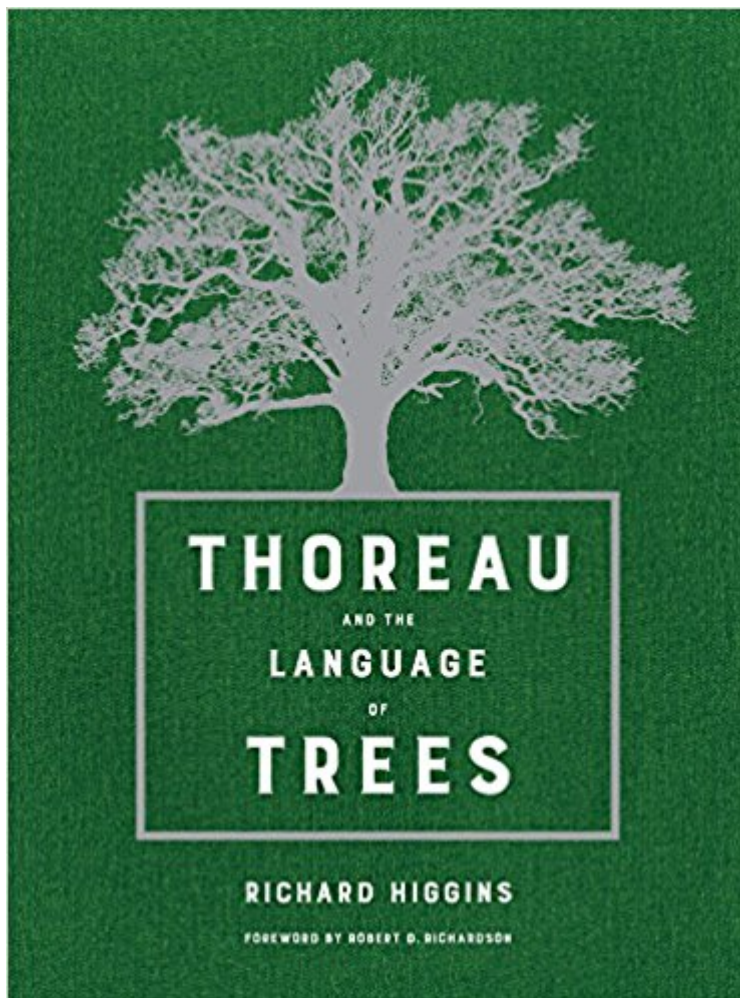


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# Thoreau And The Language Of Trees



## Synopsis

Trees were central to Henry David Thoreau's creativity as a writer, his work as a naturalist, his thought, and his inner life. His portraits of them were so perfect, it was as if he could see the sap flowing beneath their bark. When Thoreau wrote that the poet loves the pine tree as his own shadow in the air, he was speaking about himself. In short, he spoke their language. In this original book, Richard Higgins explores Thoreau's deep connections to trees: his keen perception of them, the joy they gave him, the poetry he saw in them, his philosophical view of them, and how they fed his soul. His lively essays show that trees were a thread connecting all parts of Thoreau's being—heart, mind, and spirit. Included are one hundred excerpts from Thoreau's writings about trees, paired with over sixty of the author's photographs. Thoreau's words are as vivid now as they were in 1890, when an English naturalist wrote that he was unusually able to "to preserve the flashing forest colors in unfading light." Thoreau and the Language of Trees shows that Thoreau, with uncanny foresight, believed trees were essential to the preservation of the world.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Writer and former Boston Globe reporter Richard Higgins culls a selection of Thoreau's writings on trees from his voluminous journals. Higgins gathers a satisfying assemblage, one that showcases Thoreau's deep reverence for the oaks and elms, pines and birches, rising into the sky in Concord. Short essays open each chapter, revealing Higgins to be a sensitive observer

both of his environment and of Thoreau's writing." (Boston Globe 2017-04-20)

"This beautiful book brings us face to face with one of Thoreau's true passions—his love for trees, leaf by leaf and in the whole. Richard Higgins interweaves a generous selection of Thoreau's writings and drawings, classic Herbert Wendell Gleason photographs of trees long gone, and his own extraordinary photographs of trees in our time. To round off the feast, each chapter opens with one of Higgins's graceful and deeply informed essays. Few books satisfy the eye, the mind, and the heart so fully as this one: one part elegy, two parts celebration, deep-rooted in the earth, and brimful with sheer joy.

—Laura Dassow Walls, author of *Henry David Thoreau: A Life*

"In Thoreau's era, unbroken forest stretched from New England to the Mississippi. Trees were always his best companions. He studied them with love and care, and from that knowledge built noble lessons for us all on how to live. As a writer and photographer, Richard Higgins has made of that material a brilliant, evocative book about the precious natural heritage of North America.

—William Howarth, author of *The Book of Concord and Walking with Thoreau*

"Thoreau wrote that trees indeed have hearts. In compiling this expressive compilation of Thoreau's writings on trees, Richard Higgins has indeed found the heart and the soul of the tree. We have much to learn about ourselves from the tree: from its strength as well as its pliancy; from its life stages from seedling to sapling to eventual death; and from its place in the community. Higgins helps us to see the forest for the trees.

—Jeffrey S. Cramer, editor of *The Portable Thoreau*

"Thoreau and the Language of Trees provides an unusually patient and devoted reading and interrogation of Thoreau's primary works. The world as reported here is both Thoreau's and Higgins's; a capable and objective reporter in his own right, Higgins traverses the century and a half that nominally separates him from Thoreau with an ease that enables him to convey his subject's lifelong interest in trees and their language to modern readers.

—Ronald A. Bosco, Distinguished Research Professor of American Literature, University at Albany, SUNY

"Thoreau and the Language of Trees elegantly fills a significant, previously unoccupied niche. The perceptive introduction and thematic chapter essays combine with quotations and sketches by Thoreau and with new and vintage photographs to form a masterfully guided tour—a tour whose visionary sylvan revelations speak to the imagination and the intellect.

—Ronald Wesley Hoag, East Carolina University

Anything with the language of trees is incredible as far as I am concerned, but Higgins has done a wonderful piece of work here.

This vivid, eloquent book celebrates an unusual relationship: the author Henry David Thoreau's passionate love affair with the trees around his home town of Concord, Mass. Thoreau lived at a time of deforestation in New England, when the great oaks, pines and elms that had lived for generations were being cut down almost everywhere for building lumber and he both protested their loss and celebrated their lives in essays and journal entries drawn from deep observation in the woods. Higgins, a Concord writer and photographer who was a longtime Boston Globe reporter, has made an absorbing book out of his own deep immersion in Thoreau's writings, excerpts from the great prose stylist's work on trees, and evocative black-and-white photos made in and around present-day Concord. This is a book that grows on you, a treasury to dip into again and again.

Whether you're meeting Thoreau for the first time, or returning to him after a long period of separation, Richard Higgins' new work is an ideal entry point to a new and fruitful relationship. Selections of Thoreau's meditations on the forests of New England are framed by Higgins' notes on their historical and literary context, along with original photography by the author. Higgins' writing is thoughtful and reflective befitting a former Boston Globe reporter on religion, and yet with as light a touch as the breeze through Thoreau's beloved trees. I highly recommend this book.

Concord resident and long-time Thoreauvian Richard Higgins has taken trees as his point of entry into Thoreau's world, and the result is surprising and fruitful. As Thoreau biographer Robert D. Richardson writes in the Foreword, "There is real magic in this book. Drawing primarily from the Journal but also 'Autumnal Tints,' 'A Week,' 'The Maine Woods,' and the posthumous work 'Faith in a Seed,' Higgins organizes Thoreau's thoughts on trees thematically, into chapters with titles like 'A Mind for Trees,' 'A Heart for Trees,' and 'A Poet's Trees.' For each one, Higgins begins with an essay that examines the theme through sensitive commentary, often benefiting from local knowledge, and deft arrangement of brief quotations.

Rich Higgins has clearly invested a great amount of time researching and writing this book, as well

as seeking out the subjects for his own photographs to complement Thoreau's words. Henry David was well ahead of his time with regard to trees and forests; his views and thoughts are brought to life in this work. If you love forests, this book was written for you.

A perfect balance in sharing the history, backdrop and motivation behind Thoreau's writings. The author went through extensive research in assembling Thoreau's quotes with a detailed sense of place. Thoroughly enjoyed it and highly recommend for both poets and nature lovers.

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