenter. (I)
   (Henry, parrying with Sam on the matter of a designation for Henry's vocation, jokes about Sam's preference for carpenter over "Pencil-maker . . . School teacher . . . Surveyor . . . Author—alleged. Huckleberry-hunter—expert . . ." Sam apparently misses the point that Christ was a carpenter who suffered jail before being scourged and crucified.)

8. Those are the exact words I used to describe you to Carlyle. Did you know that I told Carlyle about you? (II)
   (Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881) was a Scottish historian, social critic, and author of the The French Revolution *(1837) and* Sartor Resartus *(1834). A strong Calvinist and idealist, Carlyle inveighed against the problems inherent in the industrialization of England, particularly mechanization, dehumanization, poverty, exploitation of labor, and materialism. After his marriage to Jane Welsh, a noted intellectual and wit, the Carlyle home drew famous philosophers, notably Emerson, Dickens, Tennyson, Browning, Ruskin, and Mill.)*

9. A bell-rope drops from the flies as the light comes up on the thrust. (II)
   (The production of this play requires creative use of props that appear and disappear for the sake of flashback or dream sequence. In this scenario, a rope drops from the flies, which is the upper portion of the stage out of sight of the audience from which scenery is hung or "flown.")

10. This entire sequence has the blurred and overlapping quality of a nightmare, Goya-esque. It is a Walpurgisnacht, a bad trip, a surrealistic mixing of hallucinations. Time, space, sound are wrenched awry. (II)
    (The playwrights use various terms to describe the bad dream which causes Henry to see Edward as a drummer boy, Sam as an army sergeant, Bailey as an American soldier, Deacon Ball as a general, Williams as a Mexican soldier, Emerson as President Polk, and John, another American soldier, as the victim of an immoral war. [Note that John really died in 1842. He cut himself on the finger while shaving, contracted tetanus, and died in Henry's arms.)

    The term Goya-esque refers to the tortured paintings of Spanish painter Francisco Goya (1746-1828); Walpurgisnacht is a German witches' rendezvous, held on the eve of May Day; and surrealism, an artistic method which creates fantasy by juxtaposing unnatural combinations.)

11. The little DRUMMER BOY (EDWARD) has fallen wounded across his drum. HENRY runs to the stricken boy, lifting him like the Pietà. (II)
    (In Henry's nightmare, Edward Emerson is wounded and lies across Henry's outstretched arms in the classic pose called pietà; *which is Italian for* pity. *A frequent arrangement of two human forms in both sculpture and painting, the figures often depict the crucified Christ in the arms of his mother or another person. The most famous representation of Christ and Mary in this pose resides in St. Peter's Basilica in Rome and was completed by Michel-angelo early in his career during the Italian Renaissance.)*

12. Sam! You know what *quid pro quo* means? (II)
    (Henry quotes a Latin legal phrase meaning an exchange of one concession for another. He proposes to leave the jail in accordance with Sam's wishes in exchange for a speedy trial for Bailey, which is guaranteed by the Constitution. As Henry phrases it, "Tell [the Judge and the Selectmen] unless Mr. Bailey's trial is right away, they'll have another eating, non-paying guest in their jail—permanently!")

COMPREHENSION STUDY

Answer the following questions in your own words. There is not always a right answer. Your judgment is important and you should be ready to defend your answers by referring to passages in the play.

Questions 1-5 Literal Level

1. List Thoreau's most famous quotations as they appear in the diaglogue.

   1. *There is an infinitude in the private man!*
   2. *A man can suffocate on courtesy.*
   3. *Give me something magnificently* uncommon!
   4. *A man's conviction is stronger than a flame or a bullet or a rock.*
   5. *BE YOUR OWN MAN!*
   6. *Education should not be a mass process.*
   7. *We are born as innocents. We are polluted by advice.*
   8. *The state is timid as a lone woman with her silver spoons!*

9. *Simplify! Simplify!*

10. *Everything's wrong—when a man only thinks about himself.)*

2. Summarize essential information from the introduction, "The Now Thoreau."

   (Lawrence and Lee explain that Thoreau's philosophy characterizes the 1970's. He was Emerson's handyman and a "weirdo" who questioned technology, despised materialism, and anticipated the problems of pollution a century before they occurred. Even though his ideas were sound, few people listened to him beyond a handful of radicals, including Gandhi, Tolstoy, and Martin Luther King.

   The main reason that Thoreau sought solitude on Walden Pond was his disgust with materialism, which led President Polk to wage illegal war on Mexico. Other famous people took a stand for or against the war, most notably Abraham Lincoln, General Winfield Scott, Ulysses S. Grant, and Santayana. From his jail cell, Thoreau seems a paragon of revolutionary spirit, wit, and clarity. His love of mankind, as expressed in protest, leaves modern readers to ponder a fascinating paradox.)

3. Describe Henry's relationship with John.

   (John Thoreau, two years younger than Henry and jealous that Henry received a Harvard diploma, shares Henry's contemplative bent, but taunts him for his idealism, particularly his idolization of Dr. Emerson. The brothers fall victim to the charms of Ellen Sewell, although her father makes her spurn them both. Still, after failing at their school and losing Ellen, Henry and John remain close and tolerate each other's eccentricities.

   On the positive side, Henry gains insight into himself and his family through John's looser, less philosophical lifestyle. John reminds Henry that the Thoreaus are by nature celibate—except for slight slips. During his doomed fight with lockjaw, John cements a permanent bond with Henry, forcing Henry to question why God would let a good man die in such agony. The measure of John's importance to Henry is the appearance of John in the role of war victim. To Henry, John symbolized innocence and goodness, two virtues that Henry treasures.)

4. Describe Henry's relationship with the Emerson family.

   (From his Cambridge college days, Henry idolizes Waldo and applies for work as family handyman so that he can be near him. Waldo considers Henry his best friend, although Waldo does not emulate Henry's protest measures against slavery and the Mexican War. Lydian, who sees both her husband and Henry from a more objective light, realizes that both men must be free to be individuals. To her, the main difficulty to overcome is Henry's solitude. She boldly suggests that Henry "find a face—and teach yourself to love it."

   Edward, Waldo and Lydian's son, gets along well with his mother, but maintains a looser bond with his father. After Henry appears to serve as mentor and friend, Edward spends more time with him than with Waldo. Henry, who is a gentle, encouraging teacher, puts less pressure on the boy and forgives mild transgressions, such as spilling the huckleberry bucket. By referring to the incident as the planting of a future huckleberry patch, Henry prompts Edward to declare that he prefers Henry to his own father. Henry is touched by the boy's genuine affection.)

5. Explain how Henry leaves both jail and Walden Pond.

   (After Aunt Louisa, Henry's mother's sister, pays his taxes, Henry refuses to leave jail. Sam Staples, the constable, insists that Henry must leave or go hungry. Henry, stubborn to the last, offers a deal—if Henry leaves, Bailey must get a speedy trial. Sam accepts the terms. Bailey, pleased that his friend makes some headway toward freeing him, promises to visit the "pond place."

   Henry, thinking over the experiences he has had at Walden Pond realizes that staying in the woods is what Emerson condemns as a retreat from reality. Henry describes for Bailey an ocean voyage in which a passenger stays below decks in a warm, dry bunk, and never knows the exhilaration of facing the elements on foredeck. Likening himself to the safe, cozy passenger, Henry declares that Bailey may not find him at Walden Pond because it is time Henry "[roamed] the whole ship.")

Questions 6-8 Interpretive Level

6. Why does Henry take offense at the concept of "going along"?

   (When Henry meets Bailey, the accused barn-burner describes himself as "not a troublemaker. I just want to earn my keep, make a little tobakky money, and get along." To Henry, the words remind him of the phrase, "To get along you have to go along." In Henry's philosophy, people who swim with the current are responsible for the immorality of the Mexican War, the issue over which Henry chooses to be jailed rather than pay his taxes.

   Later, Lydian angers Henry by quoting the aphorism. The words "Go along" echo in his mind as he takes Edward huckleberrying. In Henry's nightmare about the Mexican War, the words recur as the General, in the guise of Deacon Ball, asks President Polk if he is "prepared to go along." The phantasm, which pictures Waldo in the role of President, churns up the animosity Henry feels toward Waldo, who withdraws into intellectual pursuits rather than rally a public outcry against injustice.)

7. Why does Henry quit his job as schoolmaster?

   (During a lecture about microscopic particles in the air, Deacon Nehemiah Ball, a "pompous townsman

with a silver-topped cane," enters the schoolroom and chastises Henry for neglecting the approved textbooks. During a demonstration of Socratic method, Henry transgresses Ball's religious beliefs. Ball labels Henry a transcendental blasphemer.

Their differences escalate. Ball challenges Henry's disciplinary measures and orders him to flog students. Henry refuses to take the order seriously. Ball concludes, "Perform your duty, Schoolmaster Thoreau, if you expect to retain your post in this community." Henry gratifies Ball by resigning.)

8. Why is Henry ambivalent toward Ellen Sewell?
   (Obviously taken with Ellen, fresh from finishing school, Henry examines his feelings about marriage and commitment and realizes that he does not want to spend his life in a role that does not suit him. He shores up his arguments against Ellen with her rejection of John and surmises that Ellen is collecting scalps to bolster her ego. A daddy's girl at heart, Ellen perceives bits of Henry's transcendental concepts, but is unequal to his vision. Consequently, the match never comes off.)

Questions 9 and 10 Critical Level

9. Why is Thoreau a good choice of hero for a play written in 1970?
   (During the Vietnam war anti-war measures jelled slowly, ignited by a few individuals, such as Jane Fonda, the Berrigans, and Dr. Benjamin Spock. Gradually, the movement spread to parents and citizens and draft evaders who felt that the American presence in Vietnam was immoral. Anti-war sentiment dominated popular music, film, television, and public behavior. Soon, politicians found the courage to declare themselves sympathetic to the cause of ending the war in Vietnam.

   Thoreau, a cult figure in American literature for over a century, seems particularly appropriate in this 1970 resurrection of anti-war sentiment. Because of his youth, idealism, intelligence, love of humanity, and personal philosophy, he epitomizes the agony of people who are willing to face jail rather than support an unjust war with their taxes or their lives.)

10. Why is this play suitable for later periods?
    (The play depicts one individual's war on all external forces that impinge on individuality. The themes of this play remain constant in their appeal. There has never been a time of peace and respect among nations or a time when individuals have been totally free. Enforcers like Deacon Ball permeate all levels of society, pressuring others to conform to a circumscribed set of approved sentiments. Such tyranny provokes Thoreau to grandstand in order to express his outrage.

    On another level, the play reveals a misalignment of philosophies from an historical perspective. Ralph Waldo Emerson really did influence Henry David Thoreau. As one might imagine, the clash of two wills as strong as theirs leads to showers of dissident sparks. In the play, it is Lydian who mediates between the warring wills of two men she both loves and respects. In this way, the play offers the reader valuable insight as to the consequences of so volatile a friendship.)

Questions 11 and 12 Creative Level

11. Make a collage of quotations from Thoreau's works superimposed over pictures and objects that suggest modern problems, such as pollution and anti-war demonstrations.

12. Using Henry's imagery from his last two statements in the play, describe your own ocean passage. What parts of the ship have you visited? What parts would you like to visit? Do you prefer warmth below deck to standing on the foredeck? Develop a description of your life and hopes in terms of the image.

STUDENT INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES

1. Draw a timeline of literary, philosophical, religious, political, and historical events that happened in the Concord area during the nineteenth century. Include authors and thinkers such as Thoreau, Emerson, Hawthorne, Ellery Channing, and Bronson and Louisa May Alcott.

2. Create a wall chart delineating the characteristics of idealism, romanticism, and transcendentalism. Give specific examples of each.

3. Make a brief talk on the subject of brotherhood. Use Henry's relationship with John Thoreau, Bailey, and Henry Williams as examples.

4. Duplicate some of Thoreau's most famous sentiments with modern paraphrases concerning pollution, mechanization, progress, individualism, freedom, solitude, law, war, religion, love, marriage, politics, imperialism, and other timely topics.

5. Describe a place where you would go to "invite your soul." Give common and biological names for flora and fauna. Indicate any plants or animals that you would use for food.

6. Interview a law enforcement officer about incarceration of local prisoners. Report to the class the way in which prisoners are processed, jailed, fed, counselled, questioned, exercised, and released. Explain visitation rights in detail.

7. Compare Thoreau's concept of freedom with that of Abraham Lincoln. Cite each man's exact words where applicable. Consult the concordance in books of aphorisms for easy reference.

8. Contrast the anti-war movement of the 1970's with abolitionism and anti-war sentiment of the nineteenth century. How did people in both eras express their anger at unjust and inhuman practices? Did protesters in either century shake or shape the public's opinion?
9. Draw a bird's-eye view of any scene in the play. Reduce props and scenery to as few as possible to keep the style and spirit of the original.
10. Explain why you agree or disagree with Emerson's comment that Thoreau "was the saddest happy man I ever knew."
11. Express your own theories of education. Include commentary on discipline, curriculum, method, supervision, and materials.
12. Name and describe other eccentrics and hermits who have molded opinion and influenced behavior, such as Gandhi and Mohammed.

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TEACHING NOTES

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VOCABULARY TEST

Complete the passage below with words from the list that follows. You will have answers left over when you finish.

(Everything on stage freezes, in whatever (1) _____ *position it is, as in stopped action.* HENRY *listens with animal* (2)_____.)

"This unnecessary war was (3) _____ commenced by the President, who may be telling us the Truth—but he is not telling the *Whole* Truth. He has swept the war on and on, in showers of blood. His mind, (4) _____ beyond its powers, is running about like some tortured creature on a burning (5) _____!"

(With passion.)

Stop the war, Mr. President! For the love of god, *stop this war!*

(The figures of the battlefield begin to move again in weird, (6) _____ *slow motion, as if* (7) _____ *and helpless in quicksand. But on Henry's face there is a look of* (8) _____ *relief: Someone has spoken!)*

HENRY

I do not know you, Mr. Congressman. I doubt if the people of Illinois will (9)_____ you, because you refused to "go along." But I shall remember who you are, Congressman Lincoln.

(Deafening artillery fire peaks in (10)_____. *There are great flashes of light, the arc-ing of* (11) _____ *shells, the* (12) _____ *splattering of bullets. The Federal troops form into a ragged line of attacking* (13) _____. *They point their* (14) _____ *front and move slowly forward, advancing on the audience as if it were the enemy.* HENRY *wanders,* (15) _____ *at the bloodshed.*

aghast candid forlornly grotesque infantrymen intentness mired mortar muskets
re-elect staccato surface taxed tortured unconstitutionally vast volume

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COMPREHENSION TEST A

Part I: Matching (30 points)

Match the following descriptions with the characters being described. Choose your answers from the list of characters below.

_____ 1. rejects the idea of "going along" with the majority.

_____ 2. appears in Henry's nightmare as the President.

_____ 3. doesn't believe that Edward is always worth a dime per week.

_____ 4. refers to Henry as David Henry.

_____ 5. is not accustomed to being called "mister."

_____ 6. does not want to own the land on the shore of the pond.

_____ 7. fell asleep in a barn and accidentally set it afire.

_____ 8. reports that Waldo is still meditating on matters.

_____ 9. surprises Henry by stating the transcendental idea of death.

_____10. agrees to mend a meadow fence.

_____11. inspector of snowstorms.

_____12. wishes Henry were his father.

_____13. chooses *carpenter* as Henry's official occupation.

_____14. promises to visit the "pond place."

_____15. accuses Henry of "Transcendental blasphemy."

A. Henry Williams	F. Waldo
B. Henry	G. Ellen
C. Edward	H. Lydian
D. Sam Staples	I. Henry's mother
E. Bailey	J. Nehemiah Ball

Part II: True/False (20 points)

Mark each statement either **T** for true or **F** if any part is false.

_____ 1. Disillusioned with his idol, Henry refers to Waldo as "porridge-face."

_____ 2. John Thoreau dies at an early age on the front lines of the Mexican War.

_____ 3. Edmund angers Mr. Sewell by telling him about the Over-Soul during dinner.

_____ 4. Both John and Henry actively pursue Ellen as a prospective wife.

_____ 5. Henry prefers field trips to the textbooks approved for classroom use.

_____ 6. In order to save Henry from a jail sentence, Sam offers to lend him the money for back taxes.

_____ 7. John returns to pencil-making after the Thoreau brothers' school closes.

_____ 8. Henry characterizes the letter L as "Turn the Corner."

_____ 9. John blames his lack of success on his Harvard degree.

_____10. Henry's mother prays that God will let Henry marry Ellen Sewell.

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Part III: Quotation Identification (20 points)

Identify the following quotations by naming both the speaker (A) and the person being addressed (B).

_____1A. Stop the war, Mr. President . . . For the love of God, *stop this war!*

_____1B.

_____2A. My God, he was my god! No more! If he is the Deity, I am a doubter!

_____2B.

_____3A. I almost shattered the most sacred tradition of the Thoreau tribe: celibacy!

_____3B.

_____4A. Uh—I might interrupt *your* work now and then—and ask you to help me mend a cracked wall or pull a few weeds in a lecture I'm writing.

_____4B.

_____5A. Find a face—and teach yourself to love it.

_____5B.

Part IV: Essay Questions (30 points)

1. Discuss Thoreau's reason for leaving Walden Pond.

2. Describe the differences in Thoreau and Emerson as leaders.

3. Characterize John's and Henry's relationship with Ellen Sewell.

4. Explain how Thoreau educates and dignifies Bailey, his cellmate.

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COMPREHENSION TEST B

Part I: Multiple Choice (20 points)

Select an answer to complete each of the following statements.

_____ 1. Henry speaks angrily to Ellen on the subject of (a) marriage (b) textbook selection (c) John's death (d) Edmund's understanding of transcendentalism.

_____ 2. Henry considers Bailey (a) wiser than most people who wear watches (b) a man who respects privacy (c) too uneducated to defend himself in court (d) better off in Canada than in Massachusetts.

_____ 3. Waldo refers to Henry as (a) "Porridge-Face" (b) the boy who put gloves on chickens (c) "inspector of snowstorms" (d) a transcendental blasphemer.

_____ 4. In Henry's nightmare of the Mexican War, (a) Edmund serves as an American drummer boy (b) Congressman Lincoln appears in the role of President (c) Waldo forgets the name of his best friend (d) he cradles John, who falls victim to a fusillade.

_____ 5. Lydian suggests that Henry (a) take Ellen Sewell to church (b) ask Waldo for a section of land beyond the pond (c) forget about the misery of lockjaw that killed John (d) not work at the Emerson home while Waldo is away.

_____ 6. Henry tells John that the most exciting part of Henry's education was (a) getting a diploma from Harvard (b) hearing Emerson's lectures (c) falling in love with a face (d) field trips to Heywood's Meadow.

_____ 7. John's mother is embarrassed to see Henry (a) delivering a public lecture against slavery (b) associating with Henry Williams (c) pushing a wheelbarrow past the church door on Sunday (d) cultivating a bean patch while wearing worn-out shoes.

_____ 8. When Sam announces that Henry can go free, Henry first assumes that (a) Dr. Emerson paid Henry's taxes (b) Bailey is also being set free (c) Bailey is going to get an immediate trial (d) Aunt Louisa paid Henry's taxes.

_____ 9. Henry questions whether (a) God intended for Mexicans to die painfully (b) Henry Williams should take a first name (c) the alphabet must begin with A (d) Edward should be involved in the Mexican War.

_____10. The farmer accuses Henry of (a) upsetting Henry's mother by not paying his taxes (b) escaping to the pond so that Henry won't have to involve himself in real life (c) refusing to allow Waldo to be himself (d) pulling the bell-rope for no good reason.

Part II: Fill-in (30 points)

Fill in the blanks with answers which complete each statement. Refer to the list that follows for possible answers.

_____ 1. If *one* honest man in this state of Massachusetts had the conviction and the courage to withdraw from this unholy partnership and let himself be locked up in the County Jail, it'd be the start of more true _____ than we've seen since a few farmers had the guts to block the British by the bridge up the road.

_____ 2. But *meeting* a _____ makes you more of an expert than any botanist who ever wrote a dull book.

_____ 3. Risky, Sam. You'll shock the clergy if you lock up a _____.

_____ 4. Simply an understanding between friends—who know that the land really belongs to the _____, anyhow!

_____ 5. Right now, Mr. Bailey, I have a library of nearly nine hundred volumes!—_____ of which I wrote myself.

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_____ 6. I've got no more stomach for _____ than you do. Here you're as free as I am.

_____ 7. Look around _____ . . . We have *become* everything we protested against!

_____ 8. This unnecessary war was unconstitutionally commenced by the _____, who may be telling us the Truth—but he is not telling the *Whole* Truth.

_____ 9. My mother called *me* "_____." You may call me "Waldo."

_____ 10. And, Mama. I've asked Henry to be my _____.

_____ 11. If love is all around *you,* like huckleberries—why do you pick _____?

_____ 12. So I gave a little elegance to the ladies of the _____. They've scratched their last.

_____ 13. Oh, it's very simple for a _____ to sit off at a distance and proclaim exactly how things should be.

_____ 14. Ah, we have a surprise guest in the classroom today. The Chairman of the Concord School Committee, Deacon _____.

_____ 15. When you transcend the limits of yourself, you can cease merely living—and begin to _____!

Bailey	be	carpenter	Concord	father	freedom	henhouse
hermit	huckleberry	jail	loneliness	Mexicans	Nehemiah Ball	
President	Ralph	seven hundred	Sewell	slavery	woodchucks	

Part III: Short Answer (20 points)

Supply a word or phrase in answer to each of the following questions.

_____ 1. How old is Henry when he is jailed?

_____ 2. Which character appears in Henry's nightmare as a Mexican?

_____ 3. Who does Henry excommunicate from the Milky Way?

_____ 4. What word does Bailey learn to write?

_____ 5. What does Henry accuse Ellen of hanging on her petticoat strings?

_____ 6. For whom does Henry ask his mother to pray?

_____ 7. What is John doing that causes him to cut himself shaving?

_____ 8. Who does Waldo suspect Henry of murdering?

_____ 9. Who threatens to withhold Henry's lunch?

_____ 10. As Henry walks out into Concord Square, what sound is heard around him?

Part IV: Essay Questions (30 points)

Discuss the meaning of the following quotations from the novel.

1. But escape is like sleep. And when sleep is permanent, it's death.
2. We are in the midst of three hundred and *one* varieties of God-made grasses.
3. Go along!
   Go along!
   Go along!
   Go along!

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VOCABULARY TEST ANSWER KEY

1. tortured
2. intentness
3. unconstitutionally
4. taxed
5. surface
6. grotesque
7. mired
8. vast
9. re-elect
10. volume
11. mortar
12. staccato
13. infantrymen
14. muskets
15. aghast

COMPREHENSION TEST A ANSWER KEY

Part I: Matching (30 points)

1. B
2. F
3. H
4. I
5. A
6. B
7. E
8. H
9. G
10. B
11. B
12. C
13. D
14. E
15. J

Part II: True/False (20 points)

1. F
2. F
3. T
4. F
5. T
6. T
7. T
8. T
9. F
10. F

Part III: Quotation Identification (20 points)

1A. Congressman Lincoln
1B. President Polk

2A. Henry
2B. Lydian

3A. John
3B. Henry

4A. Waldo
4B. Henry

5A. Lydian
5B. Henry

Part IV: Essay Questions (30 points)
Answers will vary.

COMPREHENSION TEST B ANSWER KEY

Part I: Multiple Choice (20 points)

1. C
2. A
3. B
4. D
5. D
6. B
7. C
8. A
9. C
10. A

Part II: Fill-in (30 points)

1. freedom
2. huckleberry
3. carpenter
4. woodchucks
5. seven hundred
6. slavery
7. Concord
8. President
9. Ralph
10. father
11. loneliness
12. henhouse
13. hermit
14. Nehemiah Ball
15. be

Part III: Short Answer (20 points)

1. 29
2. Henry Williams
3. Aunt Louisa
4. Bailey
5. scalps
6. both her sons
7. laughing
8. Deacon Ball
9. Sam Staples
10. a drumbeat

Part IV: Essay Questions (30 points)
Answers will vary.

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