

## Transcendentalism in Songs Assignment



**Due Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

The Transcendentalists' views about life, society, self-reliance, and nature did not disappear from American thought with the end of the New England Renaissance. In fact, many of their ideas can be found in modern pop culture- movies, music, television, comics, etc.- without the modern audience (or even the artists) ever realizing or identifying them.

**This is your task:** find an example of each of the following five Transcendentalist ideas in songs:

1. Optimism
2. Nonconformity
3. Importance of, beauty of, or connection with nature
4. Free thought/individual expression
5. Self-confidence or self-truth

Once you have found an example of lyrics that fit into one of the categories, write the title of the song, the artist, and the chosen lyrics into the appropriate box in the left-hand column of the worksheet. In the right-hand column, explain how you believe your selected lyrics fit the Transcendentalist idea.

The project is very open to personal interpretation (as it should be, going along with the theme of Transcendentalism). This means that there will be *no wrong answer* for any choice made; however, you must be sure to **back your choice up with a good explanation** in order to get credit. For example: don't just tell me that the lyrics reference nature- explain how the lyrics reflect a Transcendentalist's views about nature (that nature is beautiful, that humans are reflected through nature, that nature provides greater knowledge, etc.).

On the due date, you will have the opportunity to share your song selections and explanations in groups of 4 or 5. I will give additional instructions on that day. You may play parts of your song selections using an iPod or other MP3/CD device if you wish. If you will need a laptop to play your songs, let me know before Friday!

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** Make sure the songs you select are school appropriate! Any songs containing explicit language or wildly inappropriate themes will result in an automatic point reduction and potential further disciplinary action.