When I wrote the following pages, or rather the bulk of them, I lived alone, in the woods, a mile from any neighbor, in a house which I had built myself, on the shore of Walden Pond, in Concord, Massachusetts, and earned my living by the labor of my hands only. I lived there two years and two months. At present I am a sojourner in civilized life again.

I should not obtrude my affairs so much on the notice of my readers if very particular inquiries had not been made by my townsmen concerning my mode of life, which some would call impertinent, though they do not appear to me at all impertinent, but, considering the circumstances, very natural and pertinent. Some have asked what I got to eat; if I did not feel lonesome; if I was not afraid; and the like. Others have been curious to learn what portion of my income I devoted to charitable purposes; and some, who have large families, how many poor children I maintained. I will therefore ask those of my readers who feel no particular interest in me to pardon me if I undertake to answer some of these questions in this book. In most books, the I, or first person, is omitted; in this it will be retained; that, in respect to egotism, is the main difference. We commonly do not remember that it is, after all, always the first person that is speaking. I should not talk so much about myself if there were anybody else whom I knew as well. Unfortunately, I am confined to this theme by the narrowness of my experience. Moreover, I, on my side, require of every writer, first or last, a simple and sincere account of his own life, and not merely what he has heard of other men's lives; some such account as he would send to his kindred from a distant land; for if he has lived sincerely, it must have been in a distant land to me. Perhaps these pages are more particularly addressed to poor students. As for the rest of my readers, they will accept such portions as apply to them. I trust that none will stretch the seams in putting on the coat, for it may do good service to him whom it fits. (from Henry David Thoreau's Walden, Chapter 1)

A. Look up the underlined words in a dictionary. Be sure to choose a dictionary that has sufficiently complete definitions. Write down the definition of the word that best fits the meaning of the word as it is used in the passage. Also write down the part of speech of the word used in the passage.

Example: bulk (noun) the major portion

B. Then, write a sentence with each word. The word in your sentence should have the same meaning as the word in the passage.

Example: The bulk of my books is science fiction as that is my favorite genre.

C. Answer the following questions based on the passage.

1. True or false: Thoreau wrote most of his book on Walden Pond, and at the time of the writing of the passage, he was still living there.
   a. because people wanted to know about his experience living on Walden Pond
   b. because he wanted to keep a record of his experiences
   c. because he wanted to share his experiences with his relatives
   d. as an act of charity
   e. none of the above

2. Which of the following statements is not true?
   a. Thoreau built the house he lived in on Walden Pond.
   b. Thoreau made a living as a writer while living on Walden Pond.
   c. Thoreau did not have any neighbors nearby on Walden Pond.
   d. Thoreau lived on Walden Pond for over two years.
   e. Thoreau lived alone on Walden Pond.

3. Why did Thoreau write the book?
   a. What did you eat?
   b. Were you afraid?
   c. Were you lonely?
   d. How much did you give to charity?
   e. Who did you have as guests?

4. What is not mentioned among the questions that Thoreau was asked about his experience living on Walden Pond?
   a. because people wanted to know about his experience living on Walden Pond
   b. because he wanted to keep a record of his experiences
   c. because he wanted to share his experiences with his relatives
   d. as an act of charity
   e. none of the above

5. True or false: Thoreau says that he talks so much about his own life because that's what he knows best. Write below the quote that supports your answer.
6. In which sentence does Thoreau imply that in all books an "I" is speaking even if the book is not written from the first person "I" point of view?

7. What would Thoreau most like to see from other writers?
   a. accounts of travel in distant lands
   b. what they have heard of other men's lives
   c. accounts of their personal experiences
   d. letters written to relatives
   e. none of the above

8. Thoreau says "for if he [the writer] has lived sincerely, it must have been in a distant land to me." This statement implies:
   a. living sincerely involves strange and novel experiences
   b. each writer must travel the world
   c. Thoreau has not traveled much like other writers
   d. to live sincerely, you must live in a foreign place
   e. none of the above

9. Which group of people in particular did Thoreau write for?

10. There is a metaphor in the last sentence of the passage.
    "I trust that none will stretch the seams in putting on the coat, for it may do good service to him whom it fits."
    Thoreau is comparing putting on a coat to what? (Hint: Read the sentence right before.)
RC Worksheet 1: from Henry David Thoreau's *Walden*

**Answer Sheet**

**A.**
1. shore (noun) land along the edge of a body of water
2. sojourner (noun) temporary resident of a place
3. civilized (adjective) having a highly developed society and culture
4. obtrude (verb) to impose oneself (or one's ideas) on others
5. inquiries (noun) questions
6. mode (noun) a manner of doing something, a way
7. impertinent (adjective) not relevant, inappropriate
8. pertinent (adjective) relevant, relating to matter at hand
9. charitable (adjective) having to do with charity (helping the needy)
10. maintained (verb) to provide for or support
11. undertake (verb) to decide or agree to do
12. egotism (noun) the tendency to talk or write about oneself excessively
13. theme (noun) topic or subject
14. kindred (noun) relative, family
15. omitted (verb) to leave out
16. retained (verb) to keep in a particular place, position or condition

**B.** Sentences will vary, but words should be used in accordance with the definitions in section A.

**C.**
1. false, "At present I am a sojourner in civilized life again." (in other words, he is back in society living amongst others)
2. b
3. a
4. e
5. true, "I should not talk so much about myself if there were anybody else whom I knew as well."
6. "In most books, the I, or first person, is omitted; in this it will be retained; that, in respect to egotism, is the main difference." (also may add: "We commonly do not remember that it is, after all, always the first person that is speaking.") [In the first sentence quoted, Thoreau is saying even if the book is not written in first person, it is still a single person speaking from his particular point of view.]
7. c
8. a (here being in a "distant land" is a metaphor for experiencing strange and new things, which we all do if we live sincerely, or authentically, in other words, if we don't live a copycat life following others)
9. poor students
10. to reading his book *Walden* (people who read his book will find there something useful to them and thereby "fit" into the coat)