

Introduction

1. *Research* the basic tenets of Transcendentalism.
2. Write a working definition of "Transcendentalism."
3. Read the excerpt of *Walden* on page 365 of the Springboard book. What is the main idea of this passage?
4. What is Henry David Thoreau's perception of happiness?
5. Read the excerpt from "Self-Reliance" on page 365 of the Springboard book. What is the main idea of this passage?
6. What is Ralph Waldo Emerson's perception of happiness?
7. Read the contemporary poem, "In the Depths of Solitude" by Tupac. How do the ideas in this poem compare with Transcendentalist thought?
8. Give one example of another contemporary poem, story, book, television show, or movie that you think reflects ideas that are similar to those of the Transcendentalists. Explain your reasoning.
9. What is your personal perception of happiness? Do you agree with the Transcendentalists, or is there another literary movement, philosophy, religion, or code that more accurately describes your personal beliefs? Explain your answer.
10. List one rule you remember learning in kindergarten, and discuss whether it should still apply in the adult world.

11. The excerpt on page 367 is from “All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten,” Robert Fulghum’s credo. A credo is a personal belief statement about life. Why do you think someone would write out a credo?
12. Read Fulghum’s credo. List two of Fulghum’s rules that you believe are key values in a meaningful life.
13. What is the tone of Fulgham’s credo? Give an example of diction that helps to create this tone.

Chapters 1-3

1. What do you think of Chris McCandless after reading the first three chapters of the book?
2. What is the tone of the book, based on the first three chapters? Give two examples of diction that help to achieve this tone.
3. Give an example of irony from the book.
4. How are the characteristics and ideals of Chris McCandless similar to the Transcendentalists?
5. Jon Krakauer admits that he is not objective in reporting the story of Chris McCandless, but also encourages the reader to determine whether McCandless’ actions and behavior are “admirably courageous or reckless.” Based on what you’ve read so far, which description do you think is the best fit?

Chapters 4-7

1. Why does Krakauer include the excerpt from Paul Shepard’s book at the beginning of chapter four? What does it have to do with the events in this chapter?
2. To Chris McCandless, what does it mean to pursue happiness?
3. What does the pursuit of happiness mean to you? Use details in your answer.

4. In your opinion, did Chris McCandless have a positive or negative effect on the life of Ronald Franz? Explain your answer.
5. In chapter seven, the reader gets a brief glimpse into the early family life of Chris McCandless. Describe the relationship he had with his parents, and explain how this may have affected the decisions he has made through the first seven chapters of the book.

Chapters 8-10

1. Compare the story of Everett Ruess with the story of Chris McCandless. Did these men go into the wilderness for the same reason?
2. Do you think Krakauer includes the Ruess' story to emphasize his similarity with McCandless, or his differences? Explain your answer.
3. Pick one of the following people or groups mentioned in chapters 8-10, for comparison with Chris McCandless. Either discuss which story is most similar to McCandless', or which is most different, and explain your answer.
4. Give an example of one primary source and one secondary source that Krakauer uses to piece together the story of Chris McCandless.
5. Why do you think so many of the people who choose to leave society and wander in the wilderness also choose to change their names?
6. In a letter responding to Krakauer's article about Chris McCandless in *Outsider* magazine, one reader wrote, "Entering the wilderness purposefully ill-prepared, and surviving a near-death experience does not make you a better human, it makes you damn lucky." Another wrote, "Why would anyone intending to 'live off the land for a few months' forget Boy Scout rule number one: Be Prepared?" How do you respond to these criticisms?

Chapters 11-13

1. A multi-genre paper is one that uses different types of sources to tell a story or give information about a topic. The many sources Krakauer uses in the first two chapters include a map, a postcard, an interview with Jim Gallien, graffiti, and a note written by Chris McCandless. Does the fact that the information is coming from so many different sources enhance or detract from the story? Explain your answer.
2. List three different sources Krakauer uses in chapters 11-13.
3. Choose one of the genres Krakauer uses in any chapter of the book. Explain why Krakauer may have chosen to use this genre, and evaluate its effect on the story.
4. List two additional genres Krakauer could have used to tell McCandless' story, and explain the reasons he may have not used these genres.
5. McCandless' father wonders how "...a kid with so much compassion could cause his parents so much pain." Evaluate his point-of-view. Was Chris McCandless selfish for disappearing into the wilderness? Explain your answer.
6. Explain the role Chris' relationship with his father and the knowledge of his father's moral failures may have played in his decision to enter the wilderness.

Chapters 14-15

1. Evaluate Krakauer's choice to include his own stories of his own youthful explorations in the novel.
2. Krakauer insists that McCandless' journey was not a suicide attempt. Do you agree? How does it change your perception of McCandless if he was attempting suicide? Explain your answers.

3. List two similarities and two differences between Krakauer's youthful explorations and McCandless' journey into the wild. You may use a Venn Diagram if you wish.
4. Some have called Chris McCandless and Jon Krakauer "modern-day Transcendentalists." Do these men fit in with the Transcendentalists, in your opinion? Explain your reasoning.
5. What did Krakauer learn about himself by climbing Devil's Thumb?
6. Give an example of vivid imagery from Krakauer's stories about his adventures in chapters 14 and 15.
7. Give an example of figurative language from chapter 14 or 15.
8. Give an example of a time in your life when you went on an adventure or faced a challenge that taught you something important about yourself. Describe the experience and tell what you learned from it.

Chapters 16-18 and Epilogue

1. In your opinion, what is the relationship between the pursuit of happiness and obtaining one's own American Dream?
2. How do you think Chris McCandless would have answered question 1?
3. Read the list of quotations about happiness that is distributed in class. Pick one with which you agree, and one with which you disagree. Explain your reasoning in each case.
4. Explain how Chris McCandless' definition of happiness appears to have changed from May 1992 to July 1992.
5. What is ironic about Chris' decision to return to civilization?
6. Has your definition of what it means to pursue happiness changed while reading this novel? Why or why not?

7. Describe how the life and death of Chris McCandless affected another person of your choice.
8. Read what Chris' mother, Billie McCandless, says at the end of the epilogue. Do you think most of the people who knew Chris would agree? Explain your answer.
9. In your opinion, do people have the right to pursue happiness in whatever way they choose, regardless of the effects on those around them? Explain your answer.