



# The American Scholar (An Essay)

*Ralph Waldo Emerson*

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Ralph Waldo Emerson was an American essayist, lecturer, and poet, who led the Transcendentalist movement of the mid-19th century. He was seen as a champion of individualism and a prescient critic of the countervailing pressures of society, and he disseminated his thoughts through dozens of published essays and more than 1,500 public lectures across the United States.

Emerson gradually moved away from the religious and social beliefs of his contemporaries, formulating and expressing the philosophy of Transcendentalism in his 1836 essay, *Nature*. Following this ground-breaking work, he gave a speech entitled *The American Scholar* in 1837, which Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr. considered to be America's "Intellectual Declaration of Independence".

Emerson wrote on a number of subjects, never espousing fixed philosophical tenets, but developing certain ideas such as individuality, freedom, the ability for humankind to realize almost anything, and the relationship between the soul and the surrounding world. Emerson's "nature" was more philosophical than naturalistic; "Philosophically considered, the universe is composed of Nature and the Soul."

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