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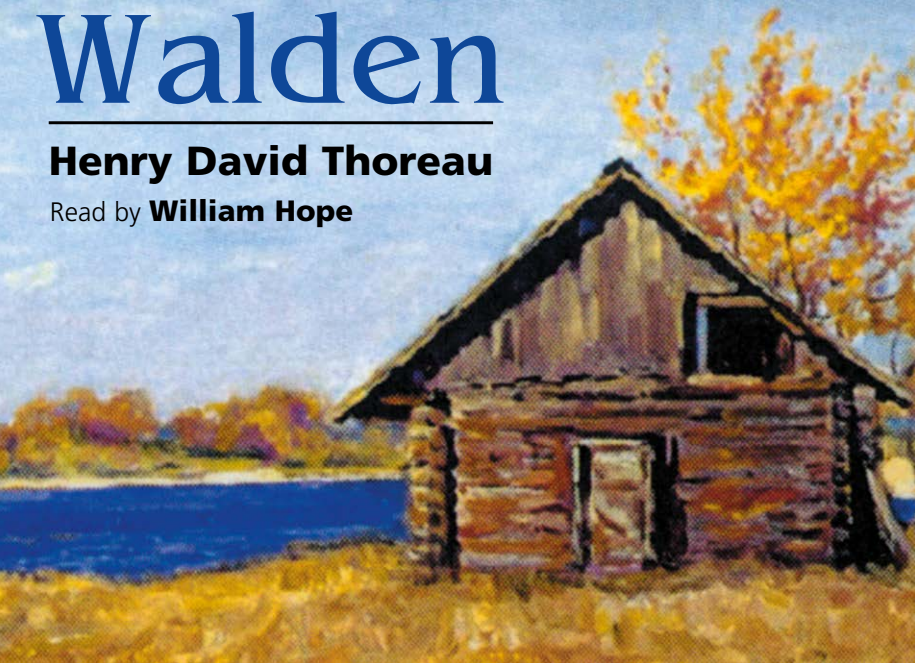
NAXOS
AudioBooks

NON-
FICTION

Walden

Henry David Thoreau

Read by **William Hope**



CD 1

1	Economy	7:07
2	'The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation'	3:45
3	'I think that we may safely trust a good deal more than we do.'	6:59
4	'Not long since, a strolling Indian went to sell baskets...'	1:31
5	'My purpose in going to Walden Pond...'	3:25
6	'As for a Shelter, man did not live long on earth...'	6:53
7	'The farmer is endeavouring to solve the problem of a livelihood...'	2:14
8	'Most men appear never to have considered what a house is...'	3:09
9	'Near the end of March 1845, I borrowed an axe and went down to the woods...'	10:24
10	'I have thus a tight shingled and plastered house...'	8:19
11	'By surveying, carpentry and day-labour...'	2:26
12	'I have learned from my two years' experience...'	4:04
13	'My furniture, part of which I made myself...'	4:05
14	'For more than five years I maintained myself thus...'	4:51
15	'But all this is very selfish, I have heard some of my townsmen say.'	9:05

Total time on CD 1: 78:25

CD 2

1	Where I lived and what I lived for	5:36
2	'When I first took up my abode in the woods...'	4:05
3	'Every morning I got up early and bathed in the pond...'	4:43
4	'Hardly a man takes a half-hour's nap after dinner...'	6:14
5	Reading	8:14
6	Sounds	6:31
7	'The Fitchburg Railroad touches the post about a hundred rods south of where I dwell.'	5:54
8	'Now that the cars are gone by and all the restless world with them...'	5:34
9	Solitude	9:46
10	Visitors	2:40
11	'Who should come to my lodge this morning but a true Homeric man...'	4:53
12	'Many a traveller came out of his way to see me...'	5:11
13	The Bean-Field	9:56

Total time on CD 2: 79:28

CD 3

1	The Village	5:50
2	The Ponds	7:35
3	'In summer, Walden never becomes so warm as most water which is exposed to the sun...'	6:30
4	The skaters and water-bugs finally disappear in the latter part of October...'	5:30
5	I have said that Walden has no visible inlet nor outlet...'	7:21
6	Baker Farm	6:23
7	Higher Laws	5:24
8	'I have found repeatedly, of late years, that I cannot fish without failing a little in self-respect.'	10:21
9	Brute Neighbours	5:27
10	'I was witness to events of a less peaceful character.'	3:39
11	'Once I was surprised to see a cat walking along the stony shore of the pond...'	5:23
12	House-Warming	6:53

Total time on CD 3: 76:24

CD 4

1	'The pond had in the meanwhile skimmed over in the shadiest and shallowest coves...'	10:06
2	Former inhabitants; and winter visitors	6:52
3	'At this season I seldom had a visitor.'	5:47
4	Winter Animals	4:52
5	'When the ground was not yet quite covered yet...'	5:40
6	The Pond in Winter	8:53
7	'In the winter of '46-7, a hundred Irishmen with Yankee overseers...'	3:48
8	Spring	6:28
9	'What is man but a mass of thawing clay?'	5:30
10	'A single gentle rain makes the grass many shades greener.'	5:19
11	Conclusion	15:23

Total time on CD 4: 78:46

Total time on CDs 1-4: 5:13:03

Walden

Henry David Thoreau



*‘If a man does not keep pace with his companions,
perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer. Let him step
to the music which he hears, however measured or far away.’*

“I am a Schoolmaster – a Private Tutor, a Surveyor – a Gardener, a Farmer – a Painter, I mean a House Painter, a Carpenter, a Mason, a Day-Laborer, a Pencil-Maker, a Glass-paper Maker, a Writer, and sometimes a Poetaster.” So wrote Henry David Thoreau.

But he is remembered for two extraordinary years of reflection while sojourning

in nature, and his account of it, *Walden*, which was published in 1854. Though it had little impact during Thoreau’s lifetime, *Walden* is now recognised as one of the great works of American literature, a sensitive but clear essay on life and living in nature, informed by an abiding interest in classic literature and philosophy.

Henry David Thoreau was born in the

village of Concord, Massachusetts, in 1817, into an unremarkable family. His father owned a pencil factory. Henry revealed academic potential early, and went to Harvard to study 'navigation' (as he says in *Walden*), but spent much of his student years in the library, pursuing his own vicarious literary interests.

On his return in 1837 he became a teacher at the Concord Academy – for two weeks. His sensitive, poetic temperament was not suited to keeping boisterous pupils in order. He left to join his father in the pencil-making business. The following year, in 1838, he started a school with his brother John, putting into practice his more progressive ideas about education. But John's growing ill-health forced closure.

In 1839, he went, with John, on a canoe trip down the McCormack and Concord rivers. It was a key experience, crystallising his need to combine his interests in nature and writing. It resulted in the publication of *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers* ten years later.

By this time, he had already formed a close friendship with the poet and essayist

Ralph Waldo Emerson, one of the leading figures of the Transcendentalists, who by coincidence had settled in Concord. Here, in this movement, and particularly in the fatherly figure of Emerson, Thoreau found an external, eloquent voice which accorded with his inner feelings: the concern for the individual vision, the emphasis on living with an awareness of nature, and the elevation of intuition rather than reason in dealing with life.

It was the vision that Thoreau craved, one that provided a stance against the growing commercialism and materialism that he found everywhere in the burgeoning American society. Prompted by Emerson, Thoreau started a diary and wrote copiously. He began writing for *The Dial*, the Transcendentalist magazine, producing essays, reviews and poetry. It was here that his first writings on nature appeared. Between 1841 and 1843, Thoreau lived mainly with Emerson, his wife and children. It was a difficult period for Thoreau. His brother John died of lockjaw, and a time spent on Staten Island (with the family of Emerson's brother William) trying to establish himself as a

poet in a more metropolitan society failed.

Thoreau went back to Concord, to his father's pencil factory. And then early in 1845, he decided to live alone in the countryside. Emerson owned some land two miles outside Concord, by a small lake, Walden Pond, and Thoreau, now aged 27, found it ideally suited to his purpose. There, he built a small cabin and, sojourning in nature, read and observed, living on food that he could gather, and beans that he grew. This combination of living in nature, all senses alert, with his background in classic literature and philosophy, and a sense of spiritual purpose produced Walden.

Thoreau spent two years by Walden Pond – not exclusively, for he returned to Concord from time to time. When he left his cabin finally, in 1847, he went back to stay at the Emerson home while Emerson himself was away in Europe. And gradually, he accustomed himself to more conventional society. He took charge of his father's pencil factory though it never became particularly profitable; he developed a reputation as a reliable surveyor; he made other naturalist trips.

But he also became involved in a variety of causes, principally the abolition of slavery. He supported the Underground Railway, the clandestine movement which helped runaway slaves reach Canada and freedom. He admired John Brown, the anti-slavery campaigner, who was hanged for the debacle at Harper's Ferry. (His essay *Civil Disobedience* reflected his more proactive political views, and widely influenced movements in the twentieth century.)

Thoreau continued to work at his writings and memories of his time at Walden Pond. In 1854, *Walden* was finally published, but it wasn't an overnight critical success. Yet it did reach a select circle. In 1855, George Eliot, in London, praised it in a review in the *Westminster Magazine*, commenting on its 'deep poetic sensibility' and remarking on its 'unworldliness'.

When *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers* was published in 1849, 1,000 copies were printed. 100 were sold, 75 were given away, and in 1853, 706 copies were dumped on Thoreau's doorstep by the publisher. *Walden* fared

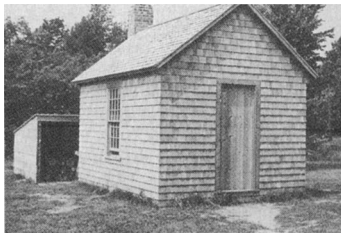
better – the initial print run of 2000 was sold within five years – though it was only in the twentieth century that it finally achieved status as a classic in its own right.

Thoreau died, probably of tuberculosis, in 1862, at the age of 44. It was said he went out into the woods to count tree rings, and caught a bad cold. He was buried in Concord.

His cabin didn't last much longer. When Thoreau left it, the cabin was bought by

Emerson who sold it to his gardener, Hugh Whelan. It started to fall into repair, and in 1849, it was bought by a farmer who moved it to his farm where it was used to store grain. In 1868, the roof was used to make a pig sty and in 1875, the last pieces of timber shored up a barn. However, a replica has now been built and can be viewed, by Route 126, on the original site by Walden Pond.

Notes by Nicolas Soames



The replica of Thoreau's cabin at the Lyceum in Concord, Massachusetts.



Though American by birth, **William Hope** trained at RADA and has appeared in theatre on both sides of the Atlantic. His TV and film work have been similarly extensive and have included leading roles for James Cameron in *Aliens*, Clive Barker in *Hellraiser II* and for Channel 4, *Dropping the Baby*. A former member of the BBC Radio Drama Company, he is regularly heard on radio in both plays and books. He also reads *The Great Gatsby* and *The Last of the Mohicans* for Naxos AudioBooks.

Credits

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