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thoughts which is so often safely offered in jest. And I am sure that I never read any memorable news in a newspaper. If we read of one man robbed, or murdered, or killed by accident, or one house burned, or one vessel wrecked, or one steamboat blown up, or one cow run over on the Western Railroad, or one mad dog killed, or one lot of grasshoppers in the winter,—we never need read of another. One is enough. . . .

Let us spend one day as deliberately as Nature, and not be thrown off the track by every nutshell and mosquito's wing that falls on the rails. Let us rise early and fast, or break fast, gently and without perturbation; let company come and let company go, let the bells ring and the children cry,—determined to make a day of it. . . .

Time is but the stream I go a-fishing in. I drink at it; but while I drink I see the sandy bottom and detect how shallow it

112–126 Thoreau says that we do not have much time on earth.

*When does every day become a day of nature? How do we spend our time? How do we spend our lives? How do we spend our deaths?*

WORDS  
TO  
KNOW

**perturbation** (pŭr'ter-bā'shen) *n.* a disturbance of the emotions; agitation; uneasiness

115 is. Its thin current slides away, but eternity remains. I would  
drink deeper; fish in the sky, whose bottom is pebbly with stars.  
I cannot count one. I know not the first letter of the alphabet. I  
120 have always been regretting that I was not as wise as the day I  
was born. The intellect is a cleaver; it discerns and rifts its way  
into the secret of things. I do not wish to be any more busy with  
my hands than is necessary. My head is hands and feet. I feel all  
my best faculties concentrated in it. My instinct tells me that my  
head is an organ for burrowing, as some creatures use their  
125 snout and fore-paws, and with it I would mine and burrow my  
way through these hills. I think that the richest vein is some-  
where hereabouts; so by the divining rod and thin rising vapors  
I judge; and here I will begin to mine.

FROM *Solitude*



130 This is a delicious evening,  
when the whole body is one  
sense, and imbibes delight  
through every pore. I go and  
come with a strange liberty  
in Nature, a part of herself.  
135 As I walk along the stony  
shore of the pond in my shirt  
sleeves, though it is cool as  
well as cloudy and windy, and I see nothing special to attract me,  
all the elements are unusually congenial to me. The bullfrogs  
trump to usher in the night, and the note of the whippoorwill is  
borne on the rippling wind from over the water. Sympathy with  
140 the fluttering alder and poplar leaves almost takes away my  
breath; yet, like the lake, my serenity is rippled but not ruffled.  
These small waves raised by the evening wind are as remote  
from storm as the smooth reflecting surface. Though it is now  
dark, the wind still blows and roars in the wood, the waves still  
145 dash, and some creatures lull the rest with their notes. The  
repose is never complete. The wildest animals do not repose, but  
seek their prey now; the fox, and skunk, and rabbit, now roam  
the fields and woods without fear. They are Nature's watch-  
men,—links which connect the days of animated life. . . .

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125 **divining rod**: a forked stick that is believed to indicate the presence of underground water.

130-145 What does Thoreau say he is part of, and why does he feel as he does?

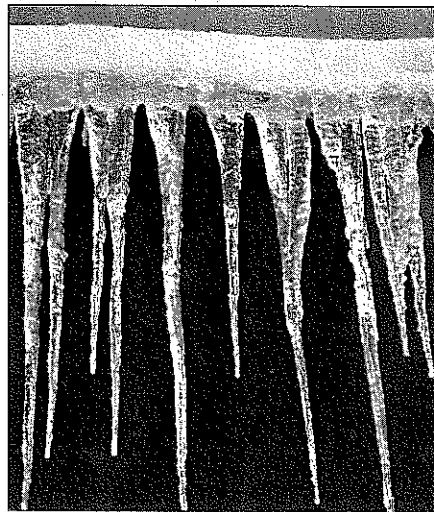
WORDS  
TO  
KNOW

**congenial** (kən-gēn'yəl) *adj.* suited to one's needs or nature; agreeable  
**serenity** (sə-rēn'ī-tē) *n.* a mental and spiritual calm; tranquillity

Men frequently say to me, "I should think you would feel lonesome down there, and want to be nearer to folks, rainy and snowy days and nights especially." I am tempted to reply to such,—This whole earth which we inhabit is but a point in space. How far apart, think you, dwell the two most distant inhabitants of yonder star, the breadth of whose disk cannot be appreciated by our instruments? Why should I feel lonely? is not our planet in the Milky Way? This which you put seems to me not to be the most important question. What sort of space is that which separates a man from his fellows and makes him solitary? I have found that no exertion of the legs can bring two minds much nearer to one another. . . .

## The Pond in Winter

Every winter the liquid and trembling surface of the pond, which was so sensitive to every breath, and reflected every light and shadow, becomes solid to the depth of a foot or a foot and a half, so that it will support the heaviest teams, and perchance the snow covers it to an equal depth, and it is not to be distinguished from any level field. Like the marmots in the surrounding hills, it closes its eye-lids and becomes dormant for three months or more. Standing on the snow-covered plain, as if in a pasture amid the hills, I cut my way first through a foot of snow, and then a foot of ice, and open a window under my feet, where, kneeling to drink, I look down into the quiet parlor of the fishes, pervaded by a softened light as through a window of ground glass, with its bright sanded floor the same as in summer; there a perennial waveless serenity reigns as in the amber twilight sky, corresponding to the cool and even temperament of the inhabitants. Heaven is under our feet as well as over our heads. . . .



153-160 Thoreau suggests that because we are all in this life together, the physical distance between us is insignificant.

167 marmots: rodents that hibernate in the winter; groundhogs.

WORDS  
TO  
KNOW

perennial (pe-rĕn'ē-əl) *adj.* lasting through the year or through many years; enduring