**Ralph Waldo Emerson 1803-1882**

Leader of the transcendental movement

Harvard educated

Career began as teacher, then became minister, but had too many questions about his faith/religion, so left his profession and eventually became a writer and lecturer.

Surrounded himself with intellectuals:

Liberal, well-educated, forward-thinking, reform-minded

Very philosophical – not stories – but essays

Concerned with the self/individual:

* self-improvement
* enhancing the mind
* self-understanding
* non-conformity
* using intuition

Most famous essay “Self-Reliance”

* Very challenging diction and concepts
* Many aphorisms – short statements full of insight

**Group Work – Emerson’s Aphorisms**

1. Locate your group’s quote in the essay.

2. Re-read the section containing the quote.

3. Make sense of the aphorism based on the paragraph in which it appears. Explain it.

4. How does it relate to the concept of self-reliance? Explain.

5. Connect the quote to at least one of the key beliefs of transcendentalism.

6. Discuss a contemporary example that illustrates the quote – how/why is it still relevant today? Be specific.

A. “Envy is ignorance; imitation is suicide.”

B. “Trust thyself: every heart vibrates to that iron string.”

C. “Whoso would be a man, must be a nonconformist.”

D. “ . . . the great man is he who in the midst of the crowd keeps with perfect sweetness the independence of solitude.”

E. “For nonconformity the world whips you with its displeasure.”

F. “A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds.”

G. “To be great is to be misunderstood.”