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Abstract
Thru-hiking is a phenomenon in which one walks long distances—sometimes 2,000 miles or longer—on journeys often spanning continents and lasting many months at a time. In this work, I ask whether thru-hiking can be considered a form of pilgrimage and what implications doing so might have in the study of religion and nature.

Using three popular hiking memoirs, I argue that thru-hiking is a form of pilgrimage because it emphasizes themes of transformation, community, and space. In doing so, I also find evidence for religious practice spanning beyond organized religion, pointing towards more diffuse and individualized forms of spirituality common to the United States. Secondly, I situate contemporary thru-hiking novels within a larger tradition of American nature writing, tracing distinct values around nature, the self, and society. Finally, I demonstrate the ways in which new media and technology influence the experience of long-distance walking.

As an activity that permeates popular media, thru-hiking not only serves as an important example of how values are reflected to society at large, but also of how depictions shape the values of those who consume it. This investigation seeks to bring this forward, in addition to analyzing the religious dimension of thru-hiking.

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American literature, literature in English produced in what is now the United States [1] of America. *Colonial Literature* American writing began with the work of English adventurers and colonists in the New World chiefly for the benefit of readers in the mother country. The Columbia Encyclopedia, 6th ed. World Encyclopedia. American History Through Literature 1870-1920. Print this article. Print all entries for this topic. Hikers today cite a wide range of reasons for hiking the Trail, but their motivations seem to highlight the search for a more simple, predictable, concrete reality which is far removed from the bustle of their quotidian routines. [3] This project, then, will attempt to approach the idea that the founding ideals of the Appalachian Trail and the unique liminal culture witnessed on the hike transform it into an experience which is far more than an outdoor adventure. That is, I will examine the ways in which the A.T. hike could be said to embody the key characteristics of a pilgrimage. As "pilgrim...