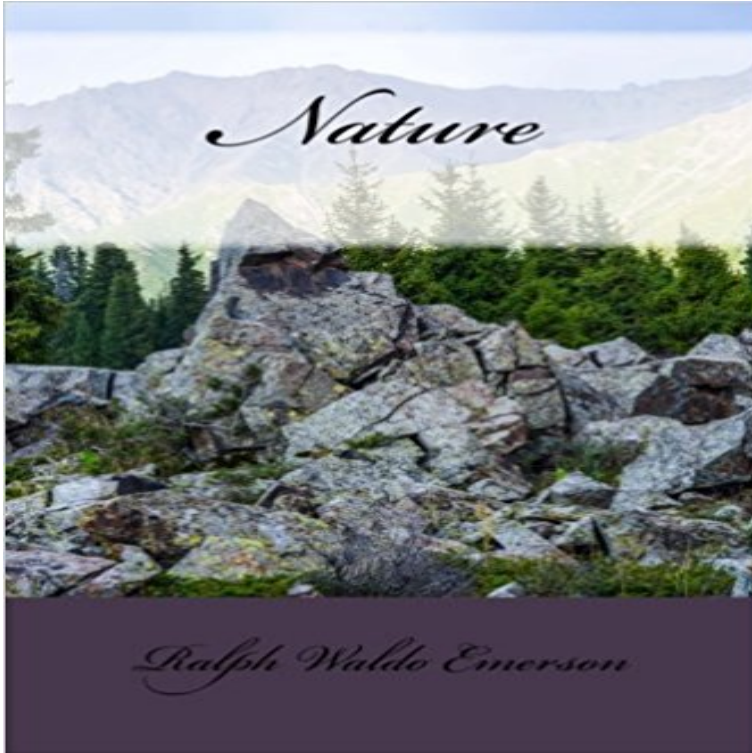


Nature



Nature is an essay written by Ralph Waldo Emerson, published anonymously in 1836. It is in this essay that the foundation of transcendentalism is put forth, a belief system that espouses a non-traditional appreciation of nature. Transcendentalism suggests that divinity suffuses all nature, and speaks to the notion that we can only understand reality through studying nature. A visit to the Museum National dHistoire Naturelle in Paris inspired a set of lectures delivered in Boston and subsequently the ideas leading to the publication of Nature. Within this essay, Emerson divides nature into four usages; Commodity, Beauty, Language and Discipline. These distinctions define the ways by which humans use nature for their basic needs, their desire for delight, their communication with one another and their understanding of the world. Henry David Thoreau had read Nature as a senior at Harvard College and took it to heart. It eventually became an essential influence for Thoreaus later writings, including his seminal Walden. In fact, Thoreau wrote Walden while living in a self-built cabin on land that Emerson owned. Their longstanding acquaintance offered Thoreau great encouragement in pursuing his desire to be a published author. Emerson followed the success of this essay with a famous speech entitled The American Scholar. These two works laid the foundation for both his new philosophy and his literary career.

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