

# Tea Time: Ralph Waldo Emerson

post by Wende

Ralph Waldo Emerson was born on May 25, 1803, in Boston, Massachusetts. His father, a Unitarian minister, died when Emerson was eight years of age. Raised by his mother and aunt, Ralph Waldo Emerson began writing as a child. He attended the Boston Latin School, where he studied the classics. After graduating from Harvard College in 1821, Emerson became a Unitarian minister like his father. However, after his wife's death in 1831, he began doubting his faith and turned to Transcendentalism, a philosophy based on metaphysical idealism developed by Plato. In its simplest terms, transcendentalism can be explained as having faith in one's own intellect or instinct as opposed to a faith in God. He formed the Transcendental Club in 1836 in Boston, Massachusetts, giving many lectures and publishing various works including the essay entitled "Self Reliance." Earning a reputation as a major American poet, Emerson published his collected *Poems* in 1847 and *May-Day* in 1867. Ralph Waldo Emerson died on April 27, 1882 in Concord, Massachusetts.



Excerpt from *The Humble-Bee*

Burly dozing humble-bee

Where thou art is clime for me.

Let them sail for Porto Rique,  
Far-off heats through seas to seek;  
I will follow thee alone,  
Thou animated torrid zone!  
Zigzag steerer, desert cheerer,  
Let me chase thy waving lines;  
Keep me nearer, me thy hearer,  
Singing over shrubs and vines.

### **Learning Activities**

Recite or memorize the poem “Humble Bee”

Record what you learn about Ralph Waldo Emerson on the notebooking page.

Analyze “The Humble-bee” excerpt using the study notes.

### **Tea Time Treat**

Bake these sweet [soft honey cookies](#) and serve with honey-lemon tea!

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## The Humblebee by Ralph Waldo Emerson

Burly dozing humblebee!  
Where thou art is clime for me.  
Let them sail for Porto Rique,  
Far-off heats through seas to seek,  
I will follow thee alone,  
Thou animated torrid zone!  
Zig-zag steerer, desert-cheerer,  
Let me chase thy waving lines,  
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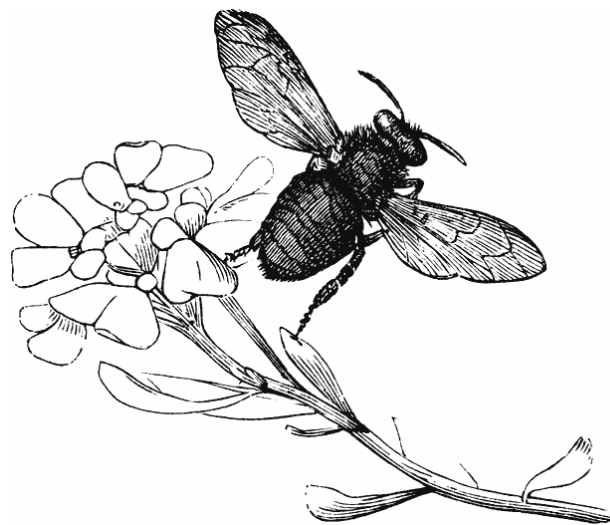
Insect lover of the sun,  
Joy of thy dominion!  
Sailor of the atmosphere,  
Swimmer through the waves of air,  
Voyager of light and noon,  
Epicurean of June,  
Wait I prithee, till I come  
Within ear-shot of thy hum,—  
All without is martyrdom.

When the south wind, in May days,  
With a net of shining haze,  
Silters the horizon wall,  
And, with softness touching all,  
Tints the human countenance  
With a color of romance,  
And, infusing subtle heats,  
Turns the sod to violets,  
Thou in sunny solitudes,  
Rover of the underwoods,  
The green silence dost displace,  
With thy mellow breezy bass.

Hot midsummer's petted crone,  
Sweet to me thy drowsy tune,  
Telling of countless sunny hours,  
Long days, and solid banks of flowers,  
Of gulfs of sweetness without bound  
In Indian wildernesses found,  
Of Syrian peace, immortal leisure,  
Firmest cheer and bird-like pleasure.

Aught unsavory or unclean,  
Hath my insect never seen,  
But violets and bilberry bells,  
Maple sap and daffodels,  
Grass with green flag half-mast high,  
Succory to match the sky,  
Columbine with horn of honey,  
Scented fern, and agrimony,  
Clover, catch fly, adders-tongue,  
And brier-roses dwelt among;  
All beside was unknown waste,  
All was picture as he passed.

Wiser far than human seer,  
Yellow-breeched philosopher!  
Seeing only what is fair,  
Sipping only what is sweet,  
Thou dost mock at fate and care,  
Leave the chaff and take the wheat,  
When the fierce north-western blast  
Cools sea and land so far and fast,  
Thou already slumberest deep,—  
Woe and want thou canst out-sleep,—  
Want and woe which torture us,  
Thy sleep makes ridiculous.





# Ralph Waldo Emerson

Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Place of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Death: \_\_\_\_\_

Place of Death: \_\_\_\_\_

What is he famous for?

\_\_\_\_\_

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## “The Humble-Bee” by Ralph Waldo Emerson

Burly dozing humble-bee

Where thou art is clime for me.

Let them sail for Porto Rique,

Far-off heats through seas to seek;

I will follow thee alone,

Thou animated torrid zone!

Zigzag steerer, desert cheerer,

Let me chase thy waving lines;

Keep me nearer, me thy hearer,

Singing over shrubs and vines.

**“The Humble-Bee” by Ralph Waldo Emerson**

*Burly dozing humble-bee  
Where thou art is clime for me.  
Let them sail for Porto Rique,  
Far-off heats through seas to seek;  
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Keep me nearer, me thy hearer,  
Singing over shrubs and vines.*

Handwriting practice lines consisting of multiple sets of three horizontal lines (top solid, middle dashed, bottom solid).

*The Humble-Bee*  
by Ralph Waldo Emerson

**Study Notes**

Define:

Burly: \_\_\_\_\_

Clime: \_\_\_\_\_

Porto Rique: \_\_\_\_\_

Animated: \_\_\_\_\_

Torrid: \_\_\_\_\_

Interpret:

Explain, in your own words, what the poem says about bees.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Examine:

Look at the individual elements of the poem. Give examples of the following:

Assonance – the repetition of vowel sounds without the repetition of consonants

\_\_\_\_\_

Internal Rhyme – when rhyming words appear in the same line of poetry

\_\_\_\_\_

Malapropism – a play on words in which a similarly sounding word is used for effect

\_\_\_\_\_

Evaluate:

The value of a poem is determined by the impact it has on its reader. What did you find most interesting about the poem?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*The Humble-Bee*  
by Ralph Waldo Emerson

**Study Notes**

Define:

Burly: bulky; stout

Clime: a country, region, or climate

Porto Rique: former spelling of Puerto Rico, an island south east of the United States

Animated: full of life; vivacious; lively

Torrid: very hot; tropical;

Interpret:

Explain, in your own words, what the poem says about bees.

Answers will vary.

Examine:

Look at the individual elements of the poem. Give examples of the following:

Assonance – the repetition of vowel sounds without the repetition of consonants

Far-off heats through seas to seek;  
Let me chase thy waving lines;  
Keep me nearer, me thy hearer,

Internal Rhyme – when rhyming words appear in the same line of poetry

Zigzag steerer, desert cheerer;  
Keep me nearer, me thy hearer,

Malapropism –a play on words in which a similarly sounding word is used for effect

“Humble-bee” used instead of “Bumble-bee”

Evaluate:

The value of a poem is determined by the impact it has on its reader. What did you find most interesting about the poem?

Answers will vary



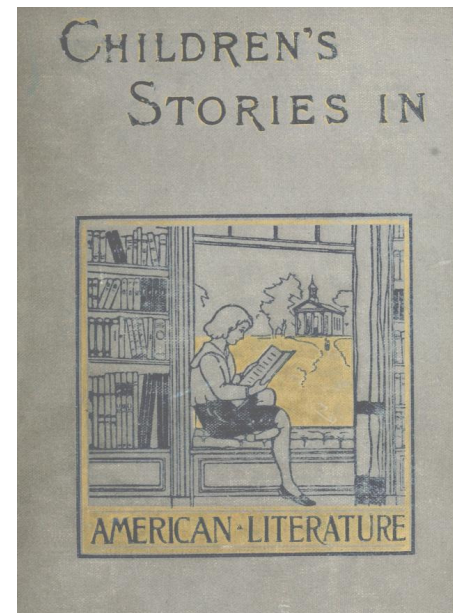
Instructions for mini-book:

Print out all pages after these instructions.

Mountain fold all pages so print is on outside.  
Place pages inside cover and staple close to fold,  
making sure to catch all pages.

*The Story  
of  
Ralph Waldo Emerson*

excerpted from



**BY Henrietta Christian Wright**

Copyright, 1895

## RALPH WALDO EMERSON

1803-1882



Walking the streets of Boston, in the days when old-fashioned gambrel-roofed houses and gardens filled the space now occupied by dingy warehouses, might be seen a serious-eyed boy who, whether at work or at play, seemed always to his companions to live in a world a little different from their own. This was not the dream-world so familiar to childhood, but another which few children enter, and those only who seem destined to be teachers of their race. One enters this world just as the world of day-dreams is entered, by forgetting the real world for a time and letting the mind think what thoughts it will. In this world Milton spent many long hours when a child, and Bunyan made immortal in literature the memory of these

dreams of youth. Never any thought of the real world enters this place, whose visitors see but one thing, a vision of the soul as it journeys through life. To Bunyan this seemed but a journey over dangerous roads, through lonely valleys, and over steep mountain sides; to Milton it seemed a war between good and evil; to this little New-England boy it seemed but a vision of duty bravely accomplished, and in this he was true to the instincts of that Puritan race to which he belonged. The boy's father was the Rev. William Emerson, pastor of the First Church in Boston, who had died when this son, Ralph Waldo, was in his ninth year; but for three years longer the family continued to reside in the quaint old parsonage, in which Emerson had been born. The father had left his family so poor that the congregation of the First Church voted an annuity of five hundred dollars to the widow for seven years, and many were the straits the little family was put to in order to eke out a comfortable living. The one ambition was to have the three boys educated. An aunt who lived in the family declared that they were born to be educated, and that it must be brought about somehow. The mother took boarders, and the two eldest boys, Ralph and Edward, helped do the housework. In a little letter written to his aunt, in his tenth year, Ralph mentions that he rose before six in the morning in order to help his brother make the fire and set the table for prayers before calling his mother—so early did the child realize that he must be the burden-sharer of the family.

Poverty there was, but also much happiness in the old parsonage, whose dooryard of trees and shrubs, joined on to the neighboring gardens, made a pleasant outlook into the world. When school work was over, and household duty disposed of, very often the brothers would retire to their own room and there find their own peculiar joy in reading tales of Plutarch, reciting poetry, and declaiming some favorite piece, for solitude was loved by all, and the great authors of the world were well studied by these boys, whose bedchamber was so cold that Plato or Cicero could only be indulged in when the reader was wrapped so closely in his cloak that Emerson afterward remarked, the smell of woollen was forever afterward associated with the Greek classics. Ralph attended the Latin Grammar School, and had private lessons besides in writing, which he seems to have acquired with difficulty, one of his school-fellows telling long afterward how his tongue moved up and down as the pen laboriously traversed the page, and how on one occasion he even played truant to avoid the dreaded task, for which misdemeanor he was promptly punished by a diet of bread and water. It was at this period that he wrote verses on the War of 1812, and began an epic poem which one of his school friends illustrated. Such skill did he attain in verse-making that his efforts were delivered on exhibition days, being rendered with such impressiveness by the young author that his mates considered nothing could be finer.

From the Latin school Emerson passed to Harvard in his fifteenth year, entering as "President's Freshman," a post which brought with it a certain annual sum and a remission of fees in exchange for various duties, such as summoning unruly students to the president, announcing the orders of the faculty, and serving as waiter at commons.

At college Emerson was noted as a student more familiar with general literature than with the college text-books, and he was an ardent member of a little book club which met to read and discuss current literature, the book or magazine under discussion being generally bought by the member who had the most pocket-money at the time. But in spite of a dislike for routine study, Emerson was graduated with considerable honor, and almost immediately afterward set about the business of school-teaching.

But Emerson was not able to take kindly to teaching, and in his twenty-first year began preparations to enter the ministry. These were interrupted for a while by a trip South in search of health, but he was finally able to accept a position as assistant minister at the Second Church. A year or two later he was again obliged to leave his work and go abroad for his health. After he returned home he decided to leave the ministry, and he began that series of lectures which speedily made him famous and which have determined his place in American literature.

From this time Emerson began to be recognized as one of the thought-leaders of his age. To him literature appealed as a means of teaching those spiritual lessons that brace the soul to brave endurance. While Hawthorne was living in the world of romance, Poe and Lowell creating American poetry, and Bancroft and Motley placing American historical prose on the highest level, Emerson was throwing his genius into the form of moral essays for the guidance of conduct. To him had been revealed in all its purity that vision of the perfect life which had been the inspiration of his Puritan ancestors. And with the vision had come that gift of expression which enabled him to preserve it in the noblest literary form. These essays embrace every variety of subject, for, to a philosopher like Emerson every form of life and every object of nature represented some picture of the soul. When he devoted himself to this task he followed a true light, for he became and remains to many the inspiration of his age, the American writer above all others whose thought has moulded the souls of men.

Much of Emerson's work found form in verse of noble vein, for he was a poet as well as philosopher. He also was connected with one or two magazines, and became one of the most popular of American lecturers; with the exception of several visits to Europe and the time given to his lecturing and other short trips, Emerson spent his life at Concord, Mass. To this place came

annually, in his later years, the most gifted of his followers, to conduct what was known as the Concord School of Philosophy. Throughout his whole life Emerson preserved that serenity of soul which is the treasure of such spiritually gifted natures.

He died at Concord in 1882, and was buried in the village cemetery, which he had consecrated thirty years before.