

Individual Learning Packet

Teaching Unit

Anthem

by Ayn Rand

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Anthem

Note to the Teacher

Anthem, Ayn Rand's second novel, is an allegorical story set in a bleak and terrifying future where individuality has been suppressed in favor of the collective good. People are not named but numbered; each person's life's work is determined by a special council; men and women are not allowed to choose their own mates; being alone is against the law; thinking differently than one's fellow citizens is a sin. In this society, everyone is equal, but no one is free. The very word "I" has been eliminated from the language in favor of the collective "We."

One member of this society, Equality 7-2521, dares to express his individuality, risking his life in pursuit of knowledge and freedom. Will Equality 7-2521 succeed in his courageous quest, or will he ultimately be crushed by the society from which he tries to escape?

The themes of *Anthem*, along with those of Ayn Rand's other major fictional works, are directly linked to the political and ethical philosophy she called Objectivism. The central principle of Objectivism is the idea that each individual is responsible for his or her own life and pursuit of happiness. The philosophy stresses individuality over collectivism, reason over religion and/or superstition, individual rights over societal control, and capitalism over socialism. As Rand herself summarized it:

"My philosophy, in essence, is the concept of man as a heroic being, with his own happiness as the moral purpose of his life, with productive achievement as his noblest activity, and reason as his only absolute."

Rand's philosophy developed out of her own life experiences. Born in St. Petersburg, Russia in 1905, she grew up during the Bolshevik Revolution, which led to the rise of Communism in Russia. Although the ostensible goals of the new regime were to promote economic equality and community welfare, the system ultimately resulted in corruption and economic disaster. Rand witnessed the negative effects of Communism first hand, as her once upper-middle class family was reduced to poverty when her father's business was taken over by the government.

After graduating from the Petrograd State University in 1924 with a degree in philosophy and history, Rand escaped Russia and settled in America, starting out as a screenwriter and then working full time as a writer of both fiction and philosophy. Among her most well-known works are *We the Living* (1936), *Anthem* (1938), *The Fountainhead* (1943), and *Atlas Shrugged* (1957). Many critics consider *Anthem* her Objectivist manifesto—a public declaration of her political and philosophical theories. The novel simply and directly presents the Objectivist viewpoint through the use of allegory and a focused, streamlined plot.

All references come from the *Prestwick House Literary Touchstone Classics™* edition of *Anthem*, copyright 2015.

Anthem

Terms and Definitions

Generalization About Life – a statement that can apply to humanity at large; a seemingly universal truth; **Examples:** “All men are created equal”; “Beauty is truth, truth is beauty.”

Motif – a situation, incident, idea, or image that is repeated significantly in a literary work; **Examples:** In *Hamlet*, revenge is a frequently repeated idea. In *The Catcher in the Rye*, Holden continually comments on the phoniness of people he meets.

Narrator – the one who tells the story; the narrator must not be confused with the “author,” the one who writes the story. If the narrator is a character in the book, the term is first-person narration. (**Example:** *Moby Dick* is narrated by Ishmael, a crew member.) If the narrator is not a character, the term is third-person narration. (**Example:** *Sense and Sensibility*)

Plot – the pattern of events in a literary work; what happens

Point of View - the position or vantage point, determined by the author, from which the story seems to come to the reader; the two most common points of view are First-person and Third-person. **Examples:** First-person point of view occurs in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*; the reader receives all information through Huck’s eyes. An example of third-person point of view is Dickens’ *Hard Times*, in which the narrator is not a character in the book.

Setting – when and where the short story, play, poem, or novel takes place. **Examples:** *Macbeth* takes place in the eleventh century in Scotland. *The Old Man and the Sea* has its main setting on the ocean outside Havana, Cuba, in an unspecified time in the middle-to-late 20th century.

Style – the way an author chooses and uses words, phrases, and sentences to tell the story; for example, in an action/adventure story, the author may use simple words and short, choppy sentences because this style moves the story along quickly. In a story about a college professor, the same author may choose to use polysyllabic, unfamiliar words, and long, convoluted sentences.

Symbol – an object, person, or place that has a meaning in itself and that also stands for something larger than itself, usually an idea or concept; some concrete thing that represents an abstraction. **Example:** The sea could be symbolic for “the unknown.” Since the sea is something that is physical and can be seen by the reader, and also has elements that cannot be understood, it can be used symbolically to stand for the abstraction of “mystery,” “obscurity,” or “the unknown.”

Theme - the central or dominant idea behind the story; the most important aspect that emerges from how the book treats its subject; sometimes theme is easy to see, but, at other times, it may be more difficult. Theme is usually expressed indirectly, as an element the reader must figure out. It is a universal statement about humanity, rather than a simple statement dealing with plot or characters in the story. Themes are generally hinted at through different methods: a phrase or quotation that introduces the novel, a recurring element in the book, or an observation made that is reinforced through plot, dialogue, or characters. It must be emphasized that not all works of literature have themes in them. **Example:** In a story about a man who is diagnosed with cancer and, through medicine and will-power, returns to his former occupation, the theme might be: "Real courage is demonstrated through internal bravery and perseverance." In a poem about a flower that grows, blooms, and dies, the theme might be: "Youth fades, and death comes to all."

Anthem

Objectives

By the end of this Unit, the student will be able to:

1. recognize the use of first-person narration and list the advantages and disadvantages of this type of narrator.
2. follow time order in a novel that uses a diary or journal format and compare the advantages and disadvantages of this type of format.
3. identify three motifs found in the novel:
 - the use of darkness and light,
 - the presence of ignorance and knowledge,
 - the idea of transgression and damnation.
4. trace the use of names as these names change in the novel:
 - Equality 7-2521 – The Unconquered – Prometheus,
 - Liberty 5-3000 – The Golden One – Gaea.
5. distinguish between the two philosophical points of view central to this novel, collectivism and objectivism, and identify where and how both are presented.
6. write an essay identifying the major theme of this novel, and prove how this assertion is the main theme by citing incidents and statements from the text.
7. write an essay discussing the style of this novel; compare and contrast it to the style of other novels with which the student is familiar.
8. state the significance of this novel's title, show its relationship to the novel's theme, and prove this assertion by citing specific points in the novel.
9. become familiar with terms that are specific to *Anthem*.
10. define and identify uses of the following literary terms:
 - theme,
 - point of view,
 - setting,
 - narrator.

11. describe the setting of the novel, and explain how it is used to develop and support many of the novel's major concepts and/or themes.
12. identify the following symbols, discuss how they are presented in the novel, and explain their significance and meaning:
 - the light bulb that Equality 7-2521 builds,
 - the Uncharted Forest,
 - the home on the mountain top,
 - manuscripts, books, and writing.

Anthem

Questions for Essay and Discussion

1. Why do you suppose this novel is titled *Anthem*?
2. Is this story narrated in the first person or third person? Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of both types of narration.
3. Discuss the manner in which the author uses darkness and light as symbols in this novel.
4. Trace the evolution of Equality 7-2521's and Liberty 5-3000's names in this novel. Identify, for each, their three names, and explain how and why the names are used.
5. Consider the concepts of ignorance and knowledge as they appear in this novel. To support any generalizations you draw, refer to specific incidents or comments in the novel.
6. Explain what the author means by the terms "collectivism" and "objectivism." Do you feel that she treats both points of view fairly? Why or why not?
7. The author presents objectivism as a countermeasure to what she sees as the evils of collectivism. While countermeasures may correct the abuses of an earlier system, historically, they have often gone on to spawn their own evils. What might be some evils inherent in objectivism?
8. State the theme of this story, and cite incidents and statements from the novel to support your generalization.
9. Identify how the motif of transgression (the hero's sins) and damnation (his curse) play out in this novel.
10. Describe the type of society that Equality 7-2521 lives in. What is his life like in the City, before he flees to the forest? How is the philosophy of collectivism responsible for the oppressive nature of the society?
11. Compare and contrast the City with the Uncharted Forest. Why is the forest a fearful place for the citizens of the City? When Equality 7-2521 decides to escape, why does he flee to the forest? What does the forest symbolize?
12. Discuss the significance of the light bulb that Equality 7-2521 builds in the tunnel. What happens when he presents it to the World Council of Scholars? How does their reaction relate to the concepts of ignorance and knowledge? What does light represent?

13. Explain the symbolic significance of books, manuscripts, and writing. How are these things presented in the novel? How are the Great Rebirth and the Script Fire related to the presence or absence of books and writing? Discuss the role that reading and writing play in Equality 7-2521's quest for knowledge, individuality, and freedom.

PART II

VOCABULARY

avert – to turn away

deigned – lowered oneself; stooped

eugenics – the belief that selective breeding can result in the improvement of the human race

falter – to stumble or hesitate

fraternity – a brotherhood

furrows – channels cut into the soil by a plow; grooves

lassitude – exhaustion; lack of energy

likeness – an image or picture; a representation

monstrous – shocking; frightful

perish – to die

pyre – a pile of wood upon which a body is burned

reprimanded – scolded

solidarity – a bond of unity between people, usually for a shared goal

taut – tense; pulled tight

tunics – long, loose-fitting articles of clothing

1. Who lives in the Home of the Peasants?

2. Who is Liberty 5-3000? Why is Equality 7-2521 attracted to her?

3. What forms of expression do their feelings for each other take? Why are they so hesitant and cautious?

PART III

VOCABULARY

brine – salt water

lodestone – a piece of iron ore containing natural magnetic properties

unveiling – revealing, uncovering

whence – from what place

1. What discovery of nature does Equality 7-2521 make?

2. With this discovery, to what does Equality 7-2521 dedicate himself?

PART VI

VOCABULARY

defied – disobeyed; went against
hastened – hurried; went quickly
humblest – poorest, lowliest
withered – wrinkled or shriveled, usually due to age

1. What happens that results in Equality 7-2521's being caught in a transgression?

2. Why is Equality 7-2521 taken to the Palace of Corrective Detention?

3. What is Equality 7-2521 subjected to at the Palace of Corrective Detention? What do you think his captors are trying to accomplish?

4. Why is it easy for Equality 7-2521 to escape from his confinement?

5. What is the one thing that Equality 7-2521 hopes for after his discovery is made known to the World Council of Scholars?

PART XI

VOCABULARY

alms – money or goods given to the poor
covet – to want or desire
creed – a system of beliefs
depraved – immoral, wicked
dictate – to order or command
edict – a law or command
impotent – powerless, weak; helpless
plunder – robbery, theft
sanction – permission, approval
serfdom – slavery
threshold – a doorway
undefiled – clean; pure
vindicate – to defend or justify
warrant – a reason or justification

1. An anthem is a song or hymn of praise or gladness. What is the key word in Equality 7-2521's anthem? How is this word tied in with the Unspeakable Word?

2. Summarize Equality 7-2521's new philosophy and understanding about himself in relation to the rest of mankind.

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