(1) BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803 – 1882)
- B.A at Harvard 1821.
- After graduation worked as a schoolmaster at Chelmsford, Massachusetts (his brother’s school).
- Became junior pastor of Boston’s Second Church but affected by his wife’s death he started disagreeing with its methods.
- In 1836 founded the Transcendental Club with a number of followers.
- In 1845 he started showing interest in the Bhagavad-Gita, which along with works of French philosopher Victor Cousin, provoked his interest in Indian philosophy.
- He was a big proponent of the abolitionist movement.
- A list of his works can be found on this page: [http://www.vcu.edu/engweb/transcendentalism/authors/emerson/essays/](http://www.vcu.edu/engweb/transcendentalism/authors/emerson/essays/)

(2) TEXT OF WORK

Read the poem at: [http://www.vcu.edu/engweb/transcendentalism/authors/emerson/poems/brahma.html](http://www.vcu.edu/engweb/transcendentalism/authors/emerson/poems/brahma.html)

(3) ANALYSIS AND COMMENTARY

Brahma
- Brahma is the Hindu god of creation and belongs to the Hindu Gods trinity along with Vishnu and Shiva.

- The general idea of "Brahma" is the oriental counterpart of the Platonic idea of Unity in Variety, and is common to all mystical speculation. But the uniqueness of the poem lies in its adoption of the point of view of God--and of God conceived as the impersonal creative energy of the universe, paradoxically personified as unconcerned with the life or death of man has proved congenial the "I" of "Brahma." This concept of an impersonal God of energy to the spirit of modern science, and several great atomic scientists have been students of the Bhagavad Gita and of "Brahma." (Carpenter 87)

- "Days," together with "Brahma," is perhaps Emerson’s most perfect poem, and with "Brahma" has most often aroused the interest and admiration of scholars and critics, especially in modern times. (Carpenter 88)

- The philosophers of mysticism, from the anonymous authors of the Hindu scriptures to Emerson, have emphasized first the negative element of mysticism, which is the detachment of the individual from the "illusions" of the self. And in "Brahma," Emerson translated this idea almost perfectly: all individuals, whether "slayer" or "slain," "know not well" until they learn to identify themselves with God--or the "I" of the poem. But once they find God, and recognize that their own individual lives are but an infinitesimal part of the life of humanity, they achieve perspective and peace of mind. Even if they themselves be slain, their lives contribute to the whole. (Carpenter 121)

- The most important idea which Emerson translated is that of "Brahma" itself--the concept of a disinterested and impersonal God whose laws lie beyond human good and evil. To this absolute God, human life and death--human "shame and fame"--are one. Therefore, the human worshiper of Brahma will recognize the relativity of the human laws of good and evil and will accept the scientific laws of the universe.--"Find me, and turn thy back on heaven." Achieving this superhuman point of view, he will join the company both of the religious mystics, and also of the great modern scientists. It is curious that Emerson, by returning to the oldest religious idealism of the East, discovered a philosophy which the latest astronomers and physicists of the West were beginning to formulate in new, scientific terms. (Carpenter 211)
(4) GLOSSARY

slayer (n) – ubojica
slay, slew, slain (v) – ubiti
slain (n) – ubijeni
subtle (adj) – fin, istančan, suptilan, rafiniran; domišljat, oštroman, spretan, lukav
forgot (n) – zaboravljeno
reckon (v) – AE misliti
ill (n) – zlo, nevolja
they reckon ill who leave me out – zlo misle oni koji me izostave
doubter (n) – onaj ko sumnja, sumnjalo

And I the hymn the Brahmin sings.

Brahmin (n) – brahmanac
pine (v) – čeznuti za, silono željeti
abode (n) – boravište, stan
in vain (idiom) – uzalud
meek (n) – krotak; skroman; ponizan
thou (pron) – ti
thy (pron) – tvoj/a

(5) SOURCES CITED: