

“Self Reliance” Analyzing Argument

Objective: CCSS 11.RI.8 – Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text.

Objective: CCSS 11.SL.4 – Determine the theme of a text.

Assignment:

Read Self-Reliance and annotate the handout Mr. Restad gave in class (it’s also below) and respond to the prompts below.

1. **SHORT ANSWER (2-3 sentences):** Identify the type of literary device Emerson is using when he says, “Trust thyself: every heart vibrates to that iron string.” **Interpret** what Emerson means by this.

Type answer here

2. **SHORT ANSWER(3-4 sentences):** Identify what type of literary device Emerson is using when he says, “Pythagoras was misunderstood, and Socrates and Jesus, and Luther, and Copernicus, and Galileo, and Newton*, and every pure and wise spirit that ever took flesh. To be great is to be misunderstood.” **Interpret** what he means in that last sentence and **explain** why he uses these people as examples.

Type answer here

3. **IN A PARAGRAPH:** Analyze Emerson’s view on self-reliance and **evaluate** one of the reasons Emerson gives that impedes people’s ability to be self-reliant.
 - Use the ["Self Reliance" Paragraph Organizer](#) and be sure to...
 - Create a topic sentence for your overall idea
 - Back it up with examples from the essay (try using 2 direct quotes, just try it doesn’t have to be perfect), explanations of those examples, and a conclusions that answers the question “so what”?
 - answer both parts of the prompt.
 - If you’re struggling with Emerson and want to read and try an easier article try this one: [“Self-Reliance Is The Secret Sauce To Consistent Happiness”](#) Respond to the same prompt above: analyze the argument and evaluate one of the reasons Foreaux gives that stops people from being self reliant.

Type answer here

(passed out in class)

“Self Reliance” Annotation

DIRECTIONS: To help us understand our own role in creating our version of Eudaimonia, the well-lived life, it helps to understand some pitfalls people fall into. Read and annotate the following passage from Ralph Waldo Emerson’s essay “Self-Reliance.”

1. Summarize and paraphrase each paragraph using the comment tool (just go with the main ideas, don’t try to break down every single metaphor and sentence)
2. Highlight or underline at 2 or 3 MAIN CLAIMS Emerson makes about things that prevent people from being self-reliant
3. Comment on three words you don’t know with the definitions
4. Underlined words are vocab words

SELF RELIANCE

There 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 the plot of ground which is given him to till...

Trust thyself: every heart vibrates to that iron string. Accept the place the divine providence has found for you, the society of your contemporaries, the connection of events. Great men have always done so, and confided themselves childlike to the genius of their age, betraying their perception that the Eternal was stirring at their heart, working through their hands, predominating in all their being...

Whoso would be a man, must be a non-conformist. 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. I remember an answer which when quite young I was prompted to make a valued adviser who was wont to importune me with the dear old doctrines of the church. On my saying, What have I to do with the sacredness of traditions, if I live wholly from within? my friend suggested, — "But these impulses may be from below, not from above." I replied, 'They do not seem to me to be such; but if I am the devil's child, I will live then from the devil.' No

law can be sacred to me but that of my nature. Good and bad are but names very readily transferable to that or this; the only right is what is after my constitution; the only wrong what is against it...

What I must do is all that concerns me, not what the people think. This rule, equally arduous in actual and in intellectual life, may serve for the whole distinction between greatness and meanness. It is the harder because you will always find those who think they know what is your duty better than you know it. It is easy in the world to live after the world's opinion; it is easy in solitude to live after our own; but the great man is he who in the midst of the crowd keeps with perfect sweetness the independence of solitude...

For non-conformity the world whips you with its displeasure. And therefore a man must know how to estimate a sour face. The bystanders look askance on him in the public street or in the friend's parlor. If this aversion had its origin in the contempt and resistance like his own he might well go home with a sad countenance; but the sour face of the multitude, like their sweet faces, have no deep cause — disguise no god, but are put on and off as the wind blows and a newspaper directs....

The other terror that scares us from self-trust is our consistency; a reverence for our past act or word because the eyes of others have no other data for computing our orbit than our past acts, and we are loath to disappoint them.

A foolish consistency is the source of fear of little minds, adored by little statesmen and philosophers and religious leaders. With consistency a great soul has simply nothing to do. He may as well concern himself with his shadow on the wall. Out upon your guarded lips! Sew them up with pockthread, do. Else if you would be a man speak what you think today in words as hard as cannonballs, and tomorrow speak what tomorrow thinks in hard words again, though it contradict everything you said today. Ah, then, exclaim the aged ladies, you shall be sure to be misunderstood! Misunderstood! It is a right fool's word. Is it so bad then to be misunderstood? Pythagoras was misunderstood, and Socrates and Jesus, and Luther, and Copernicus, and Galileo, and Newton*, and every pure and wise spirit that ever took flesh. To be

great is to be misunderstood.

*Great thinkers whose groundbreaking work caused controversy.