

12.2.1 Lesson 12

Introduction

In this lesson, students read part 2, paragraphs 13 and 14 of “Civil Disobedience” (from “I have paid no poll-tax for six years” to “live according to its nature, it dies; and so a man”), in which Thoreau recounts his night in prison and explains how this experience influenced his perspective on his relationship to the state. Students discuss and analyze how Thoreau develops his point of view that the individual cannot be controlled by the state. Student learning is assessed via a Quick Write at the end of the lesson: How does Thoreau develop his point of view in part 2, paragraphs 13 and 14?

For homework, students review central ideas in part 2, identify at least one central idea, and add at least two central ideas to their Central Ideas Tracking Tools. Additionally, students preview part 3, paragraphs 1-8, box unfamiliar words and look up their definitions, and respond briefly in writing to a series of questions.

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Standards

Assessed Standard(s)	
RI.11-12.6	Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text in which the rhetoric is particularly effective, analyzing how style and content contribute to the power, persuasiveness, or beauty of the text.
Addressed Standard(s)	
W. 11-12.9.b	<p>Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.</p> <p>b. Apply <i>grades 11-12 Reading standards</i> to literary nonfiction (e.g., "Delineate and evaluate the reasoning in seminal U.S. texts, including the application of constitutional principles and use of legal reasoning [e.g., in U.S. Supreme Court Case majority opinions and dissents] and the premises, purposes, and arguments in works of public advocacy [e.g., <i>The Federalist</i>, presidential addresses]").</p>
L. 11-12.4.c	<p>Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on <i>grades 11-12 reading and content</i>, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.</p> <p>c. Consult general and specialized reference materials (e.g., dictionaries, glossaries, thesauruses), both print and digital, to find the pronunciation of a word or determine or clarify its precise meaning, its part of speech, its etymology, or its standard usage</p>
L. 11-12.5.a	<p>Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.</p> <p>a. Interpret figures of speech (e.g., hyperbole, paradox) in context and analyze their role in the text.</p>

Assessment

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Assessment(s)

Student learning is assessed via a Quick Write at the end of the lesson. Students respond to the following prompt, citing textual evidence to support analysis and inferences drawn from the text.

- How does Thoreau develop his point of view in part 2, paragraphs 13 and 14?

High Performance Response(s)

A High Performance Response should:

- Identify Thoreau's point of view in part 2, paragraphs 13 and 14 (e.g., the individual cannot be controlled by the state).
- Analyze how Thoreau develops his point of view (e.g., In paragraphs 13 and 14, Thoreau expresses his point of view that the individual cannot be controlled by the state because the state relies solely upon "superior physical strength" to control individuals, and so fails to control the "intellectual or moral" aspects of a man's "senses" (part 2, par. 14). Thoreau develops and supports his point of view by recounting his night in jail, during which he realizes that the state's attempt to control him by imprisoning him is ineffective "foolishness" (part 2, par. 13). Although jail may restrict and "punish" Thoreau's body, it cannot control his thoughts or "meditations," which are far more "dangerous" and remain "free" (part 2, par. 13). In paragraph 14, Thoreau develops his point of view further by using the metaphor of an acorn and a chestnut to compare the individual and the state: neither has any power over the other, but rather they must coexist if they are both to live. Since, according to Thoreau, there is no "higher law" that gives one power over the other, each must be allowed to "obey their own laws," or "live according to [their] nature" or they will "die" (part 2, par. 14).).

Vocabulary

Vocabulary to provide directly (will not include extended instruction)

- poll-tax (n.) - a tax that each adult has to pay in order to vote in an election
- avail (v.) - to be useful or helpful to (someone or something)
- underbred (adj.) - having inferior breeding or manners; vulgar
- blunder (n.) - a gross, stupid, or careless mistake
- let (n.) - something that impedes; obstruction
- higher law (n.) - a principle of divine or moral law that is considered to be superior to constitutions and enacted legislation
- strait (n.) - a position of difficulty, distress, or need
- inert (adj.) - having no inherent power of action, motion, or resistance

Vocabulary to teach (may include direct word work and/or questions)

- None.

Additional vocabulary to support English Language Learners (to provide directly)

- confined (adj.) - kept within limits; prevented from going beyond a particular limit, area, etc.
- mortar (n.) - a wet substance that is spread between bricks or stones that holds them together when it hardens
- meditations (n.) - the act or process of spending time in quiet thought
- hindrance (n.) - the act of making it difficult for someone to act or for something to be done
- half-witted (adj.) - foolish or stupid
- timid (adj.) - feeling or showing a lack of courage or confidence
- sense (n.) - a faculty or function of the mind
- senses (n.) - any one of the five natural powers (touch, taste, smell, sight, and hearing) through which one receives information about the world around one
- wit (n.) - an ability to say or write things that are clever and usually funny
- fashion (n.) - a specified way of acting or behaving
- snivel (v.) - to complain or cry in an annoying way

Lesson Agenda/Overview

Student-Facing Agenda	% of Lesson
Standards & Text: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Standards: RI.11-12.6, W.11-12.9.b, L.11-12.4.c, L.11-12.5.a Text: “Civil Disobedience” by Henry David Thoreau, Part 2, paragraphs 13-14 	
Learning Sequence: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Introduction of Lesson Agenda Homework Accountability Reading and Discussion Quick Write Closing 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5% 20% 60% 10% 5%

Materials

- Student copies of the Short Response Rubric and Checklist (refer to 12.2.1 Lesson 1) (optional)
- Student copies of the Central Ideas Tracking Tool (refer to 12.2.1 Lesson 4)—students may need additional blank copies

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Learning Sequence

How to Use the Learning Sequence	
Symbol	Type of Text & Interpretation of the Symbol
10%	Percentage indicates the percentage of lesson time each activity should take.
no symbol	Plain text indicates teacher action.
	Bold text indicates questions for the teacher to ask students.
	<i>Italicized text indicates a vocabulary word.</i>
►	Indicates student action(s).
☞	Indicates possible student response(s) to teacher questions.
ⓘ	Indicates instructional notes for the teacher.

Activity 1: Introduction of Lesson Agenda

5%

Begin by reviewing the agenda and the assessed standard for this lesson: RI.11-12.6. In this lesson, students read part 2, paragraphs 13 and 14 of “Civil Disobedience” (from “I have paid no poll-tax for six years” to “live according to its nature, it dies; and so a man”) and analyze how Thoreau develops his point of view over the course of this passage.

- Students look at the agenda.

Activity 2: Homework Accountability

20%

Instruct students to take out their responses to the previous lesson’s homework assignment. (Read part 2, paragraphs 10-12 of “Civil Disobedience.” Respond briefly in writing to the following questions.) Instruct students to Turn-and-Talk in pairs about their responses.

What relationship does Thoreau establish between wealth and morality in part 2, paragraph 10?

- Thoreau argues, “the more money, the less virtue” (part 2, par. 10), or that wealth compromises the morality of the individual. Thoreau explains that when people make a lot of money, the important questions they ask themselves that establish their “moral ground” are replaced with the single “hard but superfluous” question of “how

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to spend” their money (part 2, par. 10). In other words, wealthy individuals are guided by thoughts of their wealth, rather than their consciences.

What advice does Thoreau offer those who are afraid to “deny the authority” of the state (part 2, par. 11)? What is the rationale behind this advice?

- Student responses should include:
 - Thoreau advises those who are afraid to deny the authority of the state to “live within yourself, and depend upon yourself” (part 2, par. 11). To Thoreau, this means that one should not “accumulate property” or gather many possessions; one should “hire or squat” on land rather than buy it; and one should “raise but a small crop” to grow only enough food to eat (part 2, par. 11).
 - Thoreau believes that if people rely upon themselves rather than the government, then the government has no “right to [their] property and life,” and therefore has no means by which to punish them (part 2, par. 11).

How does Thoreau develop the central idea of the relationship between the individual and the state in part 2, paragraphs 10-12?

- Thoreau’s advice to give up worldly possessions and live simply and self-reliantly develops the idea of the relationship between the individual and the state by suggesting that the individual must be completely independent from the state, and not rely upon the state for anything.

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses.

Activity 3: Reading and Discussion

60%

Instruct students to form small groups. Post or project each set of questions below for students to discuss. Instruct students to continue to annotate the text as they read and discuss (W.11-12.9.b).

- If necessary to support comprehension and fluency, consider using a masterful reading of the focus excerpt for the lesson.
- **Differentiation Consideration:** Consider posting or projecting the following guiding question to support students in their reading throughout this lesson:

How much control does Thoreau believe the state has over an individual?

Instruct student groups to read part 2, paragraph 13 (from “I have paid no poll-tax for six years” to “I lost all my remaining respect for it, and pitied it”) and answer the following questions before sharing out with the class.

Provide students with the definitions of *poll-tax*, *avail*, *underbred*, *blunder*, and *let*.

- Students may be familiar with some of these words. Consider asking students to volunteer definitions before providing them to the group.
 - Students write the definitions of *poll-tax*, *avail*, *underbred*, *blunder*, and *let* on their copies of the text or in a vocabulary journal.
- **Differentiation Consideration:** Consider providing students with the definitions of *confined*, *mortar*, *meditations*, *hindrance*, *half-witted*, and *timid*.
 - Students write the definitions of *confined*, *mortar*, *meditations*, *hindrance*, *half-witted*, and *timid* on their copies of the text or in a vocabulary journal.

What does Thoreau’s statement that he was “treated ... as if [he] were mere flesh and blood and bones” suggest about how he views his role in society (part 2, par. 13)?

- The phrase “as if” implies that this belief is misplaced, and therefore suggests that Thoreau understands himself as more than “flesh and blood and bones” (part 2, par. 13), or more than his physical body. Thoreau’s use of the word *mere* suggests that these physical components are relatively unimportant, and suggests that Thoreau believes that prison is not “the best use [the state] could put [him] to” (part 2, par. 13), because there is something more important, or essential, about him than his body (part 2, par. 13).

How does Thoreau’s experience in jail support his point of view that jail is a “foolish[] ... institution” (part 2, par. 13)?

- Rather than feeling “confined” in jail, Thoreau feels as if he is more “free” than his “townsmen” who are not imprisoned (part 2, par. 13), because the jail operates on the mistaken idea that Thoreau is only his physical body, or “mere flesh and blood and bones, to be locked up” (part 2, par. 13). Although the jail can confine Thoreau’s body, it has not “locked the door” on his “meditations” or thoughts, which are the most “dangerous” or powerful part of him (part 2, par. 13). Thoreau’s feeling of freedom supports his point of view that jail is a foolish institution, because the state’s attempt to punish or confine Thoreau by putting him in jail has failed, and actually results in the opposite effect.

How does Thoreau’s night in jail affect his relationship with the state?

- After spending a night in jail, Thoreau loses all “respect” for the state because he sees that the punishment it has devised for him is ineffective “foolishness,” because it does not take into account the power of his thoughts (part 2, par. 13). Thoreau sees this misjudgment as evidence that the state is “half-witted,” or stupid, and “timid,” or cowardly. He therefore “lost all [his] remaining respect for it, and pitied it” (part 2, par. 13). Thoreau feels that he is superior to, or more powerful than, the state because of his intelligence.

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses.

Instruct student groups to read part 2, paragraph 14 (from “Thus the State never intentionally confronts a man’s sense” to “live according to its nature, it dies; and so a man”) and answer the following questions before sharing out with the class.

Provide students with the definitions of *higher law*, *strait*, and *inert*.

- Students may be familiar with some of these words. Consider asking students to volunteer definitions before providing them to the group.
- Students write the definitions of *higher law*, *strait*, and *inert* on their copies of the text or in a vocabulary journal.
- **Differentiation Consideration:** Consider providing students with the definitions of *sense*, *senses*, *wit*, *fashion*, and *snivel*.
- Students write the definitions of *sense*, *senses*, *wit*, *fashion*, and *snivel* on their copies of the text or in a vocabulary journal.

According to Thoreau, with what are he and the state “armed” (part 2, par. 14)? How does Thoreau’s account of his night in jail support this point of view?

- Student responses should include:
 - The state is “armed with ... superior physical strength” rather than intellectual or moral superiority (part 2, par. 14), while he is armed with “superior wit or honesty” (part 2, par. 14).
 - Thoreau’s account of his night in jail supports his statement that the state is “armed with ... superior physical strength,” because jail is an example of how the state tries to control citizens like Thoreau by “punish[ing] [his] body” (part 2, par. 13). Thoreau’s account of his night in jail supports his point that he is armed with “superior wit or honesty” (part 2, par. 14); his “meditations,” or thoughts, are

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powerful enough to escape the confines of the jail, so he feels “free” even though he is imprisoned (part 2, par. 13).

- **Differentiation Consideration:** If students struggle, consider posing the following scaffolding question:

How does Thoreau describe “wit or honesty” and “physical strength” (part 2, par. 14)? What does this description suggest about the purpose of these qualities?

- Student responses should include:
 - Thoreau describes “wit or honesty” and “physical strength” (part 2, par. 14) as weapons, or elements with which one can be “armed” (part 2, par. 14).
 - This description suggests that Thoreau believes that “wit” and “strength” are sources from which individuals and the state can derive power, and use to their advantage in a conflict (part 2, par. 14).

Who has the power to “force” Thoreau (part 2, par. 14)? From where do they derive their power?

- Student responses should include:
 - Thoreau believes that the only people who have the power to force him are those who “obey a higher law” than himself (part 2, par. 14).
 - Since those who can “force” Thoreau are those who “obey a higher law,” their power comes from intellectual or moral superiority over Thoreau, rather than physical superiority, as with the “masses of men” (part 2, par. 14).
- If students struggle with this analysis, consider defining *higher law* as “a principle of divine or moral law that is considered to be superior to constitutions and enacted legislation.”
- **Differentiation Consideration:** Consider encouraging students to discuss how Thoreau uses the term *forced* in this passage, in order to draw out the ways in which physical force, as applied by the state, is secondary to the power of those acting in accordance to a higher law.

How does Thoreau’s statement, “They only can force me who obey a higher law than I” (part 2, par. 14) develop his point of view about his relationship to the state?

- Thoreau’s assertion that the only people who have the power to control him are those who are morally superior, or “obey a higher law” than he does, develops his point of view that the state, which relies only on “superior physical strength” (part 2, par. 14), has no power over Thoreau and “could not reach [him]” (part 2, par. 13).

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How does Thoreau use figurative language to develop his point of view of his relationship with the state? (L.11-12.5.a)

- Thoreau uses the metaphor of the acorn and the chestnut that “fall side by side” to develop his point of view that neither the individual nor the state has any “higher law” over the other. Rather, they must coexist. Thoreau explains, “the one does 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” (part 2, par. 14). If the acorn and chestnut do not live independently and equally, then one of them will die: “If a plant cannot live according to its nature, it dies; and so a man” (part 2, par. 14). In other words, “higher law” does not give the state control over the individual. Individuals must be allowed to “obey their own laws,” or “live according to [their] nature” or they will “die” (part 2, par. 14).
- **Differentiation Consideration:** If students struggle, consider providing the following scaffolding question:

How does the phrase “and so a man” clarify the meaning of the metaphor of the acorn and the chestnut in the text (part 2, par. 14)?

- The phrase “and so a man” clarifies that the metaphor of the acorn and the chestnut describes the relationship between the individual and the state.

Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses.

- Consider asking students which passages they found difficult or problematic. Lead a brief whole-class discussion of student responses.

Activity 4: Quick Write

10%

Instruct students to respond briefly in writing to the following prompt:

How does Thoreau develop his point of view in part 2, paragraphs 13 and 14?

Instruct students to look at their annotations to find evidence. Ask students to use this lesson’s vocabulary wherever possible in their written responses.

- Students listen and read the Quick Write prompt.
- Display the prompt for students to see, or provide the prompt in hard copy.

Transition to the independent Quick Write.

- Students independently answer the prompt using evidence from the text.
- See the High Performance Response at the beginning of this lesson.
- Consider using the Short Response Rubric to assess students' writing. Students may use the Short Response Rubric and Checklist to guide their written responses.

Activity 5: Closing

5%

Display and distribute the homework assignment. For homework, instruct students to add at least two ideas to their Central Ideas Tracking Tool and identify at least one central idea.

Additionally, instruct students to preview part 3, paragraphs 1-8 of “Civil Disobedience” (from “The night in prison was novel and interesting enough” to “This is the whole history of ‘My Prisons’”). Direct students to box any unfamiliar words and look up their definitions. Instruct them to choose the definition that makes the most sense in context and write a brief definition above or near the word in the text (L.11-12.4.c). Additionally, instruct students to respond briefly in writing to the following questions:

How does Thoreau describe his experience in the jail?

What effect does Thoreau create through his descriptions of the jail?

What does Thoreau do when he is freed from jail? How do his descriptions of his actions develop a central idea?

Ask students to use this lesson's vocabulary wherever possible in their written responses.

- Students follow along.

Homework

Add at least two ideas to your Central Ideas Tracking Tool and identify at least one central idea.

Additionally, preview part 3, paragraphs 1-8 of “Civil Disobedience” (from “The night in prison was novel and interesting enough” to “This is the whole history of ‘My Prisons’”), and box any unfamiliar words and look up their definitions. Choose the definition that makes the most sense in context, and write a brief definition above or near the word in the text.

Additionally, respond briefly in writing to the following questions:

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How does Thoreau describe his experience in the jail?

What effect does Thoreau create through his description of the jail?

What does Thoreau do when he is freed from jail? How do his descriptions of his actions develop a central idea?

Use this lesson's vocabulary wherever possible in your written responses.

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