

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Chapter 6

### Philosophical Background: Transcendentalism

**Objective:** Understanding historical and philosophical background pertinent to the story

#### Activity

Chapter Six begins with a passage written by the writer Henry David Thoreau and highlighted by Chris McCandless. Thoreau (1817-1862) was part of a literary and philosophical movement called Transcendentalism, which started in New England in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Some of the main ideas of Transcendentalism include the following:

- Self-reliance: The Transcendentalists distrusted anyone claiming political, religious, or intellectual authority. They believed that each person should trust his or her own intuition.
- Society vs. the individual: Society is usually misguided, and it tends to force conformity.
- The connection between people and nature: Nature and human beings are not separate; in fact, everything that exists is unified by one spirit.

Take the following quiz to see if you agree with the main ideas of Transcendentalism.

1. I get most of my knowledge from
  - A. books and other people.
  - B. my own experience and intuition.
2. I believe that government should be
  - A. very powerful.
  - B. very limited.
3. When walking through the woods, I feel
  - A. scared.
  - B. comfortable.
4. Titles, positions of power, and awards are
  - A. important.
  - B. unimportant.
5. Good decisions are more often made by
  - A. groups.
  - B. individuals.