From Thoreau to Muir: the Birth and Progression of American Environmental Thought

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Primary Works

- Paintings:
  - *The Rocky Mountains: Landers’ Peak* – Albert Bierstadt
  - *Twilight in the Wilderness* – Frederic Church

- Texts:
  - *The Maine Woods* – Henry David Thoreau
  - “The Grand Canon of the Colorado” – John Muir
Introduction: Thoreau and The Maine Woods

-Mt. Katahdin, Maine
Introduction: Muir and “The Grand Canon of the Colorado”
Introduction: Frederic Church and Albert Bierstadt

The Rocky Mountains: Lander’s Peak, Albert Bierstadt

Twilight in the Wilderness, Frederic Church
Key Terms

• American Environmentalism

• Anthropocentrism

• Biocentrism
Thoreau’s *The Maine Woods*, Muir’s “The Grand Canon of the Colorado,” Church’s *Twilight in the Wilderness* and Bierstadt’s *The Rocky Mountains: Lander’s Peak* illustrate the birth of American environmentalism and its progression from the mid-19th century onward.
Thoreau, *The Maine Woods*

1) A deep and abiding respect for nature

“...why came ye here before your time? This land is not prepared for you...Shouldst thou freeze or starve, or shudder thy life away, here is no shrine, nor altar, nor any access to my ear” (30-31)
Thoreau, *The Maine Woods*

2) From anthropocentric to biocentric
Thoreau, *The Maine Woods*

3) From anthropocentric to biocentric
Muir, “The Grand Canon of the Colorado

1) A profound “religious” relationship with nature
2) Vying for nature’s protection: an appeal to the public

Muir with President Teddy Roosevelt, 1906
Muir, “The Grand Canon of the Colorado

3) Abandoning foundational ethics for a pragmatic approach to protection
Thoreau Vs. Muir
Albert Bierstadt, The Rocky Mountains: Lander’s Peak
Frederic Church, *Twilight in the Wilderness*
Conclusion
Works Cited


GOOGLE IMAGES:
- http://www.history.com/photos/teddy_roosevelt/photos -muir and roosevelt