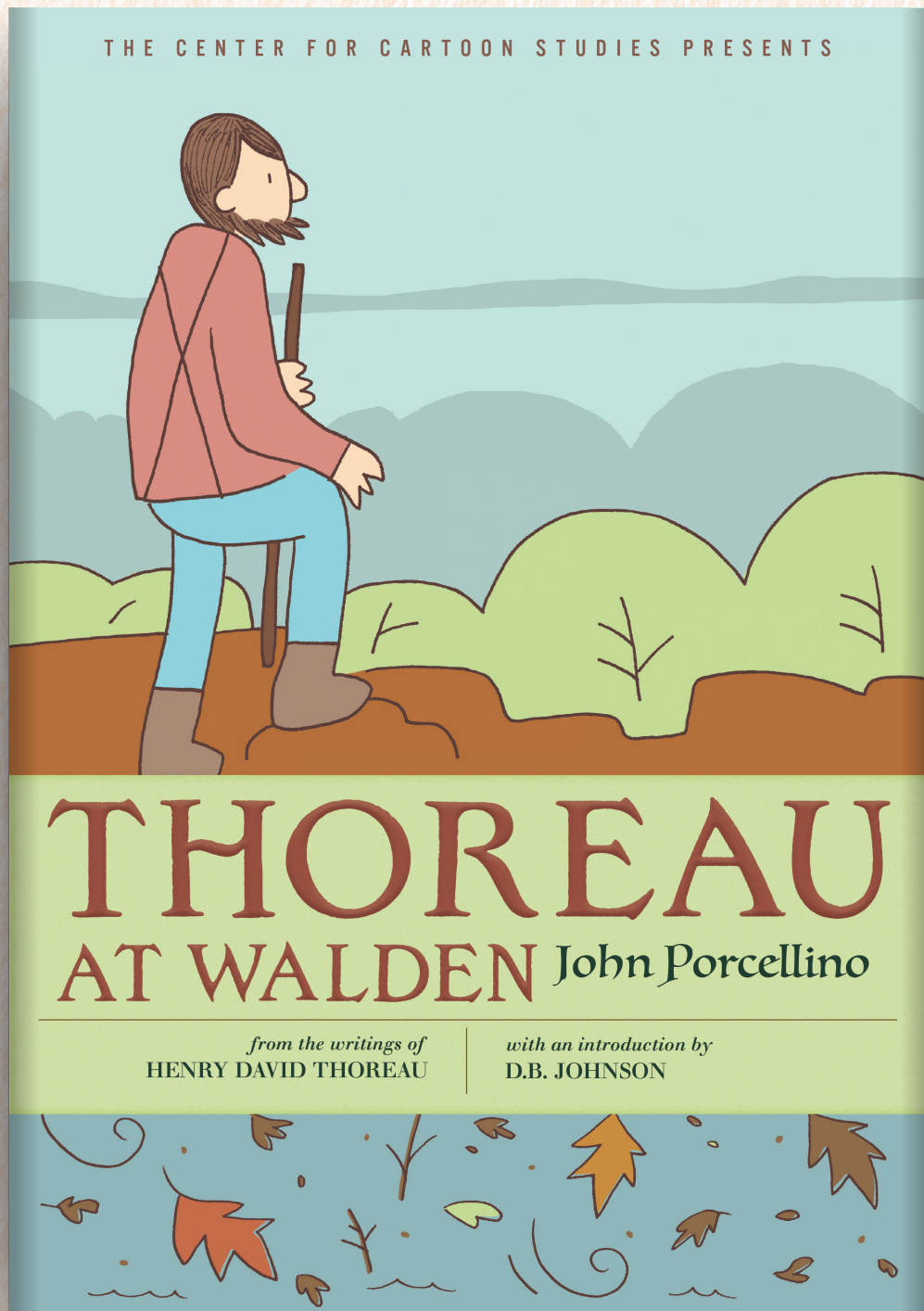


LITTLE, BROWN AND COMPANY BOOKS FOR YOUNG READERS

Educator's Guide | Ages 12 and Up



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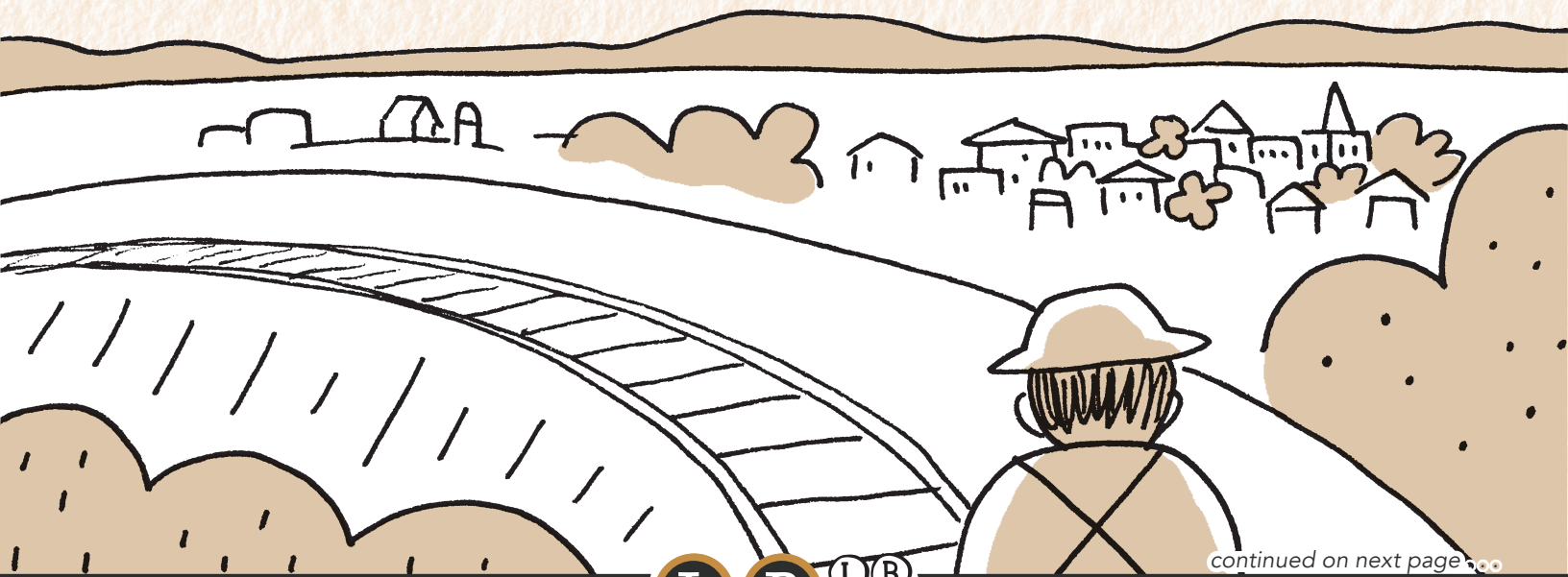
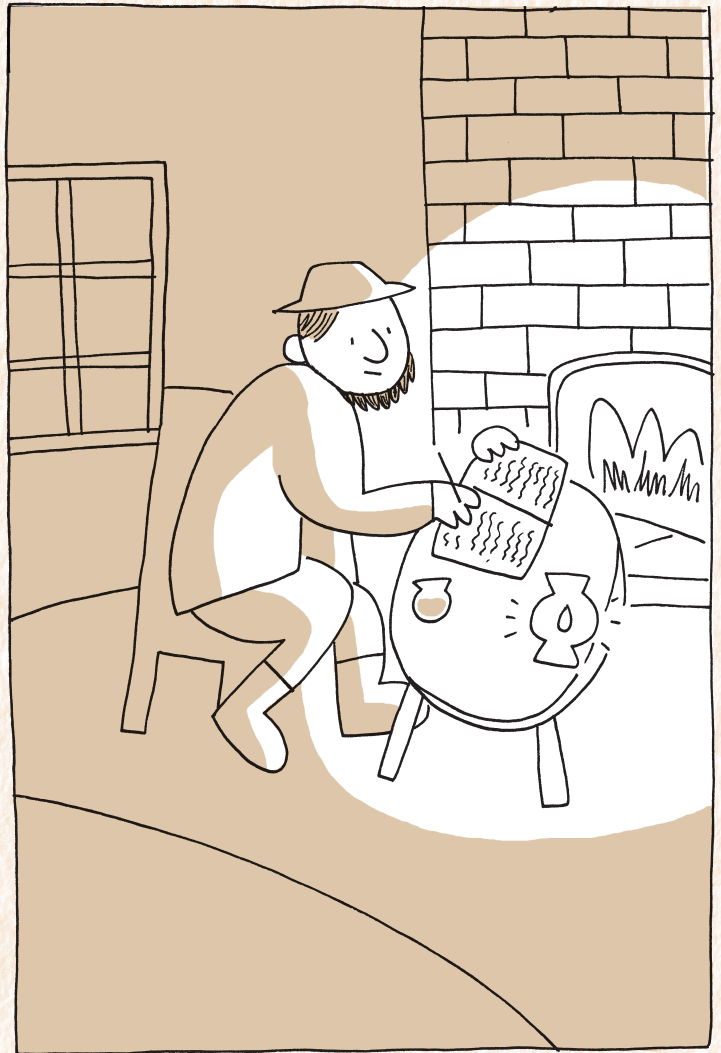
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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

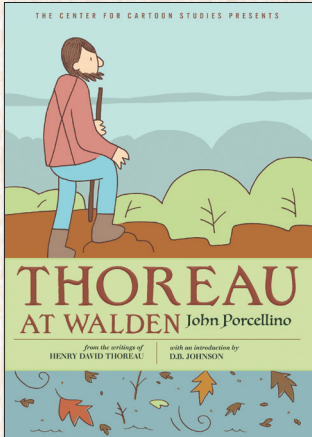
- Most of this graphic novel is imagery without text. Why do you think the author decided to do that? How did it affect your reading of the book?
- Thoreau says he moved to Walden “to live deliberately.” What do you think that means? What would cause you to make such an extreme choice in your own life?
- Thoreau moved to Walden, built his own home, grew his own food, and sold the extra to buy any provisions he couldn’t supply himself. Do you think his experiment is possible today? Would you undertake it? Do you know anyone who would? What would be the biggest challenges facing you?
- Thoreau was an abolitionist, and spent a night in jail for intentionally not paying his taxes in protest over Massachusetts’s complicity in American slavery. From the experience, he wrote “Civil Disobedience,” which has inspired generations. Do you believe civil disobedience is effective? Have you ever been civilly disobedient?
- Thoreau was a Transcendentalist. This philosophy celebrates the individual and believes that everyone has their own inner truth that transcends physical and mental limitations. What do you think of this philosophy? Which parts of it appeal to you and which don’t? Why?
- The graphic novel is broken into four sections. Why do you think the author chose to do this? What significance (if any) does it have in relation to Thoreau’s time at Walden?
- What do you think is the significance of the encounter with the owl in the woods? Likewise, what do you think is the significance of the encounter with the mouse in Thoreau’s cabin? (Note: Both actually happened).
- Thoreau was admittedly a social person. He even visited the local town and his family regularly while he was living at Walden. Given that, why do you think he felt the overwhelming urge to go and live alone? What would prompt you to make such a large change?
- Thoreau writes about the acquisition of things: “Shall we always study to obtain more of these things and not sometimes to be content with less?” How do you think the world would be affected if more people tried to live by that principle?
- Clearly, Thoreau liked nature prior to moving to Walden. Do you think his time at Walden changed his views? In what ways?
- Based off the graphic novel, how do you think Thoreau viewed his neighbors and the local townspeople? Historically, he was seen as something of an odd duck. Do you think that affected his view of others? What do you think you’d think of him, if you were his neighbor?
- The style of the book is simple and basic. Do you think that makes it easier or harder to relate to the material? How does the style of the book match up to the subject matter?

ACTIVITIES

- Have students interview a classmate (or a family member or a community leader, etc.—be creative!) and then create a mini-biography for that person. Encourage students to think beyond the written word. They can craft a collage, make a video, write a performance piece, set ideas to music, or create a graphic novel. (Social Studies, Vocabulary, Language Arts, Art, Music, [Writing, Speaking and Listening])
- Have students choose a historic figure they have heard of but don't know much about. Have them do research on that person and then create a simple graphic novel in the style of this series on their subject. You can also have them work with other forms of media, as suggested above. (Social Studies, Vocabulary, Language Arts, Music, Art, [Writing, Speaking and Listening])
- Have students pick a character from any of the graphic novels. Then have them dress up and act like that character. They can interact with one another or you can have a class interview with each individual character. (Social Studies, Arts, Language Arts, Vocabulary [Writing, Speaking and Listening])



About the Book



9781368022330 HC
9781368027106 PB

"I am convinced, both by faith and experience, that to maintain one's self on this earth is not a hardship, but a pastime, if we will live simply and wisely." So said Henry David Thoreau in 1845 when he began his famous experiment of living by Walden Pond. In this graphic masterpiece, John Porcellino uses only the words of Thoreau himself to tell the story of those two years off the beaten track. The pared-down text focuses on Thoreau's

most profound ideas, and Porcellino's fresh, simple pictures bring the philosopher's sojourn at Walden to cinematic life. For readers who know Walden intimately, this graphic treatment will provide a vivid new interpretation of Thoreau's story. For those who have never read (or never completed!) the original, it presents a contemporary look at a few brave words to live by.

Praise for the Book

A 2009 ALA-YALSA Best Book for Young Adults

★ "Porcellino creates a poetic alternation of words and silences that effectively draws the reader into Thoreau's point of view."

—Kirkus Reviews



Kelly Johnston created this guide. He taught high school and college English for over ten years in addition to being the founding artistic director for the Arizona Shakespeare Festival. He currently lives and works in New York City as a freelance theater director and screenwriter.

About the Author



John Porcellino has been writing, drawing, and publishing minicomics, comics, and graphic novels for the last thirty-five years. His celebrated series *King-Cat Comics*, begun in 1989, has inspired a generation of cartoonists. *Diary of a Mosquito Abatement Man*, a collection of King-Cat stories about Porcellino's experiences as a pest control worker, won an Ignatz Award in 2005. *Perfect Example*, first published in 2000, chronicles his struggles with depression as a teenager. Other publications include *King-Cat Classix*, *Map of My Heart*, and *The Hospital Suite*. According to cartoonist Chris Ware, "John Porcellino's comics distill, in just a few lines and words, the feeling of simply being alive." Porcellino's work has been translated into French, German, Spanish, Swedish, Italian, and Korean. He currently lives in Beloit, Wisconsin. Find out more at king-cat.net.