

Peaceful Walden Pond:



Site of Henry's house by Walden Pond:



Replica of his small house:



Train tracks along the far edge of Walden Pond:





## Excerpts from Walden, By Henry David Thoreau

[1] The Fitchburg Railroad touches the pond about a hundred rods south of where I dwell. I usually go to the village along its causeway, and am, as it were, related to society by this link.

[2] The whistle of the locomotive penetrates my woods summer and winter, sounding like the scream of a hawk sailing over some farmer's yard, informing me that many restless city merchants are arriving within the circle of the town, or adventurous country traders from the other side. As they come under one horizon, they shout their warning to get off the track to the other, heard sometimes through the circles of two towns.

[3] Here come your groceries, country; your rations, countrymen! And here's your pay for them! screams the countryman's whistle; timber like long battering-rams going twenty miles an hour against the city's walls, and chairs enough to seat all the weary and heavy-laden that dwell within them. All the Indian huckleberry hills are stripped, all the cranberry meadows are raked into the city. Up comes the cotton, down goes the woven cloth; up comes the silk, down goes the woollen; up come the books, but down goes the wit that writes them.

[4] The startings and arrivals of the cars are now the epochs in the village day. They go and come with such regularity and precision, and their whistle can be heard so far, that the farmers set their clocks by them, and thus one well-conducted institution regulates a whole country. Have not men improved somewhat in punctuality since the railroad was invented?

[5] Now that the cars are gone by and all the restless world with them, and the fishes in the pond no longer feel their rumbling, I am more alone than ever.

## **Night Journey, Theodore Roethke (1908-1963)**

Now as the train bears west,  
Its rhythm rocks the earth,  
And from my Pullman berth  
I stare into the night  
While others take their rest.  
Bridges of iron lace,  
A suddenness of trees,  
A lap of mountain mist  
All cross my line of sight,  
Then a bleak wasted place,  
And a lake below my knees.  
Full on my neck I feel  
The straining at a curve;  
My muscles move with steel,  
I wake in every nerve.  
I watch a beacon swing  
From dark to blazing bright;  
We thunder through ravines  
And gullies washed with light.  
Beyond the mountain pass  
Mist deepens on the pane;  
We rush into a rain  
That rattles double glass.  
Wheels shake the roadbed stone,  
The pistons jerk and shove,  
I stay up half the night.  
To see the land I love.

Henry David Thoreau, 1854 (from Walden):

Every path but your own is the path of fate.  
Keep on your own track, then.

Ralph Waldo Emerson, 1867 (from "The American Scholar" essay,  
known as the "Phi Beta Kappa Address"):

We have listened too long to the courtly  
muses of Europe. ... We will walk on our own  
feet; we will work with our own hands; we  
will speak our own minds.