**Walden Woods Video Game Will Recreate World of Thoreau**

Directions:

1. Mark your confusion.
2. Show evidence of a close reading. **Mark up the text with questions and comments.**
3. Write a **one-page reflection** on your own sheet of paper.

The Guardian – Alison Flood

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Its lack of thrills, spills and multiple deaths means it is unlikely to appeal to fans of Grand Theft Auto and Call of Duty, but a video game based on the years Henry David Thoreau spent living alone in a Massachusetts cabin is in development, following a US government grant.

The University of Southern California has been [given $40,000 by the National Endowment for the Arts](http://www.nea.gov/grants/recent/12grants/12aim.php) to develop Walden, in which "the player will inhabit an open, three-dimensional game-world, which will simulate the geography and environment of Walden Woods". With the game drawing from the detailed notes Thoreau wrote about the area and its landscape, flora and fauna, users will be able not only to walk in the author's footsteps but also, [said the university](http://cinema.usc.edu/interactive/research/walden.cfm), "discover in the beauty of a virtual landscape the ideas and writings of this unique philosopher, and cultivate through the gameplay their own thoughts and responses to the concepts discovered there".

Thoreau spent two years living alone in a one-room cabin in Walden Woods between 1845 and 1847, "because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life," he wrote in his seminal environmental text [Walden](http://www.gutenberg.org/files/205/205-h/205-h.htm). The book details the time he spent in the woods, and ranges from his love of his surroundings – "A lake is the landscape's most beautiful and expressive feature. It is earth's eye; looking into which the beholder measures the depth of his own nature. The fluviatile trees next the shore are the slender eyelashes which fringe it, and the wooded hills and cliffs around are its overhanging brows" – to his philosophies. "A man is rich in proportion to the number of things which he can afford to let alone," wrote Thoreau. And "I never found the companion that was so companionable as solitude … Simplify, simplify."

The team behind the video game Walden said it "posits a new genre of play, in which reflection and insight play an important role in the player experience". While the player travels through the virtual world of Walden, and deals with everyday life at Walden Pond, they will also be asked, the team said, to "focus on the deeper meaning behind events that transpire in the world. By attending to these events, the player is able to gain insight into the natural world, and into connections that permeate the experience of life at Walden."

**Reflection Prompt:**

**Does this sound like a game that will take off? Why or why not?**

**How would Thoreau feel about this game? Do you think transcendentalists would want people to spend their days in front of television screens? Explain.**