

4. Paragraph 3 begins with a direct address: "Trust thyself: every heart vibrates to that iron string." What does this metaphor mean, and how does it serve as an apt introductory phrase for what follows in paragraphs 3 through 6?
5. Emerson develops an analogy in paragraph 4 and another in paragraph 5. Select one of them and explain how it serves to deliver the idea that Emerson develops.
6. What is the chief idea Emerson develops in paragraphs 7 and 8? Briefly paraphrase his meaning.
7. In paragraph 8 Emerson writes, "I do not wish to expiate, but to live." What does he mean?
8. In paragraph 10 Emerson writes, "If I know your sect I anticipate your argument." What does he mean?
9. What does Emerson mean when he suggests, in paragraph 16, that "[t]he force of character is cumulative?"
10. What is Emerson's subject in paragraph 21? Explain the distinction he makes between "Intuition" and "tuition."
11. Explain how Emerson uses rhetorical questions in paragraph 22 to develop an analogy. What is the idea that that analogy develops?
12. Explain the distinction Emerson makes in paragraph 31.
13. Paragraph 35 mentions "all the offices and relations of men." Select one of them and analyze how Emerson explains the need for self-reliance in that office (paragraphs 34–44).
14. Explain the nature and effectiveness of the analogy in paragraph 46.
15. Emerson is well known for his pithy, epigrammatic statements: "Trust thyself: every heart vibrates to that iron string" (par. 3); "No law can be sacred to me but that of my nature" (par. 7); or "To be great is to be misunderstood" (par. 14) to cite just three examples. We can apply the same criteria to some of his short and dense paragraphs, e.g., paragraphs 9, 13, 21, and 44. Select the one that appeals most to you and analyze how Emerson uses rhetorical strategies to develop his ideas in that paragraph.
16. If we consider how they might apply to today's society or culture, we recognize that many of Emerson's statements seem timeless: "If I know your sect I anticipate your argument" (par. 10); "A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds, adored by little statesmen and philosophers and divines" (par. 14); "To be great is to be misunderstood" (par. 14); "At times the whole world seems to be in conspiracy to importune you with emphatic trifles" (par. 29); "The civilized man has built a coach, but has lost the use of his feet" (par. 46); and "They measure their esteem of each other by what each has, and not by what each is" (par. 49). Select one of these statements and discuss the extent to which it applies to our life and time. Be specific in your discussion.
17. How effectively does paragraph 50 serve as a conclusion to the essay? Be specific in your answer.
18. A strong rhetorical device Emerson employs throughout the essay is the analogy. Identify one that appeals to you. How does it support Emerson's ideas?

SIMULATED AP ESSAY QUESTIONS

1. **Rhetorical Analysis.** Carefully read paragraphs 1–3 from "Self-Reliance" by Ralph Waldo Emerson. Then, in a well-written essay, analyze the rhetorical strategies Emerson uses to develop his perspective on individuality.

2. **Rhetorical Analysis.** Carefully read paragraphs 6–9 from “Self-Reliance” by Ralph Waldo Emerson. Then, in a well-written essay, analyze how Emerson crafts these paragraphs to reveal his perspective on self-reliance.
3. **Rhetorical Analysis.** Carefully read paragraphs 9–13 from “Self-Reliance” by Ralph Waldo Emerson. Then, in a well-written essay, analyze how Emerson uses rhetorical strategies to reveal his perspective on conformity.
4. **Rhetorical Analysis.** Carefully read paragraphs 45–48 from “Self-Reliance” by Ralph Waldo Emerson. Then, in a well-written essay, explain how Emerson uses the resources of language to characterize society.
5. **Argument.** Carefully read paragraph 14 from “Self-Reliance” by Ralph Waldo Emerson. Then, in a well-organized essay, defend, challenge, or qualify Emerson’s observation that “To be great is to be misunderstood.” Support your argument with appropriate evidence.
6. **Argument.** Carefully read paragraph 14 from “Self-Reliance” by Ralph Waldo Emerson and select what you think is his most challenging or compelling observation. Then, in a well-organized essay, defend, challenge, or qualify the validity of that observation. Refer to your observation, reading, and experience for support.
7. **Argument.** Carefully read paragraphs 31–33 from “Self-Reliance” by Ralph Waldo Emerson, in which he criticizes what he calls “our age” (the early- to mid-nineteenth century). Then, in a well-organized essay, evaluate the extent to which Emerson’s observations apply to life today. Use appropriate evidence to support your argument.
8. **Argument.** Carefully read paragraphs 48–50 from “Self-Reliance” by Ralph Waldo Emerson, considering its implications for our time. Then, in a well-organized essay, evaluate the extent to which Emerson’s observations apply to life today. Support your argument with evidence that is appropriate and specific.

SUGGESTED WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

1. Compile a list of eight to ten epigrammatic statements from “Self-Reliance.” Then select a favorite one and write an essay explaining why it is particularly appealing.
2. Which paragraph of “Self-Reliance” did you find the easiest to understand? Which did you find the most difficult? Which paragraph spoke to you most clearly? Write an essay explaining why.
3. Many people regard Emerson’s “Self-Reliance” as an important document, an essential text in the canon of American literature. At the same time, we recognize that it is a difficult and challenging read for teenagers. Considering both of these factors, write a letter to your teachers explaining why you think it should or should not be part of the curriculum for next year’s students.
4. Historian Arthur Schlesinger has said that “Self-Reliance,” along with such documents as “The Gettysburg Address,” *The Federalist Papers*, The Declaration of Independence, and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, among others, is one of the texts essential to an understanding of America, on his list of the “baker’s dozen of books that have described, defined, and enriched America’s sense of itself.” Consider why a historian might believe so, and write a letter to Schlesinger or to your history teacher that defends, challenges, or qualifies Schlesinger’s observation.
5. About Ralph Waldo Emerson, historian Arthur Schlesinger observed the following:

No one has expressed the American faith in the sovereignty of the individual more brilliantly, lyrically, and sardonically than Emerson. Born in 1803, trained for the Unitarian ministry, he left the pulpit for the lecture platform, from which he

expounded his Transcendental philosophy in crackling aphorisms. Some critics have decried what they regard as Emerson's shallow optimism, but underneath his alleged disregard of the problem of evil and his allegedly guileless faith in intuition lie shrewd, skeptical, hard-edged, almost ruthless Yankee insights into human nature. "For every benefit you receive," Emerson said, "a tax is levied." It is this tough side of Emerson that appealed in the nineteenth century to Hawthorne, Carlyle, and Nietzsche, and that appeals to post-modernists today. The *Library of America* volume contains his masterly study of national character, *English Traits*, the penetrating biographical portraits in *Representative Men*, and his essays. For the tough-minded Emerson, read "History," "Self-Reliance," and "Experience," in *The Conduct of Life*, "Power" and "Fate."

Write an essay in which you evaluate Schlesinger's remark concerning Emerson as "tough-minded" in his essay "Self-Reliance."

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

The Gettysburg Address

The sixteenth president of the United States, Abraham Lincoln was born in 1809 in rural Kentucky and raised in rural Indiana. As an adult he settled in Illinois, worked in a store, managed a mill, became a self-taught lawyer, and served in the state legislature. After several unsuccessful campaigns for national office and a short stint in the House of Representatives, Lincoln was elected president in 1860 on his stance against the extension of slavery, and he guided the nation through the Civil War until his assassination in 1865.

Lincoln was not only a great leader. He also wrote great speeches, models of careful, forceful prose. The Gettysburg Address is the shortest and the most powerful of these. As you read, think about the care Lincoln took in the crafting of his phrases and the pacing of his sentences. Famously written on the back of an envelope during a train ride, the quality of the speech does not reflect the circumstances of its composition.

Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battle-field of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field, as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

But, in a larger sense, we can not dedicate — we can not consecrate — we can not hallow — this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far

above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us — that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion — that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain — that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom — and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.