

# Sample Mid-Term Essays

## Sample 1

### The Transcendental Thoughts Typical of Today

There is nothing more reflective of a society than the literature that belongs to it. Therein is the embodiment of the ideals, language, and culture of a time period. Because the words are bound within the ink and paper, present day readers will always have the capability of finding relations between the past and present. Transcendentalism was a movement during the mid-nineteenth century encompassing individuality, intuition, inspiration, a bond with nature, and a digression from tradition. Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau were two writers who were able to eloquently manifest the beliefs of transcendentalism in their works. The tenets of transcendentalist literature are apparent in contemporary America; this is illustrated by the movement away from teaching religion in public schools, the forthcoming “green” energy movement, and the individual person’s to set themselves apart from the people around them.

Americans have been on the fence for years about the extent of religious teachings in public schools. From the founding of America, religion has played a large role in schools; yet, as America began to develop and accommodate the diversity of a melting pot society there was a trend straying away from teaching religion. As expressed by Marcia Beauchamp,

“By the mid-1900s, public schools were more religiously diverse and secular. In the 1960s, the Supreme Court struck down state-sponsored prayers and devotional Bible reading in the schools. It declared that these practices were violations of the First Amendment. The Court ruled that public schools must neither promote nor inhibit religion” (Religious Liberty And Public Schools).

The idea of moving away from the mandatory traditional morning prayer, and afternoon study of religious doctrine runs parallel to iconoclastic beliefs of the transcendentalist movement. Ralph Waldo Emerson, an influential writer of the time period, construes that self-development of mind and spirituality is a priority over religion or faith. In his work “Self-Reliance” he illustrates this belief as such, “I remember an answer which when quite young I was prompted to make a valued advisor who was wont to importune me with the dear old doctrines of the church. On my saying, What have I to do with the sacredness of traditions, if I live wholly from within?” (Norton Anthology 271). In his time Emerson specifically illustrates his belief to move away from the conventions of the church, and to have the capability to render his own image of the world through introspective thought. In Emerson’s *Nature* his beliefs are further expressed, “Why should not we also enjoy an original relation to the universe? Why should not we have a poetry and philosophy of insight and not of tradition, and a religion by revelation to us, and not the history of theirs?” (Norton Anthology 214). As with Emerson, American public schools don’t ignore that religion does in fact exist. Schools are found to teach about many religions in a literary aspect as to gain a better understanding and relation to the universe. Marcia Beauchamp notes this,

“After the Supreme Court decisions striking down state-sponsored prayer, many public schools and textbook writers were afraid to deal with religion in the classroom. But in those same decisions, the Court made it clear that teaching about religion is both constitutional and important for a complete education.” (Religious Liberty And Public Schools).

Teaching about religion and teaching religion are entirely different schools of thought. Students are now meant to learn from dissecting the themes and motifs of the bible just as they can analyze the loss of innocence present in John Knowles *A Separate Peace*. Henry David Thoreau contemplates the significance of critical reading, “To read well, that is, to read true books in a true spirit, is a noble exercise and one that will task the reader more than any exercise which the customs of the day esteem.” (Norton Anthology 1034). Literature in school is meant to guide a student to a revelation of the world around them, not to bind them to the customs of the words found within. America has been slowly separating religion and public schools for years, a movement which reflects the transcendental idea of breaking free of tradition.

Through science and technology America has begun to move away from the past destructive habits to the environment. Americans today have realized the importance of maintaining nature and sustaining equilibrium in the world’s ecosystems. Engineers around the country strive to harness the energy that nature provides as to preserve the world’s resources. In an article written on clean energy solutions This belief is expressed,

“We have the technology and the know-how to move beyond our dependence on polluting power plants by using clean, safe, and affordable renewable energy. By harnessing renewable sources of energy such as solar, wind, geothermal, wave, biomass and others we can transform how we produce electricity.” (Clean Energy Solutions: Renewable Energy).

With this being said it is easy to understand that Americans of today can share the views of transcendentalists and their connection to nature. Americans realize that in order to preserve this world for the future generations cleaner energy production must continue to strive. As stated by Thoreau in his book *Walden*, “I put no manure on this land, not being the owner, but merely a squatter” (Norton Anthology 1009). The people of today understand that they are sojourners on this earth and contribute towards sustaining the environment so that it will be around for the future. With intuitive engineers developing “green” energy projects America has once again shown its affinity for nature that was present during the transcendentalist movement.

Driving through an average suburban neighborhood reveals enough evidence to understand the novelty and uniqueness of almost all Americans. Each house passed is a different color or has a different style fence as a diverse collection of cars litter their respective driveways. It is intrinsic in the modern American to strive through competition and become superior. With an economy driven by capitalism and consumerism, many people of today seize the opportunity to build their lives their own way. A statement reflective of this very nature is found in Emerson’s “American Scholar”. He writes,

“It is not the chief disgrace in the world, not to be an unit; not to be reckoned one character; not to yield that peculiar fruit which each man was created to bear, but to be reckoned in the gross, in the hundred, or the thousand, of the party, the section, to which we belong; and our opinion predicted geographically, as the north, or the south. Not so brothers and friends, please God, ours shall not be so. We will walk on our own feet; we will work with our own hands; we will speak our own minds.” (Norton Anthology 256).

Emerson develops in this quote that being an individual and separating oneself from the masses is an ideal to be desired in life. He declares that an individual will rise above conformity by their own means. Americans of today show an unknown bond with this idea, this can become evident as one drives out of the neighborhood past a strip mall. Small businesses flourish, built over time by individuals attempting to create their own path in life and distinguish themselves from their competition. Though it cannot be said for absolutely every American, most can relate to the individualistic ideal of transcendentalism that is present today.

For two-hundred thirty-six years American thoughts and ideals have been recorded and built upon by writers of different time periods and influences. It is only natural for a portion of America’s population to identify with the poems, essays, stories, and novels of its past. A semblance of transcendentalism is found in modern America because of the divergence of religious teachings in the public school system, a trend towards technologies that harness nature rather than destroy it, and the distinct individuality of American citizens. Although only some principles of writers like Emerson and Thoreau are present, America should continue to work towards its transcendence.

#### Works Cited

Beauchamp, Marcia. "Religious Liberty And Public Schools." *Cobblestone* 21.1 (2000): 30. *Primary Search*. Web. 26 Oct. 2012

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Emerson, Ralph Waldo Nature 269-286. Print.

Emerson, Ralph Waldo. Self-Reliance. 214-243. Print.

Thoreau, Henry David. *Walden*. 981-1155. Print.

## Sample 1 With My Comments

The Transcendental Thoughts Typical of Today<<<SO. . . YOU LIKE ALLITERATION

There is nothing more reflective of a society than the literature that belongs to it. Therein is<<<IT CONTAINS the embodiment of the ideals, language, and culture of a time period. Because the words are bound within the ink and paper, >>>present day<<<NOT NEEDED readers will always have the capability of finding relations between the past and present. TRANSITION NEEDED Transcendentalism was a movement during the mid-nineteenth century encompassing individuality, intuition, inspiration, a bond with nature, and a digression from tradition. Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau were two writers who >>>were able to<<<NOT NEEDED eloquently manifest the beliefs of transcendentalism in their works. The tenets of transcendentalist literature are apparent in contemporary America; this is illustrated by the movement away from teaching religion in public schools, the forthcoming “green” energy movement, and the individual person’s DESIRE to set themselves apart from the people around them.

Americans have been on the fence for years about the extent of religious teachings in public schools. START PARAGRAPH HERE>>>From the founding of America, religion has played a large role in schools; yet, as America began to develop and accommodate the diversity of a melting pot society there was a trend straying away from teaching religion. As >>>expressed by<<< Marcia Beauchamp REPORTS, “By the mid-1900s, public schools were more religiously diverse and secular. In the 1960s, the Supreme Court struck down state-sponsored prayers and devotional Bible reading in the schools. It declared that these practices were violations of the First Amendment. The Court ruled that public schools must neither promote nor inhibit religion” (Religious Liberty And Public Schools)<<<NO CITATION NEEDED BECAUSE YOU CORRECTLY IDENTIFIED THE AUTHOR IN AN INTRODUCTORY PHRASE.

The idea of moving away from the mandatory traditional morning prayer, and afternoon study of religious doctrine runs parallel to iconoclastic beliefs of the transcendentalist movement. Ralph Waldo Emerson<<<LAST NAME ONLY AFTER MENTIONING THE FULL NAME, an influential writer of the time period<<<NOT NEEDED CASH MADE THIS CLEAR EARLIER, construes that self-development of mind and spirituality is a priority over religion or faith. In his work<<<ESSAY “Self-Reliance” he illustrates this belief as such, “I remember an answer which when quite young I was prompted to make a valued advisor who was wont to importune me with the dear old doctrines of the church. On my saying, What have I to do with the sacredness of traditions, if I live wholly from within?” (Norton Anthology<<<NOT NEEDED. JUST THE PAGE NUMBER 271). In his time Emerson specifically illustrates his belief to move away from the conventions of the church, and to have the capability to render his own image of the world through introspective thought. In Emerson’s *Nature* his beliefs are further expressed, “Why should not we also enjoy an original relation to the universe? Why should not we have a poetry and philosophy of insight and not of tradition, and a religion by revelation to us, and not the history of theirs?” (Norton Anthology 214). As with Emerson, American public schools don’t ignore that religion does in fact exist. Schools are found to teach about many religions in a literary aspect as to gain a better understanding and relation to the universe. Marcia Beauchamp<<<LAST NAME ONLY notes this<<<THAT, “After the Supreme Court decisions striking down state-sponsored prayer, many public schools and textbook writers were afraid to deal with religion in the classroom. But in those same decisions, the Court made it clear that teaching about religion is both constitutional and important for a complete education.” (Religious Liberty And Public Schools).

Teaching about religion and teaching religion are entirely different schools of thought. Students are now meant to learn from dissecting the themes and motifs of the bible<<<INITIAL CAP just as they can analyze the loss of innocence present in John Knowles *A Separate Peace*. Henry David Thoreau<<<LAST NAME ONLY contemplates the significance of critical reading, “To read well, that is, to read true books in a true spirit, is a noble exercise and one that will task the reader more than any exercise which the customs of the day esteem.” (Norton Anthology 1034). Literature in school is meant to guide a student to a revelation of the world around them, not to bind them to the customs of the words found within. America has been slowly separating religion and public schools for years, a movement which reflects the transcendental idea of breaking free of tradition.

Through science and technology America has begun to move away from the past destructive habits to the environment. Americans today have realized the importance of maintaining nature and sustaining equilibrium in the world’s ecosystems. Engineers around the country strive to harness the energy that nature provides as to preserve the world’s resources. In an article written on clean energy solutions<<<NOTE HOW THIS FORMULATION DOESN’T LEND AUTHORITY TO THE QUOTE. THE SOURCE, SIERRA CLUB, WOULD WORK BETTER HERE This belief is expressed,

“We have the technology and the know-how to move beyond our dependence on polluting power plants by using clean, safe, and affordable renewable energy. By harnessing renewable sources of energy such as solar, wind, geothermal, wave, biomass and others we can transform how we produce electricity.” (Clean Energy Solutions: Renewable Energy).

With this being said, it is easy to understand that Americans today can share the views of transcendentalists and their connection to nature. Americans realize that in order to preserve this world for the future generations cleaner energy production must continue to strive. As stated by Thoreau in his book *Walden*, “I put no manure on this land, not being the owner, but merely a squatter” (Norton Anthology 1009). The people of today understand that they are sojourners on this earth and contribute towards sustaining the environment so that it will be around for the future. With intuitive engineers developing “green” energy projects America has once again shown its affinity for nature that was present during the transcendentalist movement.

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Emerson develops in this quote THE IDEA that being an individual and separating oneself from the masses is an ideal to be desired in life. He declares that an individual will rise above conformity by their own means. Americans of today show an unknown bond with this idea, this becomes evident as one drives out of the neighborhood past a strip mall. Small businesses flourish, built over time by individuals attempting to create their own path in life and distinguish themselves from their competition. Though it cannot be said for absolutely every American, most can relate to the individualistic ideal of transcendentalism that is present today. I THOREAU, IN PARTICULAR, WOULD SEE STRIP MALLS AS A BLIGHT UPON THE LAND. For two-hundred thirty-six years American thoughts and ideals have been recorded and built upon by writers of different time periods and influences. It is only natural for a portion of America’s population to identify with the poems, essays, stories, and novels of its past. A semblance of transcendentalism is found in modern America because of the divergence of religious teachings in the public school system, a trend towards technologies that harness nature rather than destroy it, and the distinct individuality of American citizens. Although only some principles of writers like Emerson and Thoreau are present, America should continue to work towards its transcendence.

#### Works Cited

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SOLID WORK HERE. GOOD JOB OF MOVING THE READER FROM THE CONNECTIONS TO  
TRANSCENDENTALISM TO REAL-LIFE MODERN EXAMPLES

## Sample 2

### Transcendentalism in Today's Society

Transcendentalism is an American literary, political, and philosophical movement of the early nineteenth century, primarily centered in New England. There are many writers of Transcendentalism but the two main writers are Emerson and Thoreau. The ideas in Transcendentalist literature are prevalent in America today. This is illustrated by the desire for individualism, a connection with nature through aspects of ecological concerns, and the importance of intuition.

In Emerson's piece of work, *Self-Reliance* he wrote "There is a time in every man's education when he arrives at the conviction that envy is ignorance; that imitation is suicide" (270). This quote shows that if one imitates society and the people of society, then they are committing an act of suicide. The underlying meaning of that means that one must be an individual, think for themselves, to not be what everyone else is being. In today's pop culture, a singer by the name of Corbin Bleu wrote a song "Marching." The chorus of the song goes "'Cause I'm marching to the beat of my own drum, I'm banging 'til the job gets done. 'Cause I'm marching to the beat of my own drum, by rhythm makes the crowd go dumb" (Bleu). The message he was trying to get across is that it's okay to be an individual, it's okay to do your own thing. Doing something different makes everyone else, who are imitating society, look "dumb," as Corbin wrote in the lyrics.

In Emerson's work, *Nature*, he wrote "Crossing a bare common, in snow puddles, at twilight, under a clouded sky" (217). Emerson, by writing this, is stating that he has found a new thrilling delight in nature. Which means that he will be more concerned with what happens to the environment Much like many people today are concerned with what is happening with the environment and those animals in the environment. One example in pop culture of this is the movie *Big Miracle* starring Drew Barrymore, John Krasinski and John Pingavak. *Big Miracle* is a movie about a news reporter who recruits his ex-girlfriend (Drew Barrymore), a Greenpeace volunteer, on a campaign to save a family of gray whales trapped by rapidly forming ice in the Arctic Circle. The movie was to show the effects of what happens when the ice forms and traps the creatures under the water. Al Gore put out a movie called *An Inconvenient Truth* which came out in 2006 to inform the nation about the effects of Global Warming.

Emerson, in *Self-Reliance*, wrote "Men do what is called a good action, as some piece of courage or charity, much as they would pay a fine in expiation of daily non-appearance on parade. Their works are done as an apology or extenuation of their living in the world, -- as invalids and the insane pay a high board. Their virtues are penances" (272). quotes mean that men do good only because they have to, not because they want to. The tenant of intuition means that one's instincts and emotions should determine our actions. In pop culture, this is proven by the movie *Won't Back Down* with Viola Davis and Maggie Gyllenhaal. The movie is about two parents who have children in a failing school and they strive to make a difference and start their own school. Their decisions are based partly on fact but mainly on emotions and their instincts.

Transcendentalism will be seen in various pop culture movies, songs, books and many more, for years to come. Even if people believe the past is the past, many aspects of the past are still prevalent in today's society. One just has to be able to look deep enough into the piece of work to decipher what the meaning is and if it has tenants of transcendentalism in them. Individualism, nature and intuition are just three aspects of transcendentalism that are shown in works from that time period.

### Works Cited

*An Inconvenient Truth*. Dir. Davis Guggenheim. Perf. Al Gore, Billy West, George Bush, George W. Bush, Ronald Reagan. Paramount, 2006. DVD.

*Big Miracle*. Dir. Ken Kwapis. Perf. Drew Barrymore, John Krasinski, John Pingayak. Universal, 2012. DVD.

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*Won't Back Down*. Dir. Daniel Barnz. Perf. Viola Davis, Maggie Gyllenhaal, Holly Hunter. Twentieth Century Fox, 2012. Film.

## Sample 2 With My Comments

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KEEP WORKING ON MORE ENGAGING INTRODUCTIONS: REMEMBER THAT THEIR PURPOSE IS TO DRAW READERS IN.

In Emerson's piece of work <<<ESSAY, *Self-Reliance*, <<<USE QUOTATION MARKS INSTEAD OF ITALICS FOR SHORTER WORKS SUCH AS ESSAYS he wrote "There is a time in every man's education when he arrives at the conviction that envy is ignorance; that imitation is suicide" (270). <<<WORK ON SETTING UP A CLEARER TOPIC SENTENCE WHICH CONNECTS DIRECTLY BACK TO YOUR DIVISION. IN THIS CASE YOUR DIVISION IS INDIVIDUALISM. USE REPETITION OF THIS WORD AND OF YOUR OVERALL THESIS, THAT TRANSCENDENTALISM IS IN AMERICA TODAY, TO HELP THE READER AND YOU FOCUS ON THIS PARTICULAR POINT. A TOPIC SENTENCE FRAMES THE ARGUMENT IN YOUR PARAGRAPH: THAT'S WHAT'S NEEDED HERE THE FRAMING. REVIEW PLANNING AND THESIS ON THE COURSE DOCUMENT PAGE UNDERWRITING ASSIGNMENTS FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THIS. This quote shows that if one imitates society and the people of society, then they are committing an act of suicide. The underlying meaning of that means that one must be an individual, think for themselves, to not be what everyone else is being. <<<HOW SO? HOW DOES THE IDEA THAT IMITATION IS SUICIDE CONNECT INDIVIDUALISM EXPLAIN THIS IN MORE DETAIL. In today's pop culture, a singer by the name of Corbin Bleu wrote a song TITLED <<LOWERCASE "Marching." The chorus of the song goes "'Cause I'm marching to the beat of my own drum, I'm banging 'til the job gets done. 'Cause I'm marching to the beat of my own drum, by rhythm makes the crowd go dumb" (Bleu). The message he was trying to get across is that it's okay to be an individual, it's okay to do your own thing. Doing something different makes everyone else, who are imitating society, look "dumb," as Corbin wrote in the lyrics. <<<IS THIS A POPULAR BAND? NEED MORE INFORMATION ON THIS TO SHOW THAT IT IS PREVALENT IN AMERICA TODAY

>>> AGAIN WORK ON SETTING UP CLEARER TOPIC SENTENCES In Emerson's work, *Nature*, he wrote "Crossing a bare common, in snow puddles, at twilight, under a clouded sky" (217). Emerson, by writing this, is stating that he has found a >>new thrilling delight in nature<<MAJOR PROBLEM HERE: PLAGIARISM. THIS PHRASING IS TAKING DIRECTLY FROM ONE OF THE DEFINITIONS BY HORTON AND EDWARDS. IF USING SOMETHING LIKE THIS, YOU NEED TO SEPARATE IT FROM YOUR OWN TEXT WITH QUOTATION MARKS AND THEN INCLUDE THE CITATION. Which means that he will be more concerned with what happens to the environment, <<<HOW THIS IS QUOTE FROM EMERSON SHOW A DELIGHT IN NATURE? IT SEEMS TO JUST DESCRIBE A MOVEMENT ACROSS A PIECE OF LAND. NOT SURE IF THIS QUOTE WORKS – NOT SURE IF IT CONVEYS THE IDEA OF A DELIGHT IN NATURE Much like many people today are concerned with what is happening with the environment and those animals in the environment. One example in pop culture of this is the movie Big Miracle <<<ITALICS FOR MOVIES starring Drew Barrymore, John Krasinski and John Pingavak. Big Miracle is a movie about a news reporter who recruits his ex-girlfriend (Drew Barrymore), a Greenpeace volunteer, on a campaign to save a family of gray whales trapped by rapidly forming ice in the Arctic Circle. The movie was to show the effects of what happens when the ice forms and traps the creatures under the water. <<<HOW IS THIS TRANSCENDENTAL? Al Gore put out a movie called An Inconvenient Truth which came out in 2006 to inform the nation about the effects of Global Warming. <<<THIS IS A GOOD EXAMPLE, BUT IT NEEDS MORE DETAIL. WHAT WAS THE MOVIE ABOUT, HOW DOES IT CONNECT TO TRANSCENDENTALISM?

Emerson, in *Self-Reliance*, wrote "Men do what is called a good action, as some piece of courage or charity, much as they would pay a fine in expiation of daily non-appearance on parade. Their works are done as an apology or extenuation of their living in the world, -- as invalids and the insane pay a high board. Their virtues are penances" (272). <<TOPIC SENTENCES AGAIN. This quotes mean that men do good only because they have to, not because

they want to. The tenant of intuition means that one's instincts and emotions should determine our actions.<<<AGREED ON THIS BUT NOT SURE HOW THE QUOTE YOU SELECTED REALLY PROVES THIS POINT. NEED MORE EXPLANATION HERE In pop culture, this is proven by the movie Won't Back Down with Viola Davis and Maggie Gyllenhaal. The movie is about two parents who have children in a failing school and they strive to make a difference and start their own school. Their decisions are based partly on fact but mainly on emotions and their instincts.<<<NEED TIGHTER CONNECTION TO TRANSCENDENTALISM HERE

Transcendentalism will be seen in various pop culture movies, songs, books and many more, for years to come. Even if people believe the past is the past, many aspects of the past are still prevalent in today's society. One just has to be able to look deep enough into the piece of work to decipher what the meaning is and if it has tenants of transcendentalism in them. Individualism, nature and intuition are just three aspects of transcendentalism that are shown in works from that time period.

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THE OVERALL IDEA HERE WORKS. THE PROBLEM FOR READERS IS THE FOCUSING AND ARGUMENTS WITHIN THE PARAGRAPHS. WITHOUT CLEARER TOPIC SENTENCES TO SET UP YOUR POINT, THE PARAGRAPHS DRIFTED THAT AND IT'S DIFFICULT TO TELL WHAT ARGUMENT YOU ARE MAKING. CONTINUE TO WORK, AS WELL, ON CHOOSING QUOTES THAT BEST EXPRESS THE POINT YOU'RE TRYING TO MAKE. HERE MANY OF THE QUOTES DO NOT ILLUSTRATE THE POINT OF THE PARAGRAPH.

CHECK THE SUGGESTIONS ON WRITING PARAGRAPHS AND EXPLAINING QUOTES ON THE COURSE DOCUMENT PAGE OF THE WEBSITE. LET'S WORK MORE CLOSELY ON YOUR NEXT ESSAY TO MAKE YOUR REVISIONS MORE EFFECTIVE,

## Sample 3

### America's Puritans

"America has always been one of the most religious of western nations," writes David Gergen in his article "Dueling for Values" in *U.S. News & World Report*. Today's society exudes a strong religious belief system. This can be related to the beliefs of the Puritans in American literature. In Puritan writing, the figure of God is valued and feared throughout every aspect of life. Christianity in America shares this faith and promotes it in similar ways. The ideas portrayed in Puritan literature are still prevalent in American society. This is illustrated by overtly religious political sects, discrimination from the dominant religion, and the idea of deserved punishment in exchange for redemption.

Religion has often been used in public speeches and politics to promote conservative ideas. Jonathan Edwards, a Puritan preacher, was famous for his speeches to his community. He "became a master at the art of persuading his congregation" (Gura 385). His use of scare tactics convinced people to conform to a strict Puritan way of life. In *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God*, Edwards warns that "the devil stands ready to fall upon them [sinners], and seize them as his own" (427). The idea of being "seized" by the devil would lead primitive minds into a pious life. Political activists, such as Rush Limbaugh, use politics to promote their own religious propaganda in today's society. According to Lewiss Grossberger, in his article "The Rush Hours" for *The New York Times*, Limbaugh "has more listeners (about five million a week) than any other talk-show host and a list of stations (nearly 300) that grows every day". His popularity allows him to promote his conservative ideas much in the same way that Edwards did. Grossberger also notes that Limbaugh "creates a black-and-white world where almost everything divides into liberal (bad) versus conservative (good)". His two-dimensional view can be directly related to Puritan's view of hell (bad) and heaven (good). Using one's public voice and popularity to promote religion is not a tactic tied specifically to the Puritans, but to modern Christians as well.

In addition to promoting religion, Puritans and today's Christians discriminate similarly. While traveling to new places, the Puritans could not have found a more different set of beliefs than those of the Native Americans. William Bradford, in *Of Plymouth Plantation*, constitutes discrimination of the Indians to religious texts. He argues that, "it is recorded in scripture as a mercy to the apostle and his shipwrecked company, that the barbarians showed them no small kindness" (115). The fact that the Indians do not follow Puritanism allows them to be regarded as "savages" (115). Likewise, Jonathan Edwards in *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God*, writes, "every unconverted man properly belongs to hell" (427). These writers used a judgmental attitude towards anyone who was not part of their understanding of God. Modern America is not immune to this blunt discrimination either – especially in reference to religion. Natalie McDonald in her article "Religiously Motivated Discrimination in Health Care Is Wrong" wrote:

In recent years [as of 2006], doctors and pharmacists across the country have been fighting for the right to incorporate their religion into their practice, often at the expense of gays and lesbians. And they are finding support in high places. Some judges have ruled in favor of the idea, and more than a dozen state legislatures are now considering bills that would allow medical professionals to refuse treatment to individuals based on religious and moral objections.

Refusing healthcare for an individual who does not share one's belief is certainly a righteous form of discrimination. This intolerance, simply based on religion, connects Puritan ideas with that of today's Christians. Both groups believe it is acceptable to punish others who are not worshippers of God.

In addition to punishing others, the highly pious are in favor of punishing themselves – in order to be saved. Early Puritans understood this ideology very well. Mary Rowlandson describes her own divine experiences in *A Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration*. She has been captured by Indians, forced to part with her family, and has witnessed the death of her own child. Rowlandson believed this was her test in order to achieve salvation – and that she deserved it. "How evilly I had walked in God's sight...it was easy for me to see how righteous it was with God to cut off the thread of my life" (239). Simple acts, such as ignoring the Sabbath, were enough reason for God to relay a severe punishment (239). Rowlandson

accepts these events and even admits to desiring them. She writes, “affliction I wanted” (266). Suffering can offer religious followers a way into redemption of their sins. Puritans were constantly aware of the guilt they should feel for their wrong-doings. Similarly, religion can have this effect on American society. George Saint-Laurent in his article “Religion Pursues Life's Meaning”, wrote that pious people, “all seek to commune with awe-inspiring reality, and they hope that their particular way will lead them to final transformation, enlightenment, or salvation”. The idea of searching for some sort of religious enlightenment relates to the Puritans who literally wanted to be punished. If they were put through hardships by God, then they were worthy of his forgiveness.

Religion has remained an important aspect of life in Puritan literature and in American society. David Gergen writes, according to the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press in 2003, that “69 percent [of Americans] said they never doubt God's existence”. Puritan writers such as Jonathan Edwards and William Bradford would be pleased to hear this statistic. The promotion of religion through the public, discrimination from those who believe in God, and the desire for redemption are attributes that relate to Puritan American literature as well as American society. Each idea illustrates the similarities between religious followers throughout America’s history.

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