Walden
Henry David Thoreau
A man is rich in proportion to the number of things which he can afford to let alone. (p. 901)
“Morning is when I am awake and there is dawn in me. Moral reform is the effort to throw off sleep. ... The millions are awake enough for physical labor, but only one in a million is awake enough for intellectual exertion ... To be awake is to be alive. I have never yet met a man who was quite awake. How could I have looked him in the face?

“We must learn to reawaken and keep ourselves awake, not by mechanical aids, but by an infinite expectation of the dawn ... I know of no more encouraging fact than the unquestionable ability of man to elevate his life by a conscious endeavor. ... Every man is tasked to make his life ... worth of the contemplation of his most elevated and critical hour.”

(pp.905-906)
from Walden, Chapter 2
“Where I Lived, and What I lived For”

“I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived. I did not wish to live what was not life, living is so dear; nor did I wish to practice resignation, unless it was quite necessary. I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrows of life, to live so sturdily and Spartan-like as to put to rout all that was not life, to drive life into a corner and reduce it to its lowest terms.”

(p. 906)
from Walden, Chapter 2
“Where I Lived, and What I lived For”

“Our life is frittered away by detail. ... Simplicity, simplicity, simplicity! ... let your affairs be as two or three and not a hundred or a thousand ... keep your accounts on your thumb nail.”

“Men think that it is essential that Nation have commerce, and export ice, and talk through a telegraph, and ride thirty miles an hour ... but whether we should live like baboons or like men, is a little uncertain. If we do not get out sleepers, and forge rails, and devote days and nights to the work, but go to tinkering upon our lives to improve them, who will build railroads? And if railroads are not built, how shall we get to heaven in season? But if we stay at home and mind our business, who will want railroads? We do not ride on the railroad, it rides upon us.”

“Why should we live with such hurry and waste of life? We are determined to be starved before we are hungry.”

(p. 907)
from Walden, Chapter 2
“Where I Lived, and What I lived For”

“Hardly a man takes a half-hour nap after dinner, but when he awakes he holds up his head and asks ‘What’s the news?’ ... After a night’s sleep the news is as indispensable as the breakfast. ‘Pray tell me any thing new that has happened to a man anywhere on this globe’,—and he reads it over his coffee and rolls, that a man had had his eyes gouged out this morning on the Wachito River, never dreaming the while that he lives in the dark unfathomed mammoth cave of this world, and has but the rudiment of an eye himself.
“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.”
(pp. 907-908)
“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 settle ourselves, and work and wedge our feet downward through the mud and slush of opinion, and prejudice, and tradition, and delusion, and appearance, that alluvion that covers the globe. ... till we come to a hard bottom and rocks in place, which we can call reality, and say, This is, and no mistake; ... Be it life or death, we crave only reality. If we are really dying, let us hear the rattle in our throats and feel cold in the extremities; if we are alive, let us go about our business.

(pp. 909-910)
“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 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 have always been regretting that I was not as wise as the day I was born. ... 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 instrument for burrowing, as some creatures use their snout and fore-paws, and with it I would mine and burrow my way through these hills. I think that the richest vein is somewhere hereabouts.”
from *Walden*, Chapter 18

“Conclusion”

“Why level downward to our dullest perception always, and praise that as common sense? The commonest sense is the sense of men asleep, which they express by snoring.”

(p. 929)
from *Walden*, Chapter 18

“Conclusion”

“Some are dinning in our ears that we Americans ... are intellectual dwarfs compared with the ancients ... But what is that to the purpose? A living dog is better than a dead lion. Shall a man go and hang himself because he belongs to the race of pygmies, and not be the biggest pygmy he can be? Let everyone mind his own business, and endeavor to be what he was made.

(p. 929)
from *Walden*, Chapter 18

“Conclusion”

“If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer. Let him step to the music which he hears however measured or far away.”

(p. 930)

Henry David Thoreau
The light which puts out our eyes is darkness to us. Only that day dawns to which we are awake. There is more day to dawn. The sun is but a morning star. (p. 934)