## From Self-Religion Self-Religion Emerson

 $m{\ell}$  here is a time in every man's education when he arrives at the conviction that envy is ignorance; that imitation is suicide; that he must take himself for better, for worse, as his portion; that though the wide universe is full of good, no kernel of nourishing corn can come to him but through his toil bestowed on that plot of ground which is given to him to till. The power which resides in him is new in nature, and none but he knows what that is which he can do, nor does he know until he has tried. Not for nothing one face, one character, one fact makes much impression on him, and another none. This sculpture in he memory is not without preestablished harmony. The eye was placed where one ray should fall, that it might testify of that particular ray. We but half express ourselves, and are ashamed of that divine idea which tach of us represents. It may be safely trusted as proportionate and of good issues, so it be faithfully imparted, but God will not have his work made manifest by cowards. A man is relieved and gay when he has put als heart into his work and done his best; but what he has said or done officerwise, shall give him no peace. It is a deliverance which does not deliver. In the attempt his genius deserts him; no muse befriends; no ention, no hope.

Trust thyself: every heart vibrates to that iron string. Accept the lace the divine providence has found for you; the society of your consemporaries, the connection of events. Great men have always done so ad confided themselves childlike to the genius of their age, betraying but perception that the absolutely trustworthy was stirring at their cart, working through their hands, predominating in all their being. We are now men, and must accept in the highest mind the same anscendent destiny; and not minors and invalids in a protected corbit but guides, redeemers, and benefactors. Obeying the Almighty fort and advancing on chaos and the Dark. . . .

Society everywhere is in conspiracy against the manhood of every the state of the manhood of every against the manhood of every the state of the manhood of every against the manhood of every the state of the manhood of every the state of the manhood of every against the manhood of every the state of the sta

## Literary Analysis Transcendentalism

What does the passage beginning "Trust thyself" tell you about Emerson's belief in the importance of the individual?

Vocabulary Builder chaos (kā' ās') n. disorder of matter and space, supposed to have existed before the ordered universe

## Reading Check

What does Emerson believe about being true to oneself?

Vocabulary Builder aversion (e ver shen) n. object arousing an intense dislike

suffrage (suf rij) n. vote or voting

divines (de vinz') n. clergy

to surrender the liberty and culture of the eater. The virtue in most request is conformity. Self-reliance is its <u>aversion</u>. It loves not realities and creators, but names and customs.

Whoso would be a man must be a nonconformist. He who would gather immortal palms must not be hindered by the name of goodness, but must explore if it be goodness. Nothing is at last sacred but the integrity of your own mind. Absolve you to yourself, and you shall have the suffrage of the world. . . .

A foolish consistency is the hobgobin of little minds, adored by little statesmen and philosophers and <u>divines</u>. With consistency a great soul has simply nothing to do. He may as well concern himself with his shadow on the wall. Speak what you think now in hard words again, though it concrow speak what tomorrow thinks in hard words again, though it misunderstood?"—is it so bad, then, to be misunderstood? Pythagoras misunderstood? —is it so bad, then, to be misunderstood? Pythagoras was misunderstood, and Socrates, and Jesus, and Luther, and Copernicus, and Cailleo, and Newton, I and every pure and wise spirit that ever took flesh. To be great is to be misunderstood. . . .

1. Pythagoras ... Newton individuals who made major contributions to scientific, philosophical, or religious thinking.

## gmbss/Mesima

- 1. Respond: Which aspects, if any, of today's American culture reflect Emerson's belief in self-reliance?
- 2. (a) Recall: What terms does Emerson use to describe society?
  (b) Interpret: According to Emerson, what is society's main purpose?
  (c) Draw Conclusions: In what ways does Emerson believe people should be affected by the way others perceive them?
- 3. (a) Recall: According to Emerson, what do Pythagoras, Socrates, Jesus, Luther, Copernicus, Calileo, and Newton have in common?(b) Support: What evidence does Emerson use to support his claim that "to be great is to be misunderstood"?
- 4. (a) Make a Judgment: How important is Emerson's use of the adjective "foolish" in his discussion of consistency? (b) Speculate: Do you think there would be any circumstances in which Emerson would advocate the benefits of consistency? Explain.
- 5. (a) Interpret: According to Emerson, what role does the "divine" have in determining each person's circumstances? (b) Generalize: What would Emerson say is each person's reason for living? Explain.
- 6. Apply: Which of Emerson's statements, if any, would you choose as a guideline for personal conduct? Explain.

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