

The Rhodora, On Being Asked, Whence is the Flower

By Ralph Waldo Emerson

In May, when sea-winds pierced our solitudes,
I found the fresh Rhodora in the woods,
Spreading its leafless blooms in a damp nook,
To please the desert and the sluggish brook.
The purple petals fallen in the pool
Made the black water with their beauty gay;
Here might the red-bird come his plumes to cool,
And court the flower that cheapens his array.
Rhodora! if the sages ask thee why
This charm is wasted on the earth and sky,
Tell them, dear, that, if eyes were made for seeing,
Then beauty is its own excuse for Being;
Why thou wert there, O rival of the rose!
I never thought to ask; I never knew;
But in my simple ignorance suppose
The self-same power that brought me there, brought you.

Answer the following questions about the poem:

- 1. Who is the speaker in the poem?**
- 2. What is the rhyme scheme of the poem?**
- 3. What does purple connote in the poem?**
- 4. What is the setting of the poem?**
- 5. What is a rhodora flower?**
- 6. How does Emerson describe a lover of nature?**
- 7. What three aspects of the beauty of nature does Emerson delineate?**
- 8. What is the central theme of nature by Emerson?**
- 9. Does Emerson believe in God? (What does transcendentalist mean?)**
- 10. What does *immersing* mean?**
- 11. Why do you think the speaker compares the rhodora to a rose?**
- 12. What images can you see in the poem?**
- 13. What is the tone of the poem?**
- 14. What is the message of the poem?**