Writing Situation: The Transcendental Movement dramatically shaped the direction of American literature, although perhaps not in the ways its adherents had imagined. Many writers were and still are inspired and taught by Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman. They held a deep belief in the innate divinity of all people and faith in their capability to understand immortality, the soul, and God through intuition rather than through pure reason. Their notion that human beings are the center of the universe and share a direct kinship with nature still resonates with us today.

Directions for Writing: Choose one of the five topics below to write a multiparagraph essay based on the philosophy of transcendentalism. In your introduction, universally reflect upon the significance of the topic before tying it into the writing of Emerson, Thoreau, Whitman and Dead Poets Society. Be sure you have an argumentative thesis statement and it is the last sentence of your introduction. In your body paragraphs cite examples from transcendental writers and Dead Poets Society, as well as one non-fiction source from the Internet or other secondary sources to prove your thesis. Finally, restate the thesis in the conclusion and reflect upon the significance of your thesis as it relates to transcendentalism, as well as to the audience. Be sure to end your essay with an analogy or figure of speech that brings your essay to a powerful close that appeals to a general audience.

_topic one:_ Write an essay that analyzes the transcendental philosophies of Emerson, Thoreau, Whitman and the plot developments in Dead Poets Society to demonstrate how the individual must rebel against societal conformity in order to seize the day and make life extraordinary, yet willingly accepts the consequences it entails.

topic two: Write an essay analyzing the transcendental philosophies of Emerson, Thoreau, Whitman and the plot developments in Dead Poets Society to clearly demonstrate how it is necessary at times to rebel against society in order to achieve social justice.

topic three: Write an essay analyzing the transcendental philosophies of Emerson, Thoreau, Whitman and the plot developments in Dead Poets Society to clearly demonstrate the strengths and weaknesses of transcendentalism as it relates to society and the individual.

_topic four:_ Write an essay that analyzes the transcendental philosophies of Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman to clearly analyze the influence it had on Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the societies in which they lived.

_topic five:_ Write an essay that analyzes the transcendental philosophies Emerson, Thoreau, Whitman and the plot developments in Dead Poets Society to clearly demonstrate how they used irony and other figures of speech to confront the social injustices of their day and how it relates to the world in which we live.

_topic six:_ Write an essay that analyzes the transcendental philosophies Emerson, Thoreau, Whitman and the plot developments in Dead Poets by creating your own topic. Your topic must analyze events, themes, characterization or other literary techniques in the plot and apply them to a clear subject on which to write. If you decide to create your own topic, you must first receive teacher approval before beginning to write.
Rubric Evaluation for Transcendental Essay

**Introduction**

- Introduction contains a universal lead that hooks your audience’s attention and reflects in depth about the topic you’ve chosen to write about

  - 0 1 2 3 4 =

- Introduction narrows its reflective lead by smoothly transitioning into the topic for your essay, then sets the context of your topic by briefly summarizing transcendentalism, the Romantic Era, its major writers, and Dead Poets Society in the context of your thesis

  - 0 1 2 3 4 =

- Thesis statement is argumentative, strongly controls your essay, thoroughly guides the direction of each body paragraph, and appears as the last sentence of the introduction

  - 0 1 2 3 4 =

**Body Paragraphs**

- Each body paragraph contains a strong statement that is clearly based on the structure of your thesis and controls the paragraph in which it is written

  - 0 1 2 3 4 =

- Each body paragraph analyzes in depth directly cited examples from Emerson, Thoreau, Whitman, or Dead Poets Society to clearly support the structure of your thesis that analytically explains (not summarizes) in several sentences or more how the cited examples prove your thesis

  - 0 1 2 3 4 =

- At least one body paragraph contains an example of antithesis that is thoroughly refuted

  - 0 1 2 3 4 =

**Conclusion**

- Conclusion clearly restates the thesis by using different words and appears as the first sentence

  - 0 1 2 3 4 =

- Reflects upon the Romantic Era, transcendentalism, and the dominant themes and issues addressed in the introduction and the body paragraphs

  - 0 1 2 3 4 =

- Provides a strong final statement that uses a figure of speech to grab the audience’s attention

  - 0 1 2 3 4 =

**Throughout the Essay**

- Written in MLA format, uses parenthetical citations, is at least four ½ pages long, with paragraphs of at least twelve sentences or more whereby the writer varies the paragraph structure by providing in-depth, analytical, motivated, and on-topic writing

  - 0 1 2 3 4 =

- Transitions and attribution smoothly connects sentences, direct citations, and or paragraphs

  - 0 1 2 3 4 =

- Relatively free of pointers, spelling, grammatical, and mechanical errors

  - 0 1 2 3 4 =

- ON TIME

  - 0 1 2 =

**TOTAL = _____/50**