

## Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882)

American poet, philosopher, lecturer, and essayist

Ralph Waldo Emerson was an American essayist and philosopher. Later he participated in national issues and delivered many antislavery speeches, even welcoming the beginning of Civil War. Ralph Waldo Emerson's works are a pivotal part of American literature.

Ralph Waldo Emerson was born on 25 May 1803 in the Puritan New England town of Boston, Massachusetts. Young Ralph had a strict but loving upbringing. Early on young Waldo as he liked to be called started keeping journals and later would base many of his essays on his thoughts and observations. While his writings were sometimes criticized as being too abstract, he was an eloquent and popular speaker. After studying the classics at the Boston Latin School, Emerson enrolled in Harvard College, graduating in 1821.

Initially published anonymously, Emerson's first collection of essays, *Nature*, is the culmination of much soul-searching and scholarly study by Emerson in the fields of philosophy and religion. Never intending to be regarded as a philosopher, Emerson emerged as one of the original thinkers of his age.

The history of Emerson's thought is a rebel against the world of "mechanical necessity" created in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and the establishment of the sovereignty of a personality. His influence on the development of the American literature can hardly be overestimated. Emily Dickinson and Robert Frost grow as poets under his influence. His quotations are still popular in the modern American society.

### **Answer the questions**

1. What is the place of Ralph Waldo Emerson's works in the American literature?
2. What made the base of many of his essays?
3. How can Emerson's thought be characterized?

### **Ralph Waldo Emerson**

### **Quotations**

"To be yourself in a world that is constantly trying to make you something else is the greatest accomplishment."

“For every minute you are angry you lose sixty seconds of happiness.”

“What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us.”

“Always do what you are afraid to do.”

“Do not go where the path may lead, go instead where there is no path and leave a trail.”

“Our greatest glory is not in never failing, but in rising up every time we fail.”

“It is not the length of life, but the depth.”

“Dare to live the life you have dreamed for yourself. Go forward and make your dreams come true.”

“Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm.”

“Life is a journey, not a destination.”

“Once you make a decision, the universe conspires to make it happen.”

“Write it on your heart that every day is the best day in the year.”

“Without ambition one starts nothing. Without work one finishes nothing. The prize will not be sent to you. You have to win it.”

“Life is a succession of lessons which must be lived to be understood.”

“Peace cannot be achieved through violence; it can only be attained through understanding.”

“If we encounter a man of rare intellect, we should ask him what books he reads.”

“A hero is no braver than an ordinary man, but he is brave five minutes longer.”

“Love, and you shall be loved.”

“The creation of a thousand forests is in one acorn”

**Choose three quotes and comment on them**