Romanticism and Transcendentalism

Celebrations of the Self
Romanticism

- Began in the 19\textsuperscript{th} century in Europe and America as a reaction to everything that had come before it. --- rationalism of the 18\textsuperscript{th} century and the strict doctrines of Puritanism.

- Romantic artists, philosophers and writers celebrated the individual spirit, the emotions, and the basic elements of human nature.
Transcendentalism

- The philosophy of transcendentalism, derived in part from German romanticism, was based on the belief that “transcendent forms” of truth exist beyond reason and experience.

- Ralph Waldo Emerson, one of the pioneers of this movement, gave the philosophy its peculiar American spin: he said that every individual is capable of discovering this higher truth on his or her own, through intuition, our “divine intellect.”
According to Transcendentalists...

- God gave human kind the gift of intuition, the gift of insight, and the gift of inspiration.
Transcendental Beliefs

- The oversoul—God, man, universe, and nature are intertwined.

- Individualism---Be true to one's inner perception and intuition. Reject standard societal beliefs. Fulfillment comes from knowing one's self.

- Nature is truth---It can be the guide to higher understanding, it is divine, and it can be an escape from society.
Literary Focus

• Because transcendentalism emphasized “feelings” and “self,” literature was a very large medium that artists used to express themselves during this period. Such artists included:

  • Emily Dickinson and Walt Whitman

  • Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau are most recognized for their contributions to this philosophical movement.

  • ***While Dickinson is not typically considered a member of the transcendentalist movement, she was noted for following its ideals.