

The Big Ideas

School-to-Home Connection

Imagine a person in the time of Emerson and Melville saying, “Things surely were different back in the 1700s.” At the end of the 1700s, the United States was struggling to be born, and many people were struggling to carve a life out of the wilderness. The 1800s brought the possibility of new beginnings, individual choices, optimism about the future, an appreciation of the natural world, and all the fears that accompany newly found freedom.

ACTIVITY

Directions Think about the unit’s three Big Ideas: Optimism and Individualism, Kinship with Nature, and the Power of Darkness. Discuss how these ideas play out in the twenty-first century. Talk with one or two people at home who may have an opinion about whether “things surely were different back in the 1900s.” Use the following questions as a guide.

1. Do you think there was more reason for optimism about the future in the twentieth century than there is in the twenty-first century? Why or why not?

2. Do you think individuals have more freedom to choose a path in life then they did in the twentieth century? Why? _____

3. How do you interact with nature today compared with how you interacted with nature in the twentieth century? _____

4. Do you think people and nature are in harmony or at war? Did your opinion in the twentieth century differ from your opinion now? _____

5. Do you think there is more or less to be afraid of now than there was in the twentieth century? What has changed? _____
