



abolitionist: pertaining to the abolishment of slavery

a priori knowledge: the idea that humans are born with pre-knowledge, and that experiences in this world, particularly those connecting with nature and one's own intuition activate this pre-knowledge. The idea of *a priori* knowledge helped to inform the "discovery" concept in Transcendentalist theories about education. Bronson Alcott's and the Thoreau brother's experimental schools promoted this Socratic method of learning.

brotherhood: the idea that all humans are connected through a "fundamental unity." Skin color, race, and gender do not matter; all humans are "brothers."

feminist: an individual dedicated to promoting social, economic, and political equality for women

monologue: a speech or dramatic presentation delivered by one person

moral imperative: an extension of the philosopher Immanuel Kant's idea of "categorical imperative." This is the idea that there exists a "corrective" force in nature that will attack violations of the fundamental unity. A resonating voice of this force is housed in each individual (one's sense of truth or "conscience"). The force justifies man's participation in "just causes" of revolution, civil war, and dedication to causes (such as abolition and reforms)

petition: a collection of signatures to support a cause; in the mid- to late-19th century, petitions were often sent by women's groups to the U.S. Congress to argue for reforms

self-reliance: an extension of the metaphysical base of Transcendental thought, which is the idea that each individual is equipped with an inner voice of knowledge and truth that equips him/her to be independent and self-reliant. Individuals have a responsibility to stay connected to nature, to avoid having "the world," in terms noted by the writer William Wordsworth, "be too much with us."

Temperance Movement: a group dedicated to curbing the consumption of alcoholic beverages

Transcendentalism: An ambiguous, but influential intellectual movement that argued the basic concept that all things in nature are united by a shared divinity or a spiritual essence; Related terms include "Fundamental Unity," "Over-Soul" (Ralph Waldo Emerson's term), "Master Intellect," and the "Sublime." Transcendentalism teaches that through intuition and immersion in nature, one experiences connection with this spiritual unity. The outlook has strong Platonic overtones. In fact, Emerson is sometimes referred to as "the Yankee Plato." The Transcendentalist philosophy also incorporates ideas of Immanuel Kant and Jean-Jacques Rousseau.