

Nature

RALPH WALDO EMERSON

Nature is a setting that fits equally well a comic or a mourning piece. In good health, the air is a cordial of incredible virtue. Crossing a bare common, in snow puddles, at twilight, under a clouded sky, without having in my thoughts any occurrence of special good fortune, I have enjoyed a perfect **exhilaration**. I am glad to the brink of fear. In the woods too, a man casts off his years, as the snake his slough,¹ and at what period soever of life, is always a child. In the woods, is perpetual youth. Within these plantations of God, a **decorum** and sanctity reign, a perennial festival is dressed, and the guest sees not how he should tire of them in a thousand years. In the woods, we return to reason and faith. There I feel that
10 nothing can befall me in life,—no disgrace, no calamity, (leaving me my eyes,) which nature cannot repair. Standing on the bare ground,—my head bathed by the blithe air, and uplifted into infinite space,—all mean egotism vanishes. I become a transparent eye-ball; I am nothing; I see all; the currents of the Universal Being circulate through me; I am part or particle of God. The name of the nearest friend sounds then foreign and accidental: to be brothers, to be acquaintances,—master or servant, is then a trifle and a disturbance. I am the lover of uncontained and immortal beauty. In the wilderness, I find something more dear and connate² than in streets or villages. In the tranquil landscape, and especially in the distant line of the horizon, man beholds somewhat as beautiful as his own nature. **E**

exhilaration

(ĭg-zĭl'ə-rā'shən) *n.* a feeling of high spirits or lively joy

decorum (dĭ-kôr'əm) *n.*

good taste in conduct or appearance

E TRANSCENDENTALISM

Review the elements of transcendentalism listed on page 361. Which aspect of transcendentalist thought is reflected in lines 12–19?

1. **slough** (slŭf): the cast-off skin of a snake.

2. **connate**: agreeable; able to be related to.