

COMMON CORE

RI 2 Determine two or more central ideas of a text and analyze their development; provide an objective summary of the text.

RI 6 Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text in which the rhetoric is effective, analyzing how style and content contribute to the power, persuasiveness, or beauty of the text. **RI 9** Analyze documents of literary significance for their themes, purposes, and rhetorical features.

DID YOU KNOW?

Henry David Thoreau ...

- worked off and on as a pencil maker in his family's pencil factory.
- kept a journal that when published filled 20 volumes.
- pared down his expenses to 27 cents a week, which he earned by working only six weeks a year.

from *Walden* from *Civil Disobedience*

Essays by Henry David Thoreau

VIDEO TRAILER



KEYWORD: HML11-378A



Video link at
thinkcentral.com

Meet the Author

Henry David Thoreau 1817–1862

Henry David Thoreau (thə-rō') advocated simple, mindful living and rejected a lifestyle dedicated to the pursuit of wealth. Thoreau spent much of his life writing and observing nature, devoting only a minimum of time to earning a wage. He published just two books, both of which sold very poorly in his own lifetime. Few of his contemporaries would have judged him much of a success. In the years since his death, however, his reputation has grown tremendously. Today, he is regarded as a writer of uncommon vision and remembered as one of the first environmentalists.

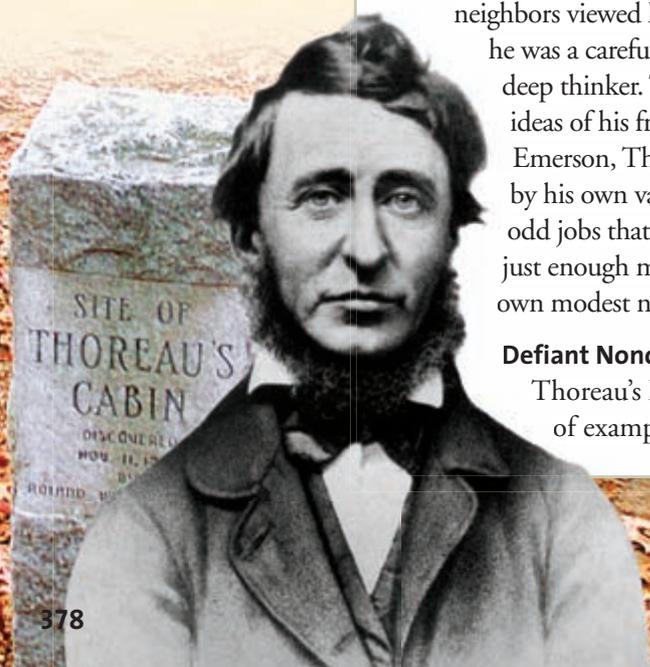
Independent Spirit Thoreau was born and raised in Concord, Massachusetts, and attended Harvard University. After graduating, he returned to Concord to teach school. Though some of Thoreau's neighbors viewed him as eccentric, he was a careful observer and a deep thinker. Taking to heart the ideas of his friend Ralph Waldo Emerson, Thoreau tried to live by his own values, often doing odd jobs that would earn him just enough money to meet his own modest needs.

Defiant Nonconformist

Thoreau's life was full of examples of his

nonconformity to society's norms. As a Harvard student, he was required to wear a black coat but sported a green one instead. In his first year of teaching, he refused to punish his students physically, a harsh but common practice of the time, and resigned his post. In 1845, he conducted his famous experiment, living simply and frugally in a small cabin on the shores of Walden Pond. In 1846, he was arrested and spent a night in jail for refusing to pay a poll tax, an act of protest against the U.S. government's war with Mexico and its support of slavery. This exercise of conscience over law later became known as civil disobedience.

Influential Thinker At the time of Thoreau's death from tuberculosis at age 44, he was viewed as an unsuccessful nature writer. Today, however, he is known as the father of American nature writing and an important political thinker. His observations about the natural world and the value of the simple life, as well as his promotion of nonviolent protest, have helped bring about great societal change. He has provided inspiration to many, including conservationist John Muir and civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr.



Author Online



Go to thinkcentral.com. KEYWORD: HML11-378B

● TEXT ANALYSIS: ESSAY

An **essay** is a work of nonfiction, often loosely structured, expressing the writer's personal views on a single subject. To analyze an essay, pay careful attention to the rhetorical or persuasive power of the following elements:

- the writer's **tone**, or attitude toward his or her subject
- **figurative language** that makes abstract ideas more appealing and easier to grasp
- **anecdotes**, or short accounts of personal incidents
- **imagery** that creates vivid impressions for the reader

As you read, consider how these rhetorical elements illuminate Thoreau's ideas and contribute to the power and persuasiveness of the text.

Review: **Transcendentalism**

● READING SKILL: EVALUATE IDEAS

To **evaluate** a writer's ideas, you must examine them carefully and then make judgments about their value. **Summarizing** can help. As you read the selections from *Walden* and "Civil Disobedience," use a chart like the one shown to briefly restate Thoreau's main ideas. After you summarize each idea, note your reaction to it.

	<i>Thoreau's Ideas and Beliefs</i>	<i>My Reactions</i>
<i>Walden</i>		
<i>"Civil Disobedience"</i>		

▲ VOCABULARY IN CONTEXT

Thoreau uses the following words to present his theories about simple, principled living. To see how many you know, choose the word that is closest in meaning to each numbered term.

WORD LIST	abject	impetuous	pervade
	congenial	misgiving	transgress
	deliberately	perturbation	

- err
- disturbance
- doubt
- wretched
- friendly
- permeate
- impulsive
- thoughtfully



Complete the activities in your **Reader/Writer Notebook**.

Do you chart your own COURSE?

"Cranks," "crackpots," "oddballs"—society has been quick to apply a negative label to people outside the mainstream. Although Thoreau was probably never called an "oddball," he was certainly regarded as an eccentric. Nonconformity has never been an easy choice, as people often condemn nonconformists without bothering to find out why they embrace a different set of values. Nevertheless, history has shown that many nonconformists, like Thoreau, are often simply ahead of their time.

DISCUSS With a small group of classmates, create a list of famous nonconformists. How did the individuals you listed depart from the norms of their time? Were they punished for their actions? Were they able to win others to their point of view? Discuss these questions with your group.



WALDEN

Henry David Thoreau

BACKGROUND Like Ralph Waldo Emerson and other transcendentalists, Thoreau felt a need to affirm his unity with nature. On July 4, 1845, he began an experiment in what he thought of as “essential living”—living simply, studying the natural world, and seeking truth within himself. On land owned by Emerson near Concord, Massachusetts, Thoreau built a small cabin by Walden Pond and lived there for more than two years, writing and studying nature. *Walden* is the record of his experiences.

THEME

What is the right way to live? People have been asking this question for millennia. In *Walden*, Thoreau describes his attempt to live the “right way.” In the recent movie *Into the Wild* (2007), a young man attempts to find his own way of living but meets with disastrous results. What characters in recent films, plays, or novels have tried to find a new or different way of living? How successful were they?

from *WHERE I LIVED, AND WHAT I LIVED FOR*

When first I took up my abode in the woods, that is, began to spend my nights as well as days there, which, by accident, was on Independence day, or the fourth of July, 1845, my house was not finished for winter, but was merely a defense against the rain, without plastering or chimney, the walls being of rough weather-stained boards, with wide chinks, which made it cool at night. The upright white hewn studs and freshly planed door and window casings gave it a clean and airy look, especially in the morning, when its timbers were saturated with dew, so that I fancied that by noon some sweet gum would exude from them. . . . **A**

10 I was seated by the shore of a small pond, about a mile and a half south of the village of Concord and somewhat higher than it, in the midst of an extensive wood between that town and Lincoln, and about two miles south of that our only field known to fame, Concord Battle Ground; but I was so low in the woods that the opposite shore, half a mile off, like the rest, covered with wood, was my most distant horizon. For the first week, whenever I looked out on the pond it impressed me like a tarn high up

Analyze Visuals ►

Consider the tranquil scene depicted in the photograph on the opposite page. What aspect of the photograph is most responsible for conveying this sense of tranquility, and why?

A ESSAY

Think about Thoreau’s **tone** as he describes his crude, unfinished house. What sense of the writer’s views or personality do you get from these opening lines?

16 **tarn**: a small mountain lake or pool.



on the side of a mountain, its bottom far above the surface of other lakes, and, as the sun arose, I saw it throwing off its nightly clothing of mist, and here and there, by degrees, its soft ripples or its smooth reflecting surface was revealed, while the mists, like ghosts, were stealthily withdrawing in every direction into the woods, as at the breaking up of some nocturnal conventicle. The very dew seemed to hang upon the trees later into the day than usual, as on the sides of mountains. . . .

I went to the woods because I wished to live **deliberately**, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived. I did not wish to live what was not life, living is so dear; nor did I wish to practice resignation, unless it was quite necessary. I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life, to live so sturdily and Spartan-like as to put to rout all that was not life, to cut a broad swath and shave close, to drive life into a corner, and reduce it to its lowest terms, and, if it proved to be mean, why then to get the whole and genuine meanness of it, and publish its meanness to the world; or if it were sublime, to know it by experience, and be able to give a true account of it in my next excursion. For most men, it appears to me, are in a strange uncertainty about it, whether it is of the devil or of God, and have *somewhat hastily* concluded that it is the chief end of man here to “glorify God and enjoy him forever.” **B**

Still we live meanly, like ants; though the fable tells us that we were long ago changed into men; like pygmies we fight with cranes; it is error upon error, and clout upon clout, and our best virtue has for its occasion a superfluous and evitable wretchedness. Our life is frittered away by detail. An honest man has hardly need to count more than his ten fingers, or in extreme cases he may add his ten toes, and lump the rest. Simplicity, simplicity, simplicity! I say, let your affairs be as two or three, and not a hundred or a thousand; instead of a million count half a dozen, and keep your accounts on your thumbnail. In the midst of this chopping sea of civilized life, such are the clouds and storms and quicksands and thousand-and-one items to be allowed for, that a man has to live, if he would not founder and go to the bottom and not make his port at all, by dead reckoning, and he must be a great calculator indeed who succeeds. Simplify, simplify. Instead of three meals a day, if it be necessary eat but one; instead of a hundred dishes, five; and reduce other things in proportion. . . . **C**

Why should we live with such hurry and waste of life? We are determined to be starved before we are hungry. Men say that a stitch in time saves nine, and so they take a thousand stitches today to save nine to-morrow. As for *work*, we haven't any of any consequence. We have the Saint Vitus' dance, and cannot possibly keep our heads still. If I should only give a few pulls at the parish bell-rope, as for a fire, that is, without setting the bell, there is hardly a man on his farm in the outskirts of Concord, notwithstanding that press of engagements which was his excuse so many times this morning,

22 conventicle: a secret religious meeting.

deliberately (dĭ-lĭb'ər-ĭt-lē) *adv.* in an unhurried and thoughtful manner

29 Spartan-like: in a simple and disciplined way, like the inhabitants of the ancient city-state of Sparta.

B EVALUATE IDEAS

Reread lines 24–37. **Summarize** Thoreau's reasons for moving to the woods. What do you think of these reasons?

41 evitable: avoidable.

C ESSAY

In this essay, Thoreau often uses **figurative language** to present his observations. In lines 46–50, he likens civilized life to a rough sea. What might “the clouds and storms and quicksand” of life be? How might one “founder,” or sink, in civilized life?

56 Saint Vitus' dance: a disorder of the nervous system, characterized by rapid, jerky, involuntary movements.

nor a boy, nor a woman, I might almost say, but would forsake all and follow that sound, not mainly to save property from the flames, but, if we will confess the truth, much more to see it burn, since burn it must, and we, be it known, did not set it on fire,—or to see it put out, and have a hand in it, if that is done as handsomely; yes, even if it were the parish church itself. Hardly a man takes a half hour's nap after dinner, but when he wakes he holds up his head and asks, "What's the news?" as if the rest of mankind had stood his sentinels. Some give directions to be waked every half hour, doubtless for no other purpose; and then, to pay for it, they tell
70 what they have dreamed. After a night's sleep the news is as indispensable as the breakfast. "Pray tell me any thing new that has happened to a man any where on this globe,"—and he reads it over his coffee and rolls, that a man has had his eyes gouged out this morning on the Wachito River; never dreaming the while that he lives in the dark unfathomed mammoth cave of this world, and has but the rudiment of an eye himself. **D**

For my part, I could easily do without the post-office. I think that there are very few important communications made through it. To speak critically, I never received more than one or two letters in my life—I wrote this some years ago—that were worth the postage. The penny-post is, commonly,
80 an institution through which you seriously offer a man that penny for his thoughts which is so often safely offered in jest. And I am sure that I never read any memorable news in a newspaper. If we read of one man robbed, or murdered, or killed by accident, or one house burned, or one vessel wrecked, or one steamboat blown up, or one cow run over on the Western Railroad, or one mad dog killed, or one lot of grasshoppers in the winter,—we never need read of another. One is enough. . . .

Let us spend one day as deliberately as Nature, and not be thrown off the track by every nutshell and mosquito's wing that falls on the rails. Let us rise early and fast, or break fast, gently and without **perturbation**; let
90 company come and let company go, let the bells ring and the children cry,—determined to make a day of it. . . .

Time is but the stream I go a-fishing in. I drink at it; but while I drink I see the sandy bottom and detect how shallow it is. Its thin current slides away, but eternity remains. I would drink deeper; fish in the sky, whose bottom is pebbly with stars. I cannot count one. I know not the first letter of the alphabet. I have always been regretting that I was not as wise as the day I was born. The intellect is a cleaver; it discerns and rifts its way into the secret of things. I do not wish to be any more busy with my hands than is necessary. My head is hands and feet. I feel all my best faculties concentrated
100 in it. My instinct tells me that my head is an organ for burrowing, as some creatures use their snout and fore-paws, and with it I would mine and burrow my way through these hills. I think that the richest vein is somewhere hereabouts; so by the divining rod and thin rising vapors I judge; and here I will begin to mine. **E**

D ESSAY

What situation does Thoreau exaggerate in lines 66–75, and what is the rhetorical effect of his exaggeration? Would you respond differently to Thoreau's point if he stated his view here without exaggeration? Explain your answer.

79–81 penny-post . . . jest: Thoreau jokingly connects the postage rate at the time (a penny per letter) with the phrase "a penny for your thoughts."

perturbation (pŭr'tər-bā'shən)
n. disturbance of the emotions; agitation; uneasiness

E EVALUATE IDEAS

Summarize lines 87–104. What does Thoreau want to spend his time trying to understand, and how does he plan to achieve this understanding? Decide what you think about this desire.



from **SOLITUDE**

This is a delicious evening, when the whole body is one sense, and imbibes delight through every pore. I go and come with a strange liberty in Nature, a part of herself. As I walk along the stony shore of the pond in my shirt sleeves, though it is cool as well as cloudy and windy, and I see nothing special to attract me, all the elements are unusually **congenial** to me. The
110 bullfrogs trump to usher in the night, and the note of the whippoorwill is borne on the rippling wind from over the water. Sympathy with the fluttering alder and poplar leaves almost takes away my breath; yet, like the lake, my serenity is rippled but not ruffled. These small waves raised by the evening wind are as remote from storm as the smooth reflecting surface. Though it is now dark, the wind still blows and roars in the wood, the waves still dash, and some creatures lull the rest with their notes. The repose is never complete. The wildest animals do not repose, but seek their prey now; the fox, and skunk, and rabbit, now roam the fields and woods without fear. They are Nature's watchmen,—links which connect the days
120 of animated life. . . .

Men frequently say to me, "I should think you would feel lonesome down there, and want to be nearer to folks, rainy and snowy days and nights especially." I am tempted to reply to such,—This whole earth which we inhabit is but a point in space. How far apart, think you, dwell the two most distant inhabitants of yonder star, the breadth of whose disk cannot be appreciated by our instruments? Why should I feel lonely? Is not our planet in the Milky Way? This which you put seems to me not to be the most important question. What sort of space is that which separates a man from his fellows and makes him solitary? I have found that no exertion of the legs
130 can bring two minds much nearer to one another. . . . **F**



from **THE POND IN WINTER**

Every winter the liquid and trembling surface of the pond, which was so sensitive to every breath, and reflected every light and shadow, becomes solid to the depth of a foot or a foot and a half, so that it will support the heaviest teams, and perchance the snow covers it to an equal depth, and it is not to be distinguished from any level field. Like the marmots in the surrounding hills, it closes its eye-lids and becomes dormant for three months or more. Standing on the snow-covered plain, as if in a pasture amid the hills, I cut my way first through a foot of snow, and then a foot of ice, and open a
140 window under my feet, where, kneeling to drink, I look down into the quiet parlor of the fishes, **pervaded** by a softened light as through a window of

congenial (kən-jēn'yəl) *adj.*
suited to one's needs or nature;
agreeable

COMMON CORE L 4c

Language Coach

Synonyms *Rippled* and *ruffled* (line 113) are synonyms, words with similar meanings. Thoreau contrasts their meanings, though. With a partner, look up each word in a dictionary; then, decide what difference in meaning Thoreau intended for them to have.

F EVALUATE IDEAS

Reread lines 121–130. **Summarize** Thoreau's ideas about loneliness. Do you agree with his assessment of this condition? Explain your answer.

135 marmots: burrowing rodents that hibernate in winter; also known as groundhogs or woodchucks.

pervade (pər-vād') *v.* to spread through every part of

ground glass, with its bright sanded floor the same as in summer; there a perennial waveless serenity reigns as in the amber twilight sky, corresponding to the cool and even temperament of the inhabitants. Heaven is under our feet as well as over our heads. . . . **G**

G TRANSCENDENTALISM
What transcendentalist ideal is reflected in lines 143–144?



from **SPRING**

One attraction in coming to the woods to live was that I should have leisure and opportunity to see the spring come in. The ice in the pond at length begins to be honey-combed, and I can set my heel in it as I walk. Fogs and rains and warmer suns are gradually melting the snow; the days have grown sensibly longer; and I see how I shall get through the winter without adding
150 to my woodpile, for large fires are no longer necessary. I am on the alert for the first signs of spring, to hear the chance note of some arriving bird, or the striped squirrel's chirp, for his stores must be now nearly exhausted, or see the woodchuck venture out of his winter quarters. . . .

The change from storm and winter to serene and mild weather, from dark and sluggish hours to bright and elastic ones, is a memorable crisis which all things proclaim. It is seemingly instantaneous at last. Suddenly an influx of light filled my house, though the evening was at hand, and the clouds of winter still overhung it, and the eaves were dripping with sleety rain. I looked out the window, and lo! where yesterday was cold gray ice there lay
160 the transparent pond already calm and full of hope as in a summer evening, reflecting a summer evening sky in its bosom, though none was visible overhead, as if it had intelligence with some remote horizon. . . . **H**

149 sensibly: noticeably.

H ESSAY
Even when an essay does not argue a particular point, the writer uses **rhetorical techniques**, or methods that have persuasive appeal. For example, in lines 143–144, when Thoreau says “Heaven is under our feet,” his use of figurative language has strong emotional appeal. Re-read lines 145–162. What effect does Thoreau’s use of **imagery** have in this description?



from **CONCLUSION**

I left the woods for as good a reason as I went there. Perhaps it seemed to me that I had several more lives to live, and could not spare any more time for that one. It is remarkable how easily and insensibly we fall into a particular route, and make a beaten track for ourselves. I had not lived there a week before my feet wore a path from my door to the pond-side; and though it is five or six years since I trod it, it is still quite distinct. It is true, I fear that others may have fallen into it, and so helped to keep it open. The surface of
170 the earth is soft and impressible by the feet of men; and so with the paths which the mind travels. How worn and dusty, then, must be the highways of the world, how deep the ruts of tradition and conformity! I did not wish to take a cabin passage, but rather to go before the mast and on the deck of

Language Coach

Figurative Language “Beaten track” (line 166) and “ruts” (line 172) can be used as figurative language, language that communicates ideas beyond the literal meaning of the words. How can “beaten track” and “ruts” be understood both literally and figuratively?

172–175 On a sailing ship, passengers stayed in private compartments, or cabins, near the middle of the ship, while the crew shared living quarters at the front, where more was visible.

the world, for there I could best see the moonlight amid the mountains. I do not wish to go below now. ❶

I learned this, at least, by my experiment; that if one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams, and endeavors to live the life which he has imagined, he will meet with a success unexpected in common hours. He will put some things behind, will pass an invisible boundary; new, universal, 180 and more liberal laws will begin to establish themselves around and within him; or the old laws be expanded, and interpreted in his favor in a more liberal sense, and he will live with the license of a higher order of beings. In proportion as he simplifies his life, the laws of the universe will appear less complex, and solitude will not be solitude, nor poverty poverty, nor weakness weakness. If you have built castles in the air, your work need not be lost; that is where they should be. Now put the foundations under them. . . .

Why should we be in such desperate haste to succeed, and in such desperate enterprises? If a man does not keep pace with his companions, 190 perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer. Let him step to the music which he hears, however measured or far away. It is not important that he should mature as soon as an apple tree or an oak. Shall he turn his spring into summer? If the condition of things which we were made for is not yet, what were any reality which we can substitute? We will not be shipwrecked on a vain reality. Shall we with pains erect a heaven of blue glass over ourselves, though when it is done we shall be sure to gaze still at the true ethereal heaven far above, as if the former were not? . . . ❷

However mean your life is, meet it and live it; do not shun it and call it hard names. It is not so bad as you are. It looks poorest when you are richest. 200 The fault-finder will find faults even in paradise. Love your life, poor as it is. You may perhaps have some pleasant, thrilling, glorious hours, even in a poorhouse. The setting sun is reflected from the windows of the almshouse as brightly as from the rich man's abode; the snow melts before its door as early in the spring. I do not see but a quiet mind may live as contentedly there, and have as cheering thoughts, as in a palace. The town's poor seem to me often to live the most independent lives of any. May be they are simply great enough to receive without **misgiving**. Most think that they are above being supported by the town; but it oftener happens that they are not above supporting themselves by dishonest means, which should be 210 more disreputable. Cultivate poverty like a garden herb, like sage. Do not trouble yourself much to get new things, whether clothes or friends. Turn the old; return to them. Things do not change; we change. Sell your clothes and keep your thoughts. God will see that you do not want society. If I were confined to a corner of a garret all my days, like a spider, the world would be just as large to me while I had my thoughts about me. The philosopher said: "From an army of three divisions one can take away its general, and put it in disorder; from the man the most **abject** and vulgar one cannot take away his thought." Do not seek so anxiously to be developed, to subject

❶ ESSAY

To what does Thoreau compare life in lines 172–175? Explain how this **metaphor** conveys Thoreau's reasons for leaving Walden.

189–191 If a man . . . away: This is one of Thoreau's most famous passages. The "different drummer" evolved from a journal entry describing how he fell asleep to the sound of someone beating a drum "alone in the silence and the dark." The phrase "marching to the beat of a different drummer" became popular during the 1960s and 1970s.

❷ TRANSCENDENTALISM

What key feature of transcendentalism does Thoreau embrace in lines 189–191?

misgiving (mĭs-gĭv'ĭng) *n.* a feeling of doubt, mistrust, or uncertainty

215 the philosopher: Confucius (551–479 B.C.), Chinese teacher of moral living, who had an influence on Thoreau's ideas.

abject (ăb'jĕkt') *adj.* low; contemptible; wretched

yourself to many influences to be played on; it is all dissipation. Humility
220 like darkness reveals the heavenly lights. The shadows of poverty and
meanness gather around us, “and lo! creation widens to our view.” We are
often reminded that if there were bestowed on us the wealth of Croesus, our
aims must still be the same, and our means essentially the same. Moreover,
if you are restricted in your range by poverty, if you cannot buy books
and newspapers, for instance, you are but confined to the most significant
and vital experiences; you are compelled to deal with the material which
yields the most sugar and the most starch. It is life near the bone where it is
sweetest. You are defended from being a trifler. No man loses ever on a lower
level by magnanimity on a higher. Superfluous wealth can buy superfluities
230 only. Money is not required to buy one necessary of the soul. . . . **K**

The life in us is like the water in the river. It may rise this year higher than
man has ever known it, and flood the parched uplands; even this may be the
eventful year, which will drown out all our muskrats. It was not always dry
land where we dwell. I see far inland the banks which the stream anciently
washed, before science began to record its freshets. Every one has heard the
story which has gone the rounds of New England, of a strong and beautiful
bug which came out of the dry leaf of an old table of apple-tree wood,
which had stood in a farmer’s kitchen for sixty years, first in Connecticut,
and afterward in Massachusetts,—from an egg deposited in the living tree
240 many years earlier still, as appeared by counting the annual layers beyond it;
which was heard gnawing out for several weeks, hatched perchance by the
heat of an urn. Who does not feel his faith in a resurrection and immortality
strengthened by hearing of this? Who knows what beautiful and winged
life, whose egg has been buried for ages under many concentric layers of
woodenness in the dead dry life of society, deposited at first in the alburnum
of the green and living tree, which has been gradually converted into the
semblance of its well-seasoned tomb,—heard perchance gnawing out now
for years by the astonished family of man, as they sat round the festive
board,—may unexpectedly come forth from amidst society’s most trivial
250 and handselled furniture, to enjoy its perfect summer life at last!

I do not say that John or Jonathan will realize all this; but such is the
character of that morrow which mere lapse of time can never make to
dawn. The light which puts out our eyes is darkness to us. Only that day
dawns to which we are awake. There is more day to dawn. The sun is but a
morning star. 

222 Croesus (krē’sēs): an ancient king legendary for his great wealth.

K EVALUATE IDEAS

Summarize Thoreau’s ideas about poverty. Do you think his view of the poor and the lives they lead is realistic? Record your thoughts in your chart.

235 freshets: overflowings of a stream caused by heavy rain or melting snow.

245 alburnum (äl-bûr’nēm): the part of a tree’s trunk through which sap flows.

251 John or Jonathan: the common man (as in the more current expression “Tom, Dick, and Harry”).

Comprehension

- 1. Recall** What were Thoreau’s reasons for moving to the woods?
- 2. Recall** What does Thoreau advise people to do to ensure their lives are not “frittered away by detail”?
- 3. Summarize** What are Thoreau’s views on correspondence and the daily news?

Text Analysis

- 4. Make Inferences** Thoreau rejects many things as inessential or unimportant. List at least three things that *were* important to him, citing specific lines from the text to support your answer.
- 5. Analyze the Essay** Thoreau was a poet as well as an essayist, and in *Walden*, he uses **figurative language** to express abstract concepts. Complete the chart by finding examples of such language. Use your completed chart to describe what you think Thoreau’s use of figurative language adds to this essay.

Type of Figurative Language	Examples from <i>Walden</i>
metaphor	“Time is but the stream I go a-fishing in.”
simile	
personification	

- 6. Evaluate Ideas** Review the philosophical ideas you summarized as you read. Choose two ideas—Thoreau’s view of the poor, for example, or the way he feels about civilized life. Explain whether or not you think the ideas you chose have merit, citing reasons for your opinions.
- 7. Compare Texts** In “Thoreau Still Beckons, if I Can Take My Laptop” on page 389, Cynthia G. La Ferle argues that “making choices is so much more difficult in a culture fueled by sheer busyness and commercialism. There are few places . . . where one can escape.” Do you agree that it would be more challenging for a modern American to live as Thoreau did? Explain why or why not, using details from both texts to support your opinion.

Text Criticism

- 8. Critical Interpretations** According to Frank Stewart, author of *A Natural History of Nature Writing*, nature writers are “moved by the joyous, wild, and dazzling beauty in the world.” Do you think this comment applies to Thoreau? Cite examples from *Walden* to support your opinion.

Do you chart your own **COURSE**?

In his day, Thoreau’s living habits were probably considered unusual and even eccentric. In what place and in what manner might a nonconformist today live?

COMMON CORE

RI 2 Determine two or more central ideas of a text and analyze their development; provide an objective summary of the text.

RI 6 Determine an author’s point of view or purpose in a text in which the rhetoric is effective, analyzing how style and content contribute to the power, persuasiveness, or beauty of the text. **RI 9** Analyze documents of literary significance for their themes, purposes, and rhetorical features.

MAGAZINE ARTICLE Thoreau's call for a simpler life continues to resonate with Americans. Those struggling with a hectic lifestyle may recall his words with a particular sense of longing. Read on to hear one busy woman's reflection on the topic.

THOREAU STILL BECKONS, *if I Can Take My Laptop*

By Cynthia G. La Ferle

Thanks to the wonders of modern technology, I now have a mind-boggling array of options.

I can shop for birthday gifts on the Internet, watch a funeral in Britain on “live” television, and order a complete wardrobe from a computer catalog. . . .

Every day I have more choices than I can reasonably consider. And so, like other tired Americans, I carry the burden of complexity—a burden so overwhelming, in fact, that there are times when I imagine trading places with Henry David Thoreau.

It's only fitting that I rediscovered Thoreau the week I purged my home office with a dust rag and a vacuum cleaner. The autumn mornings felt ripe for pitching and sorting. “Walden,” Thoreau's famous treatise on simple living, was jammed behind a pile of unread paperbacks. . . .

It occurred to me that things were vastly different for Thoreau. The “comforts of life” in the 1840s were not exactly cushy by today's standards. His concept of luxury might have been taking tea in his mother's bone china saucers. So what had he given up to commune with nature?

Even before he moved to Walden Pond, Thoreau hadn't accumulated three television sets or a closetful of designer clothes. He didn't own several pairs of expensive athletic shoes for all those

philosophical walks he took. His cot in the cabin couldn't have been more lumpy than the straw-filled mattresses in most mid-19th-century homes. And Thoreau never had to trade a personal computer for a pencil.

With all due respect, I wonder, how tough was Thoreau's two-year sabbatical with simplicity? Is it true that he occasionally walked from Walden Pond back to Concord, where Emerson's wife had a home-cooked supper waiting for him? . . .

And yet, just as Thoreau did, I'd like to weed out, pare down, live deliberately, be a resident philosopher. . . .

Visiting the “real” Walden Pond this fall, I was amazed and disappointed to find the place overrun. Locals were strewn on its small beach. You couldn't walk the path around the pond without rubbing shoulders with other sightseers; there wasn't a spot left for solitary reflection.

If nothing else, my rendezvous with Thoreau got me thinking. What—and how much—do I really need? What price have I paid for modern technology and “convenience”? In which landfill will all my stuff end up? . . .

Could I survive in a one-room cabin with barely more than a chair, a wooden table, a bowlful of raw vegetables, and my laptop? Honestly, I wish I could.

Civil DISOBEDIENCE

Henry David Thoreau

BACKGROUND Thoreau put into practice the ideas expressed in Ralph Waldo Emerson’s “Self-Reliance.” In 1846, he spent a night in jail for refusing to pay a poll tax—a tax one had to pay in order to vote—as an act of protest against the U.S. government. Thoreau was enraged by the government’s support of slavery and its war against Mexico, which he viewed as a case of a stronger country overpowering a weaker one simply to expand its own borders. Inspired by his experience in jail, Thoreau wrote this essay to add his voice to the ongoing debate about a citizen’s responsibility to pay for a war he did not support.

I heartily accept the motto, “That government is best which governs least;” and I should like to see it acted up to more rapidly and systematically. Carried out, it finally amounts to this, which also I believe,—“That government is best which governs not at all;” and when men are prepared for it, that will be the kind of government which they will have. Government is at best but an expedient; but most governments are usually, and all governments are sometimes, inexpedient. The objections which have **A** been brought against a standing army, and they are many and weighty, and deserve to prevail, may also at last be brought against a standing 10 government. The standing army is only an arm of the standing government. The government itself, which is only the mode which the people have chosen to execute their will, is equally liable to be abused and perverted before the people can act through it. Witness the present Mexican war, the work of comparatively a few individuals using the standing government as their tool; for, in the outset, the people would not have consented to this measure. . . .

But, to speak practically and as a citizen, unlike those who call themselves no-government men, I ask for, not at once no government, but *at once* a

Analyze Visuals ►

The photographer who created the image on the opposite page chose to focus not on the people in the crowd, but on their shadows. Why might she have made this choice?

A EVALUATE IDEAS

Sometimes writers may make false or misleading statements, known as **logical fallacies**, to bolster their arguments. Examine Thoreau’s progression of ideas in lines 1–10, when he says that if you accept the motto, “That government is best which governs least” then it naturally follows that “That government is best which governs not at all.” Some might say that the second statement is a **non sequitur**, or a conclusion that does not follow from the evidence. What do you think? Explain why you think Thoreau’s statement is or is not valid.

13 the present Mexican war: the 1846–1848 war between Mexico and the United States.



better government. Let every man make known what kind of government
20 would command his respect, and that will be one step toward obtaining it.

After all, the practical reason why, when the power is once in the hands
of the people, a majority are permitted, and for a long period continue,
to rule is not because they are most likely to be in the right, nor because
this seems fairest to the minority, but because they are physically the
strongest. But a government in which the majority rule in all cases cannot
be based on justice, even as far as men understand it. Can there not be a
government in which majorities do not virtually decide right and wrong,
but conscience?—in which majorities decide only those questions to which
30 the rule of expediency is applicable? Must the citizen ever for a moment,
or in the least degree, resign his conscience to the legislator? Why has every
man a conscience, then? I think that we should be men first, and subjects
afterward. It is not desirable to cultivate a respect for the law, so much as for
the right. The only obligation which I have a right to assume is to do at any
time what I think right. It is truly enough said, that a corporation has no
conscience; but a corporation of conscientious men is a corporation *with* a
conscience. Law never made men a whit more just; and, by means of their
respect for it, even the well-disposed are daily made the agents of injustice. **B**
A common and natural result of an undue respect for law is, that you may
see a file of soldiers, colonel, captain, corporal, privates, powder-monkeys,
40 and all, marching in admirable order over hill and dale to the wars, against
their wills, ay, against their common sense and consciences, which makes it
very steep marching indeed, and produces a palpitation of the heart. They
have no doubt that it is a damnable business in which they are concerned;
they are all peaceably inclined. Now, what are they? Men at all? or small
movable forts and magazines, at the service of some unscrupulous man
in power? Visit the Navy-Yard, and behold a marine, such a man as an
American government can make, or such as it can make a man with its black
arts—a mere shadow and reminiscence of humanity, a man laid out alive
and standing, and already, as one may say, buried under arms with funeral
50 accompaniments, though it may be,—

“Not a drum was heard, not a funeral note,
As his corse to the rampart we hurried;
Not a soldier discharged his farewell shot
O’er the grave where our hero we buried.”

The mass of men serve the state thus, not as men mainly, but as
machines, with their bodies. They are the standing army, and the militia,
jailers, constables, *posse comitatus*, etc. In most cases there is no free exercise
whatever of the judgment or of the moral sense; but they put themselves
on a level with wood and earth and stones; and wooden men can perhaps
60 be manufactured that will serve the purpose as well. Such command no
more respect than men of straw or a lump of dirt. They have the same sort
of worth only as horses and dogs. Yet such as these even are commonly

B EVALUATE IDEAS

Reread lines 21–37. What position does Thoreau take in the conflict between majority rule and individual conscience? On your chart, **summarize** and react to his position.

39 powder-monkeys: boys with the job of carrying gunpowder to artillery crews.

45 magazines: places where ammunition is stored.

47–48 black arts: witchcraft.

51–54 “Not a drum . . . we buried”: opening lines of “The Burial of Sir John Moore After Corunna” by the Irish poet Charles Wolfe (1791–1823).

57 posse comitatus (pōs’ē kōm-ə-tā’-təs): group of people that can be called on by the sheriff to help enforce the law [*Latin*, literally, the power of the county].

esteemed good citizens. Others—as most legislators, politicians, lawyers, ministers, and office-holders—serve the state chiefly with their heads; and, as they rarely make any moral distinctions, they are as likely to serve the Devil, without *intending* it, as God. A very few—as heroes, patriots, martyrs, reformers in the great sense, and *men*—serve the state with their consciences also, and so necessarily resist it for the most part; and they are commonly treated as enemies by it. . . . **C**

- 70 Unjust laws exist: shall we be content to obey them, or shall we endeavor to amend them, and obey them until we have succeeded or shall we **transgress** them at once? Men generally, under such a government as this, think that they ought to wait until they have persuaded the majority to alter them. They think that, if they should resist, the remedy would be worse than the evil. But it is the fault of the government itself that the remedy *is* worse than the evil. *It* makes it worse. Why is it not more apt to anticipate and provide for reform? Why does it not cherish its wise minority? Why does it cry and resist before it is hurt? Why does it not encourage its citizens to be on the alert to point out its faults, and *do* better than it would have them? Why
- 80 does it always crucify Christ, and excommunicate Copernicus and Luther, and pronounce Washington and Franklin rebels? . . . **D**

If the injustice is part of the necessary friction of the machine of government, let it go, let it go: perchance it will wear smooth, certainly the machine will wear out. If the injustice has a spring, or a pulley, or a rope, or a crank, exclusively for itself, then perhaps you may consider whether the remedy will not be worse than the evil; but if it is of such a nature that it requires you to be the agent of injustice to another, then, I say, break the law. Let your life be a counter-friction to stop the machine. What I have to do is to see, at any rate, that I do not lend myself to the wrong which

90 I condemn. . . .

I meet this American government, or its representative, the state government, directly, and face to face, once a year—no more—in the person of its tax-gatherer; this is the only mode in which a man situated as I am necessarily meets it; and it then says distinctly, Recognize me; and the simplest, most effectual, and, in the present posture of affairs, the indispensablest mode of treating with it on this head, of expressing your little satisfaction with and love for it, is to deny it then. My civil neighbor, the tax-gatherer, is the very man I have to deal with,—for it is, after all, with men and not with parchment that I quarrel,—and he has voluntarily

100 chosen to be an agent of the government. How shall he ever know well what he is and does as an officer of the government, or as a man, until he is obliged to consider whether he shall treat me, his neighbor, for whom he has respect, as a neighbor and well-disposed man, or as a maniac and disturber of the peace, and see if he can get over this obstruction to his neighborliness without a ruder and more **impetuous** thought or speech corresponding with his action. I know this well, that if one thousand, if one hundred, if ten men

C EVALUATE IDEAS

Reread lines 55–69. Which way of serving the state does Thoreau approve of? Which ways does he condemn? Decide whether you agree with his assessment of soldiers and others who serve.

transgress (trăns-grēs') v. to violate a command or law

80 Copernicus (kō-pūr'nə-kəs) and **Luther**: Radicals in their time, Polish astronomer Nicolaus Copernicus theorized that the sun rather than the earth was the center of our planetary system; German theologian Martin Luther was a leader in the Protestant Reformation.

D GRAMMAR AND STYLE

In lines 70–81, Thoreau adds emphasis and emotion to his writing by asking **rhetorical questions**—questions that do not require a reply because the writer assumes the answers are obvious.

95 posture of affairs: situation.

impetuous (ĩm-pěch'ōō-əs) *adj.* acting with sudden or rash energy; hasty



Left: London police arresting a suffragist, 1914; center: Gandhi marching to the sea, in defiance of the British salt monopoly

whom I could name,—if ten *honest* men only,—ay, if *one* honest man, in this State of Massachusetts, *ceasing to hold slaves*, were actually to withdraw from this copartnership, and be locked up in the county jail therefor, it
110 would be the abolition of slavery in America. For it matters not how small the beginning may seem to be: what is once well done is done forever. But we love better to talk about it: that we say is our mission. Reform keeps many scores of newspapers in its service, but not one man. . . .

Under a government which imprisons any unjustly, the true place for a just man is also a prison. The proper place today, the only place which Massachusetts has provided for her freer and less desponding spirits, is in her prisons, to be put out and locked out of the State by her own act, as they have already put themselves out by their principles. It is there that the fugitive slave, and the Mexican prisoner on parole, and the Indian come to
120 plead the wrongs of his race should find them; on that separate, but more free and honorable ground, where the State places those who are not *with* her, but *against* her,—the only house in a slave State in which a free man can abide with honor. If any think that their influence would be lost there, and their voices no longer afflict the ear of the State, that they would not be as an enemy within its walls, they do not know by how much truth is stronger than error, nor how much more eloquently and effectively he can combat injustice who has experienced a little in his own person. Cast your whole vote, not a strip of paper merely, but your whole influence. A minority is powerless while it conforms to the majority; it is not even a minority then;
130 but it is irresistible when it clogs by its whole weight. If the alternative is to keep all just men in prison, or give up war and slavery, the State will not hesitate which to choose. If a thousand men were not to pay their tax bills

COMMON CORE RI 4

Language Coach

Connotation The images and feelings you connect to a word, adding a finer shade of meaning to it, are a word's **connotation**. *Abide* (line 123) can mean "withstand patiently" or simply "stay." How do *abide*'s connotations of endurance and acceptance fit the phrase "abide with honor"?



Left: Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., jailed for civil disobedience; *center:* Vietnam war protester burns his military draft card; *right:* Beijing man stands in front of tanks during the 1989 Tiananmen Square uprising.

this year, that would not be a violent and bloody measure, as it would be to pay them, and enable the State to commit violence and shed innocent blood. This is, in fact, the definition of a peaceable revolution, if any such is possible. If the tax-gatherer, or any other public officer, asks me, as one has done, “But what shall I do?” my answer is, “If you really wish to do anything, resign your office.” When the subject has refused allegiance, and the officer has resigned his office, then the revolution is accomplished. But
140 even suppose blood should flow. Is there not a sort of blood shed when the conscience is wounded? Through this wound a man’s real manhood and immortality flow out, and he bleeds to an everlasting death. I see this blood flowing now. . . . **E**

I have paid no poll-tax for six years. I was put into a jail once on this account, for one night; and, as I stood considering the walls of solid stone, two or three feet thick, the door of wood and iron, a foot thick, and the iron grating which strained the light, I could not help being struck with the foolishness of that institution which treated me as if I were mere flesh and blood and bones, to be locked up. I wondered that it should have concluded
150 at length that this was the best use it could put me to, and had never thought to avail itself of my services in some way. I saw that, if there was a wall of stone between me and my townsmen, there was a still more difficult one to climb or break through before they could get to be as free as I was. I did not for a moment feel confined, and the walls seemed a great waste of stone and mortar. I felt as if I alone of all my townsmen had paid my tax. They plainly did not know how to treat me, but behaved like persons who are underbred. In every threat and in every compliment there was a blunder; for they thought that my chief desire was to stand the other side of

E EVALUATE IDEAS

Thoreau holds an **assumption**—an opinion or belief that is taken for granted—that civil disobedience is the only sensible and moral course to take. Reread lines 114–143. How convincing are the reasons Thoreau gives in support of his belief?

157 underbred: ill-mannered.

that stone wall. I could not but smile to see how industriously they locked
160 the door on my meditations, which followed them out again without let or
hindrance, and *they* were really all that was dangerous. As they could not
reach me, they had resolved to punish my body; just as boys, if they cannot
come at some person against whom they have a spite, will abuse his dog. I
saw that the State was half-witted, that it was timid as a lone woman with
her silver spoons, and that it did not know its friends from its foes, and
I lost all my remaining respect for it, and pitied it. **F**

Thus the State never intentionally confronts a man's sense, intellectual
or moral, but only his body, his senses. It is not armed with superior wit or
honesty, but with superior physical strength. I was not born to be forced.
170 I will breathe after my own fashion. Let us see who is the strongest. What
force has a multitude? They only can force me who obey a higher law than I.
They force me to become like themselves. I do not hear of *men* being *forced*
to live this way or that by masses of men. What sort of life were that to live?
When I meet a government which says to me, "Your money or your life,"
why should I be in haste to give it my money? It may be in a great strait, and
not know what to do: I cannot help that. It must help itself; do as I do. It is
not worth the while to snivel about it. I am not responsible for the successful
working of the machinery of society. I am not the son of the engineer. I
perceive that, when an acorn and a chestnut fall side by side, the one does
180 not remain inert to make way for the other, but both obey their own laws,
and spring and grow and flourish as best they can, till one, perchance,
overshadows and destroys the other. If a plant cannot live according to its
nature, it dies; and so a man.  **G**

160–161 **without let or hindrance:**
without encountering obstacles.

F **ESSAY**

Why do you think Thoreau includes this personal **anecdote** about his night in jail? Consider why he feels free as he stands in his cell, contemplating his own imprisonment.

G **ESSAY**

What **message** does Thoreau convey through his example of the acorn and the chestnut?

Comprehension

- 1. Recall** According to Thoreau, what should be respected more than the law?
- 2. Summarize** What should a citizen do about an unjust law?
- 3. Clarify** List the three ways Thoreau says a citizen may serve the state. With which did Thoreau agree?

Text Analysis

- 4. Make Judgments** Consider the **historical context** of Thoreau’s essays. Would it be easier to practice nonconformity today? Consider the contemporary consequences of refusing to pay a tax (“Civil Disobedience,” lines 144–166) or of celebrating or “cultivating” poverty (*Walden*, lines 198–230).
- 5. Analyze Essays** Even when they discuss serious or even lofty ideas, essays are often loosely structured and highly personal. **Skim** *Walden* and “Civil Disobedience,” noting passages in which Thoreau refers to himself. Identify his personal feelings and instances when he shares his own experiences, such as the night he spent in jail. How do these passages influence your acceptance of his arguments? Explain, citing specific lines from both essays.
- 6. Interpret Paradox** A **paradox** seems to contradict itself but suggests an important truth. Reexamine both selections and record in a chart the examples of paradox you find. Then explain what truth or idea each paradox illustrates.
- 7. Evaluate Ideas** Ralph Waldo Emerson said of Thoreau, “No truer American ever lived.” Review the political ideas you summarized as you read “Civil Disobedience.” Do you consider Thoreau’s arguments to be those of a patriot or those of a traitor? In your response, consider Thoreau’s points on the necessity of government, how unjust laws may be changed, and majority rule.

Paradox	Explanation
<p>“I did not wish to live what was not life. . . .” (<i>Walden</i>, lines 26–27)</p>	

COMMON CORE

RI 2 Determine two or more central ideas of a text and analyze their development; provide an objective summary of the text. **RI 5** Analyze and evaluate the effectiveness of the structure an author uses. **RI 6** Determine an author’s point of view or purpose in a text in which the rhetoric is effective, analyzing how style and content contribute to the power, persuasiveness, or beauty of the text. **RI 9** Analyze documents of literary significance for their themes, purposes, and rhetorical features.

Text Criticism

- 8. Critical Interpretations** Critic Andrew Delbanco asserts that Thoreau is, “despite all the barricades he erected around himself, an irresistible writer; to read him is to feel wrenched away from the customary world and delivered into a place we fear as much as we need.” What does it mean when we say we both need and fear the world Thoreau creates? Explain your response.

Do you chart your own **COURSE**?

The result of Thoreau’s civil disobedience was a night spent in jail. In what ways do people today react to nonconformity? How do you act towards those who refuse to conform?

Vocabulary in Context

▲ VOCABULARY PRACTICE

Decide whether each statement is true or false.

1. If an odor were to **pervade** a room, it would be escaping through a chimney.
2. A person who is experiencing **perturbation** usually feels relaxed and confident.
3. An **impetuous** act is one that you do on the spur of the moment.
4. If you have some **misgiving** about attending a party, you should consider not going.
5. A **congenial** person usually gets along with others.
6. If you act **deliberately**, you act with haste and lack of concern.
7. **Object** sorrow is sadness that will pass quickly.
8. If you **transgress** a law, you break it.

WORD LIST

abject
congenial
deliberately
impetuous
misgiving
perturbation
pervade
transgress

ACADEMIC VOCABULARY IN WRITING

• construct • expand • indicate • reinforce • role

Thoreau **expanded** on Emerson's ideas by living them out—even to the point of being jailed for civil disobedience. In a short paragraph, discuss how you have **reinforced** a belief in your life. Use at least three Academic Vocabulary words in your writing.

VOCABULARY STRATEGY: THE PREFIXES *ab-* AND *per-*

Though the prefixes *ab-* and *per-* are sometimes combined with recognizable base words, often they are attached to Latin roots, as in the vocabulary words *abject* and *pervade*. When you think you recognize the prefix *ab-* or *per-* in a word, look for context clues that support your guess. Then use the meaning of the prefix—and of the root, if you know it—to decipher the word's definition.

PRACTICE The prefix *ab-* or *per-* occurs in each boldfaced word below. Use context clues and root and prefix meanings—or a dictionary, if necessary—to define each word.

1. That man's **pernicious** lies have totally destroyed his son's reputation.
2. To get out of debt, I have decided to **abjure** going to the mall for three months.
3. The recruits immediately obeyed the officer's **peremptory** command.
4. **Abstemious** eating habits can help a person lose weight.
5. His **perfunctory** effort to learn who had **absconded** with the money was unsuccessful.

COMMON CORE

L 4b Identify and use patterns of word changes that indicate different meanings or parts of speech. **L 6** Acquire and use academic words and phrases.

Prefix	Meaning
ab-	“away”; “away from”
per-	“through”; “thoroughly, very”

Interactive Vocabulary **THINK** central

Go to thinkcentral.com.
KEYWORD: HML11-398

Language

◆ GRAMMAR AND STYLE: Ask Rhetorical Questions

Review the **Grammar and Style** note on page 393. Thoreau asks a number of thought-provoking questions in “Civil Disobedience.” But he’s not expecting any answers. The questions he asks are **rhetorical questions**; they don’t require a reply. Writers often use these types of **interrogative sentences** to drive home a point or evoke an emotional response. Here is an example from the text:

*But even suppose blood should flow. **Is there not a sort of blood shed when the conscience is wounded?*** (lines 139–141)

Read this passage aloud. Consider how it would sound if it lacked a rhetorical question—if the second sentence read, “A sort of blood flows when the conscience is wounded.” Do you think the rhetorical question makes Thoreau’s argument more compelling?

PRACTICE Rewrite the following paragraph, changing some sentences to rhetorical questions.

Thoreau suggests that if citizens disagree with their government’s actions, they should stop paying taxes. However, if a large number of Americans refused to pay their taxes this year, the results would be disastrous. Public schools would collapse, salaries for police officers and firefighters would go unpaid, and services from public transportation to public hospitals would crumble. I do not see how a good citizen could allow this to happen. I do not see the honor in such an act.

READING-WRITING CONNECTION



Expand your understanding of Thoreau’s writing by responding to this prompt. Then, use the **revising tips** to improve your letter.

WRITING PROMPT

WRITE A LETTER TO THE EDITOR Thoreau proposed radical ideas in “Civil Disobedience.” Some people found them thrilling; others found them threatening. Choose one of the ideas proposed in “Civil Disobedience.” Write a **three-paragraph letter** to the editor of a local newspaper in which you explain the idea and argue for or against implementing it. Include at least two rhetorical questions in your letter.

REVISING TIPS

- Check to make sure your letter includes a strong argument.
- Include at least three reasons that support your argument.
- Keep the tone of your letter polite.
- End the letter with a request for action.

COMMON CORE

L 3a Apply an understanding of syntax to the study of complex texts when reading. **W 1a–b** Introduce precise, knowledgeable claims; develop claims and counterclaims, supplying the most relevant evidence for each. **W 1d–e** Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone; provide a concluding statement that follows from the argument presented.

Interactive Revision **THINK** central

Go to thinkcentral.com.
KEYWORD: HML11-399

On *Civil Disobedience*



RI 2 Determine two or more central ideas of a text; provide an objective summary of the text.

Mohandas K. Gandhi

BACKGROUND Mohandas K. Gandhi (1869–1948), called Mahatma (“Great Soul”), helped free India of British rule. As a student, he greatly admired Thoreau’s essay “Civil Disobedience.” Thoreau’s ideas helped shape Gandhi’s key principle—*satyagraha* (sə-tyä’grə-hə), or “truth-force.” In the following excerpt from a 1916 speech, Gandhi describes this powerful weapon for fighting oppression.

July 27, 1916

There are two ways of countering injustice. One way is to smash the head of the man who perpetrates injustice and to get your own head smashed in the process. All strong people in the world adopt this course. Everywhere wars are fought and millions of people are killed. The consequence is not the progress of a nation but its decline. . . . No country has ever become, or will ever become, happy through victory in war. A nation does not rise that way, it only falls further. In fact, what comes to it is defeat, not victory. And if, perchance, either our act or our purpose was ill-conceived, it brings disaster to both belligerents.¹

10 But through the other method of combating injustice, we alone suffer the consequences of our mistakes, and the other side is wholly spared. This other method is *satyagraha*.² One who resorts to it does not have to break another’s head; he may merely have his own head broken. He has to be prepared to die himself, suffering all the pain. In opposing the atrocious laws of the Government of South Africa,³ it was this method that we adopted. We made it clear to the said Government that we would never bow to its outrageous laws. No clapping is possible without two hands to do it, and no quarrel without two persons to make it. Similarly, no State is possible without two entities, the rulers and the ruled. You are our sovereign, our Government, only so long as we consider ourselves your subjects. When we are not subjects, you are not the
20 sovereign either. So long as it is your endeavour to control us with justice and love, we will let you to do so. But if you wish to strike at us from behind, we cannot permit it. Whatever you do in other matters, you will have to ask our opinion about the laws that concern us. If you make laws to keep us suppressed in a wrongful manner and without taking us into confidence, these laws will merely adorn the statute-books. We will never obey them. Award us for it what punishment you like, we will put up with it. Send us to prison and we will live there as in a paradise. Ask us to mount the

1. **belligerents:** participants in a war.
2. **satyagraha** (sə-tyä’grə-hə) *Sanskrit*: insistence on truth. Gandhi used this term to describe his policy of seeking reform by means of nonviolent resistance.
3. **atrocious laws . . . South Africa:** Gandhi led the Indian community in opposition to racial discrimination in South Africa, where he lived for several years.



Gandhi in 1948, after ending a six-day hunger strike for peace

scaffold⁴ and we will do so laughing. Shower what sufferings you like upon us, we will calmly endure all and not hurt a hair of your body. We will gladly die and will not so much as touch you. But so long as there is yet life in these our bones, we will never comply with your arbitrary laws. ☞

4. **mount the scaffold:** ascend the platform on which one is executed by hanging.

Text Analysis

- Summarize** What two ways of countering injustice does Gandhi describe? Explain which approach Gandhi adopted.
- Interpret** Reread lines 16–20. What point is Gandhi making about the relationship between a government and its citizens?
- Compare Texts** Henry David Thoreau’s ideas influenced many 20th-century reformers, including Gandhi. What connections do you see between the views Thoreau presents in *Walden* and “Civil Disobedience” and Gandhi’s beliefs? Cite evidence from both texts to support your answer.