

# Walden

Author  
**Henry David Thoreau**

Year Published  
**1854**

Original Language  
**English**

THEMES

## Marching to a Different Drummer

In 1845 philosopher and writer Henry David Thoreau built a tiny cabin in the woods of Concord, Massachusetts. There he lived, alone and self-sufficient, for two years. His observations and reflections became the basis of his book *Walden*, an essay collection that has inspired generations of students, environmentalists, and nature lovers.



### Nature

Closely observing nature is key to the best education.

### Self-Improvement

Meditation allows us to "elevate our lives" and understand our place in the universe.

### Self-Reliance

Living independently helps us break free from the expectations and conventions of traditional society.

### Minimalism

Detaching ourselves from a goal-driven, materialistic worldview is the path to genuine happiness.

## Main Characters



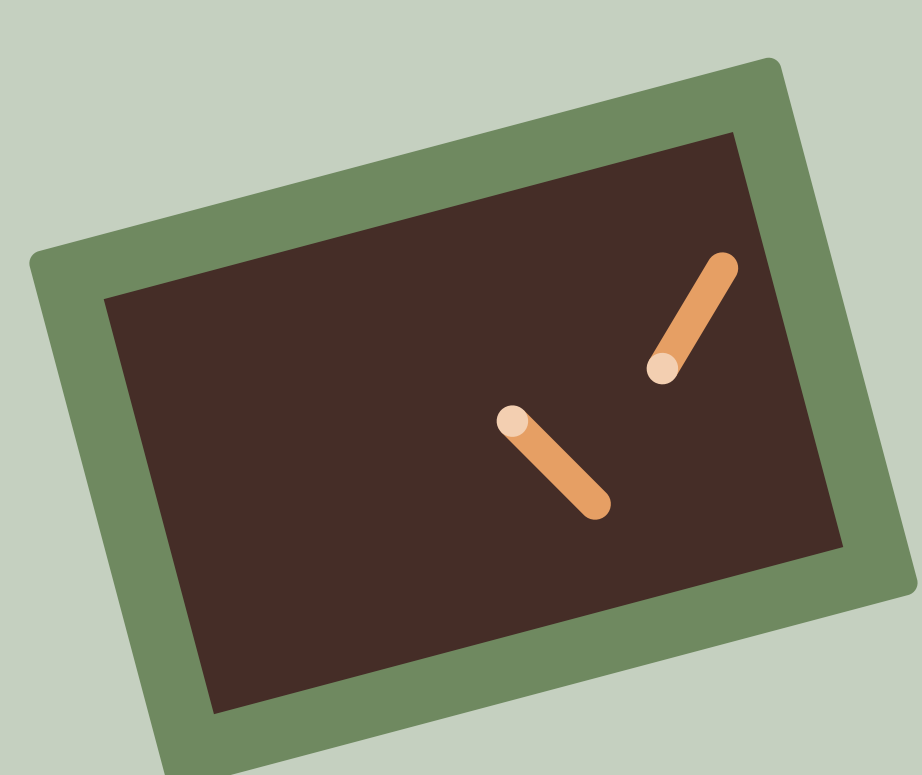
**The Woodchopper**  
*Alex Therien*

Humble, strong, and distinguished backwoodsman



**The Poet**  
*William Ellery Channing*

Witty wordsman, friend, and frequent visitor



**The Philosopher**  
*Bronson Alcott*

Utopian thinker and educator

### Henry David Thoreau

Relentlessly self-questioning narrator



**John Field**

Irish-American laborer; Eternal underdog

### The Old Immortality

*Ralph Waldo Emerson*

Serenely wise, elegant, and intellectual

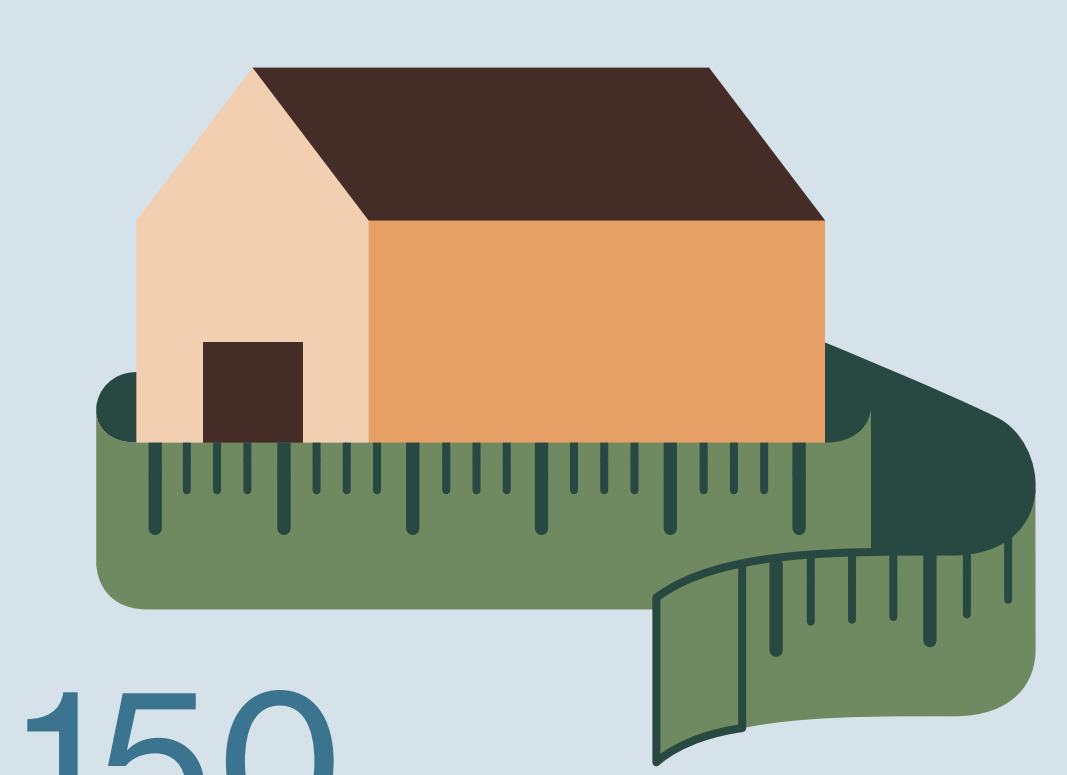
## Author



**HENRY DAVID THOREAU**  
1817–62

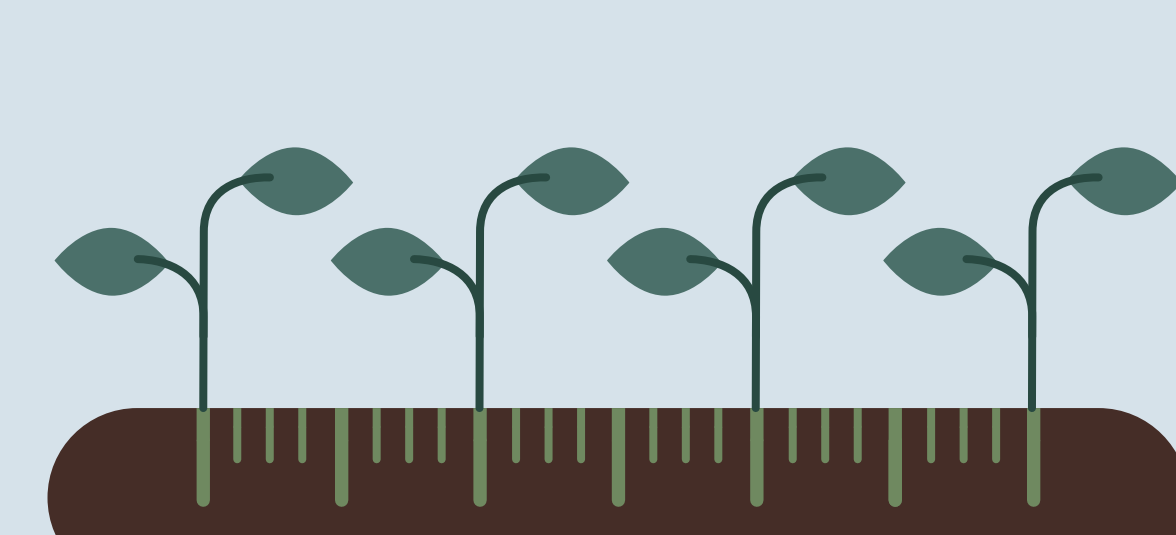
Christened David Henry, Thoreau began calling himself Henry David in early adulthood—perhaps a sign of his many battles to change the status quo. Thoreau tried various occupations, including surveying and working in his father's pencil factory, but writing, philosophy, and abolitionism were constants throughout his life.

## Walden by the Numbers



150

Square footage of Thoreau's Walden cabin



7

Miles of rows Thoreau planted in his beanfield



\$8.71

Profit Thoreau made selling vegetables grown at Walden



2

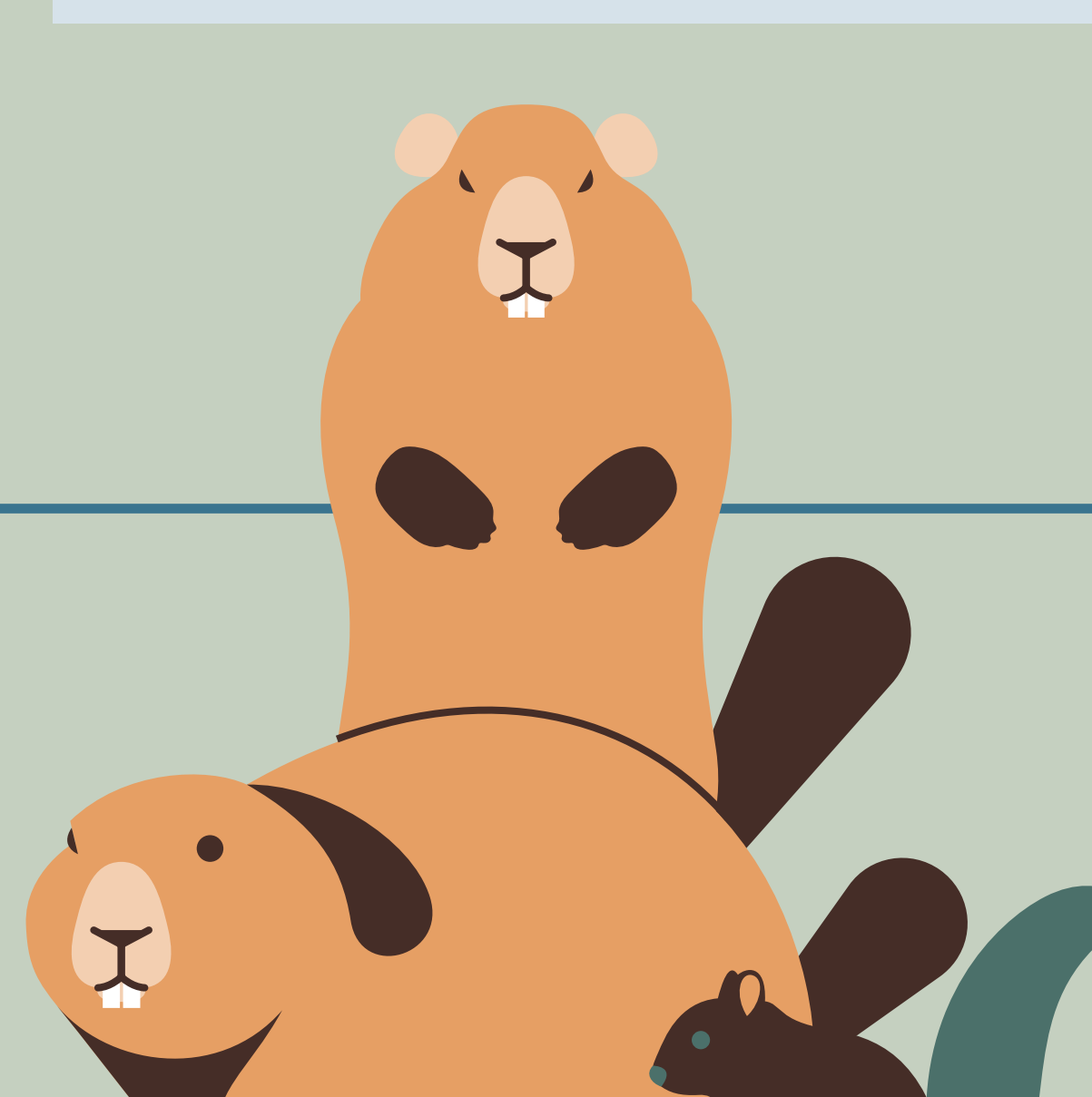
Years, months, and days Thoreau lived at Walden

## Motifs



**The Four Seasons**

Each new season in Walden offers a new period of growth and reflection.



**Woodland Creatures**

They are Thoreau's most frequent companions—and teachers.



**The Great Thinkers**

Thoreau's many quotations from poetry and philosophy underscore his message that studying literature is crucial to self-understanding.



*Heaven is under our feet as well as over our heads.*

Chapter 16