

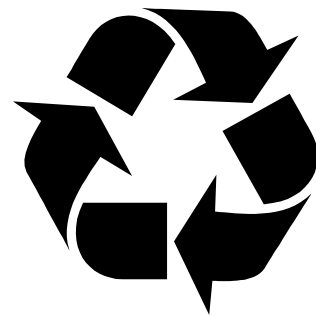


# Ralph Waldo Emerson

EVERYONE IS SPECIAL.



UU Historical Society Web



## UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST ALPHABET

Please read the Overview before using this Plan.

**E e** Letter E introduces Ralph Waldo Emerson, the concept of esteem, and the environment.

**MATERIALS:** Construction paper Letter E with hole punched in top, yarn for necklace  
Rose for the Emerson story  
Snacks—Eggs, eggnog, eclairs

### GETTING STARTED:

*Welcome.* After each person says his or her name, the group responds, “Welcome, (name).” For a child who is attending for the first time this year, add name to the letters that have been posted and to the attendance sheet, and make a nametag during or after the session. Keep a empty seat for people who are not present or who have not joined the group.

The *Letter of the Day*:

- Talk about the Letter.
- Give the Letter Necklace to a person with that initial.
- Talk about the things that the children have brought for the Letter, and/or Letter Bag.
- Put the things related to the letter in the Special Place

**SPECIAL PERSON:** Ralph Waldo Emerson  
(May 25, 1803-1882)

*Ralph Waldo Emerson was a Unitarian minister. Eight of his ancestors, including his father, grandfather and great-grandfather, were ministers and he was expected to be one, too. But he didn't feel like being a minister, so he became a writer and speaker instead. He wanted people to develop their own ideas and beliefs. He wanted to spread kindness and joy. He was upset that people owned other people, called slaves.*

*Ralph Waldo Emerson loved children. A child could always go into the place where he was writing. He kept paper, pencils and scissors*

*for them – and something to eat. He liked to have fun with children and had four children of his own.*

*Ralph Waldo Emerson was over six feet tall. He stood very straight. He had a deep voice. He made people feel very important. When he was around, people felt good about themselves. A woman who washed clothes for people came to hear him speak. She did not really understand what he was saying, but she loved to see him standing before a group making everyone think that they were as good as he was, just by the way he talked.*

Ralph Waldo Emerson loved nature. He liked to take long walks. He often wrote about nature. One of his poems is about a rose as at that very moment.

*Has anyone seen a rose? Take time to look at a rose or a picture of a rose. When we look at the rose, we see its beauty. The rose that we are looking at is not like any other rose. We see it in the present. Last week it was a bud, and next week it will not be as pretty as it is now. But it is still a rose.*

*This idea is the same for people. Each person is like no other person. And we are different today than we were last week – have learned some things that we did not know then, are probably wearing different clothes, and may be doing different things. And we will be different next week – will have learned from things today, will probably be wearing different clothes, and may be doing different things. So right now, in this group, is like no other time.*

**AFFIRMATION:** *Everyone is special.*

Everyone is important, everyone should have self-esteem, or feel good about him or herself.

*Sitting tall:* When we feel good about ourselves, we sit or stand straight, or erect, like Mr.

Emerson. Practice sitting up straight, as if being pulled up to the ceiling. Breathe deeply, and let the breath go.

When we are tired or upset, our shoulders sag, and we really cannot breathe as well.

- Let shoulders sag, and slump in the chair as if feeling sad.
- Tell the group that you will be saying something to each person. If what you say makes them feel better, ask them to sit up straight.
- As you call each person in the group, give him or her an "Esteem Message" on a card in an envelop or on a necklace. Or say something nice about each person. It must be sincere and something that the person can understand. (Suggestions: "I like your smile;" "I like your energy" "Thank you for helping me." These are something that you connect with, rather than a value statement. "I like to hear you read" rather than "You are a good reader.")
- When everyone is sitting up, take a deep breath as a group, and let it go.

### THE LETTER E IN CHURCH

*Ecology, environment and earth:* Talk about taking care of the earth right where they are.

- This includes proper disposal of wrappers and bottles, recycling.
- Filling in holes that we dig (also a safety issue).

Does the church recycle? If so, discuss where things are put. If not, this may be something that the children can do, at least in their space, and discuss with parents and church leaders.

### A-B-C

*Animals:* eagle, elephant

*Body:* ear, elbow, eye, eyelids

*Calendar:* Easter

- Note the date of the session and any special events for the day, including birthdays.
- Note items beginning with that letter
- Note events between today and the next session, including birthdays.

CLOSING: Gather around the Special Place where the things related to the letter have been placed. " We give thanks for the Letter E. We have shared and learned about special people and animals and ourselves and our church. May we leave in love and peace. Next week we will meet again. Our letter will be \_\_\_\_ and our leader(s) will be \_\_\_\_." Make sure that people take home things that need to go.

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### VARIATIONS FOR OLDER CHILDREN

Story: *Mr. Emerson's Cook*, by Judith Byron Schachner, 1998. The story weaves fact and fiction and takes place after Emerson had left the ministry and moved to Concord. The story is told from the cook's perspective and highlight's Emerson's love of nature.

Read and discuss "These Roses," *Singing the Living Tradition*, #556.

These roses under my window make no reference to former roses or to better ones; they are for what they are; they exist with God today.

There is no time to them. There is simply the rose; it is perfect in every moment of its existence.

Before a leaf-bud has burst, its whole life acts; in the full-blown flower there is no more, in the leafless root there is no less. Its nature is satisfied and it satisfies nature in all moments alike.

But we postpone or remember. We do not live in the present, but with reverted eye lament the

past, or, headless of the riches that surround us, stand on tiptoe to foresee the future.

We cannot be happy or strong until we too live with nature in the present, above time.

*Ecology.* Go into more depth regarding environmental issues.

*Affirmations:* Affirming each other (see above)  
Each person has a piece of paper, with his/her name on the back. Pass the papers around so that everyone in the group has a chance to put some affirming word or picture on the paper of every other person, from "I like you," to a smiling face. Collect the papers, and fold in half, so that the name shows, and give the papers to the respective people.

*Expectations:* What expectations did you feel as you are growing up, such as what you want to do? How did these expectations influence how you felt about yourself and your choices in life?