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**Literature**  
Teaching Unit  
*Chapter-by-Chapter Study Guide*



## Anthem

by Ayn Rand

- Learning objectives
- Study Guide with short-answer questions
- Background information
- Vocabulary in context
- Multiple-choice test
- Essay questions
- Literary terms



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# Literature Teaching Unit

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ISBN: 978-1-60389-703-7

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Item No: 201172

# 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

## 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.

# Anthem

## PART I

### VOCABULARY

**atone** – to make up for; to ask forgiveness  
**base** – shameful; immoral  
**befell** – happened to  
**dais** – a raised platform where speakers or guests of honor sit  
**forbade** – refused to allow  
**indivisible** – not capable of being divided or split  
**larder** – a storage room for food and other household supplies; a pantry  
**lashed** – beaten with a whip  
**mandates** – official commands or instructions  
**portals** – doorways, entrances  
**prescribe** – to order or advise  
**pulpit** – a raised platform from which speeches or sermons are delivered  
**ravine** – a deep, narrow valley  
**sieve** – a container with tiny holes used for straining or filtering materials  
**transgression** – a sin or crime  
**uncharted** – not explored or mapped; unknown  
**vocations** – careers, professions  
**wretch** – a wicked or immoral person

1. If you found this first part difficult to follow, what might be a possible reason? Who is the narrator? What is the point of view?

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2. What is the motto engraved in marble over the portals of the Palace of the World Council? What prayer is recited every night? What does it tell you about this futuristic world?

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**PART IV**

VOCABULARY

**scornful** – showing hatred or disrespect  
**submission** – the act of surrendering or giving up  
**tarried** – lagged behind  
**unconquered** – not beaten or defeated

- 1. In what way does the meeting between Equality 7-2521 and Liberty 5-3000 seal the bond between them?

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- 2. What names do Equality 7-2521 and Liberty 5-3000 exchange? Why is naming each other significant?

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5. What does Equality 7-2521 now see as his future?

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6. What specific plans does Equality 7-2521 have in regard to the house and the others left behind in the City of the old world?

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7. What does Equality 7-2521 see as the things that have enslaved humanity throughout the ages?

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8. What does Equality 7-2521 still find difficult to understand?

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9. What is the significance of the word inscribed above the portal of the house in which Equality 7-2521 has chosen to live?

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