

American Literature Association
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Boston, MA

Oceanic Thoreau

What might it mean to consider Thoreau an oceanic thinker, or how might the oceanic inform Thoreau's thinking? For this panel sponsored by the Thoreau Society, we are interested in papers that broaden the frame of Thoreau's work to place him in conversation with the oceanic. While the ocean itself might not be a sustained topic of inquiry in Thoreau's work, water and waterways permeate his writing. From the Concord and Merrimack rivers, to the waterways of Maine and beyond, papers might consider the relation between the river and the sea and their importance for Thoreau's work. Papers might also consider *Cape Cod*—Thoreau's most oceanic book—and its meditations on death and the limits of human knowledge and experience. Scholars have long considered Thoreau a thinker of the non-human: how might the sea underwrite Thoreau's ecology, or how might it otherwise enable and inform his work from a more silent and even invisible perspective? Papers might consider the relation between Thoreau and other nineteenth-century figures such as Melville, or they might explore conceptions of the oceanic through a Thoreauvian framework.

Send abstracts and a CV to Alex Moskowitz (amoskowitz@mtholyoke.edu) by December 4, 2026. Inquires welcome!