“Do not be too moral. You may cheat yourself out of much life. Aim above morality. Be not simply good; be good for something.” Henry Thoreau

Of course, continue if you have time, interest, and energy, especially Resistance to Civil Government.
You’ll find that Thoreau emphasizes the practical aspects of Transcendentalism. He speaks in a personal voice and addresses a common reader. Consider as you read this excerpt from Walden how the effects that Thoreau creates differ from Emerson’s.

Consider the following questions as you read:

- What for Thoreau is wrong with the daily life of his contemporaries?
- What were his motives for going to Walden?
- What led him to write the book?
- What is the effect of his version of the first person?
- Can you find evidence that he is making a pun on I and eye (recall Emerson’s “transparent eyeball” in “Nature.”)

WRITE: Choose one or two

- In what ways does Thoreau embody Emerson’s ideal of the American Scholar? Use specifics from both writers’ works in response.
- Compare/contrast Emerson’s Nature and Thoreau’s Walden as literary works: how are they conceptually similar but technically different?
- Are Thoreau’s criticisms of his own society applicable to ours? In what ways? Imagine Thoreau visiting the 21st century. What might he have to say? (Ground your response in his principles and our problems.)
- What are the necessities of life in Thoreau’s view? Explain these first, summarize that is, in your own words. Then write your own treatise on the necessities of life.
- Which sections of Thoreau’s writings were most important to you, seem most important and applicable to your own life? Summarize the sections and then explain in what ways his ideas illuminate your own thinking.
- Imagine and write about a conversation with Thoreau on one of the issues of our day. First of all, explain (summarize) the predicament we’re in (e.g. terrorism, global warming, poverty, issues with health care, etc.). Then ask him for his thoughts and opinions. And then give him voice. Answer for him.

“The greatest compliment one ever paid me was to ask me what I thought and then attend to my answer.” Henry David Thoreau