

The American Scholar by Ralph Waldo Emerson

Writer: Ralph Waldo Emerson | Generated: Jan 26, 2026

Key Facts

Full Title: The American Scholar

When Written: 1837

When Published: Delivered on August 31, 1837, and published later that year.

Literary Period: American Transcendentalism.

Genre: Speech and philosophical essay.

Point of View: Mostly first person, occasionally third person.

Background

[Emerson's](#) "The American Scholar" was written in 1837 during significant challenges in America. The nation was greatly divided by debates over slavery, [westward expansion](#), and the rights of women. This chaos created rifts within the country. As a leader of the Transcendentalist movement, Emerson aimed to inspire scholars to think independently and contribute to the nation's unity. In these circumstances, this speech outlined how to unite the divided nation.