

# READING CLOSELY GRADE 12 UNIT TEXTS

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** Because of the ever-changing nature of website addresses, the [resources](#) may no longer be available through the suggested links. Teachers and students can relocate these texts through web searches using the information provided.

AUTHOR	DATE	PUBLISHER	L	NOTES
<b>Text #1: Sorrow Teeming With Light (Painting), Peanuts (Comic Strip), and Construint (Sculpture)</b>				
Gabriel Shaffer	2012	Gabriel Shaffer	NA	Painting on collage featuring aspects of technology and myth.
Bill Watterson	Mid-20th century	Universal Uclick	NA	Calvin and Hobbes comic strip depicting Calvin and Hobbes pondering their existence on a sidewalk.
Professor Efraim Rodriguez	2008	epSos.de (Flickr)	NA	Sculpture of a boy using colored building blocks.
<b>Text #2: A Case for a Tragic Optimism (Informational Text)</b>				
Viktor Frankl	1946 & 1984	Washington Square Press	1250L	An excerpt in which Frankl discusses human nature in terms of "swine" and "saints".
<b>Text #3: Search for meaning (Video)</b>				
Viktor Frankl	1983	Viktor Frankl Insitute	NA	Frankl lectures at a conference in Toronto, extolling the virtues of overestimating man.
<b>Text #4: Time-Life Photos (Website)</b>				
NA	NA	Time	NA	Website containing photos and descriptions of human life throughout history.
<b>Text #5: Thirst - Ch 24: Dhammapada (Sacred Text)</b>				
The Buddha	c.350 BCE	Produced by Tom Weiss	1190L	24th chapter of a Buddhist scripture explaining the cause of rebirth in terms of thirst.
<b>Text #6: We Grow Accustomed to the Dark (Poem)</b>				
Emily Dickinson	1862	Commonweal	NA	Typical Dickinson poem, rich with metaphor & universal themes, describing humanity's adaptability to adversity.
<b>Text #7: The Examined Life (Speech)</b>				
Cornel West	July 2, 2011	Zeitgeist Films	1070L	From a documentary, West describes philosophy as preparation for death.
<b>Text #8: The Genealogy of Morals (Philosophical Treatise )</b>				
Friedrich Nietzsche	1887	Doubleday	1230L	Selection from the German philosopher's masterpiece in which he exhorts man to reject the impossible "opposite"
<b>Text #9: Meditations on First Philosophy (Philosophical Treatise )</b>				
René Descartes	1641	The Liberal Arts Press	1620L	The French philosopher shows that sin is the result of man's will overreaching his understanding.
<b>Extended Reading: A letter written by Rainer Maria Rilke from Muzot (Letter)</b>				
Rainer Maria Rilke	August 11, 1924	Harper & Row	1840L	A letter in which the German poet comments on how inner space is bigger than outer space.
<b>Extended Reading: Emile or On Education (Philosophical Treatise )</b>				
Jean Jacques Rousseau	1762	J. Néaulme	1130L	Philosophical treatise on nature of human beings and education.



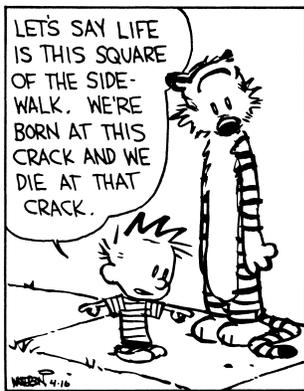
# TEXT #1



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***Sorrow Teeming With Light***  
**Gabriel Shaffer**  
**2012**

[www.gabrielshaffer.com](http://www.gabrielshaffer.com)



IS OUR QUICK EXPERIENCE HERE POINTLESS? DOES ANYTHING WE SAY OR DO IN HERE REALLY MATTER? HAVE WE DONE ANYTHING IMPORTANT? HAVE WE BEEN HAPPY? HAVE WE MADE THE MOST OF THESE PRECIOUS FEW FOOTSTEPS??



# *Calvin and Hobbes*

## Bill Watterson

### Universal Uclick, Mid-20th Century

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***Construint***  
**Professor Efraim Rodriguez Cobos**  
**2008**

<http://m.flickr.com/#/photos/epsos/4370721677/>



# TEXT #2

## *A Case for a Tragic Optimism (postscript to *Man's Search for Meaning*)*

**Viktor Frankl**

**Washington Square Press, 1946 and 1984**

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<http://tinyurl.com/ak9584j>

Sigmund Freud once asserted, "Let one attempt to expose a number of the most **P1**  
diverse people uniformly to hunger. With the increase of the **imperative** urge of hunger  
all individual differences will blur, and in their stead will appear the uniform expression of  
the one **unstilled** urge." Thank heaven, Sigmund Freud was spared knowing the  
**5** concentration camps from the inside. His subjects lay on a couch designed in the plush  
style of **Victorian** culture, not in the filth of Auschwitz. There, the "individual differences"  
did not "blur" but, on the contrary, people became more different; people unmasked  
themselves, both the swine and the saints. And today you need no longer hesitate to use  
the word "saints": think of Father Maximilian Kolbe who was starved and finally murdered  
**10** by an injection of carbolic acid at **Auschwitz** and who in 1983 was **canonized**.  
You may be prone to blame me for **invoking** examples that are the exceptions to the




rule. "Sed omnia praeclara tam difficilia quam rara sunt" (but everything great is just as difficult to realize as it is rare to find) reads the last sentence of the **Ethics of Spinoza**. You may of course ask whether we really need to refer to "saints." Wouldn't it suffice just to refer to decent people? It is true that they form a minority. And yet I see therein the challenge to join the minority. For the world is in a bad state, but everything will become still worse unless each of us does his best.

15 So, let us be alert – alert in a twofold sense:

Since Auschwitz we know what man is capable of. P3

20 And since Hiroshima we know what is at stake." P4




## **TEXT #3**

*Search for meaning*  
**Viktor Frankl**  
Viktor Frankl Institute, 1983

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fD1512\\_XJEw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fD1512_XJEw)

## **TEXT #4**

*Time-Life Photos*  
**Time**

<http://life.time.com/>



# TEXT #5

## *Thirst* The Buddha c.350 BCE

<http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/2017>

### CHAPTER 24: DHAMMAPADA

The thirst of a thoughtless man grows like a **creeper**; he runs from life to life, like a monkey seeking fruit in the forest. **P1**

Whomsoever this fierce thirst overcomes, full of poison, in this world, his sufferings increase like the abounding **Birana** grass. **P2**

5 He who overcomes this fierce thirst, difficult to be conquered in this world, sufferings fall off from him, like water-drops from a lotus leaf. **P3**

This **salutary** word I tell you, 'Do ye, as many as are here assembled, dig up the root of thirst, as he who wants the sweet-scented **Usira** root must dig up the Birana grass, that **Mara** (the tempter) may not crush you again and again, as the stream crushes the reeds.' **P4**

10 As a tree, even though it has been cut down, is firm so long as its root is safe, and grows again, thus, unless the feeders of thirst are destroyed, the pain (of life) will return again and again. **P5**




He whose thirst running towards pleasure is exceeding strong in the **P6**  
**thirty-six channels**, the waves will carry away that misguided man, **viz.** his desires which  
**15** are set on passion.

The channels run everywhere, the creeper (of passion) stands sprouting; if you see the **P7**  
 creeper springing up, cut its root by means of knowledge.

A creature's pleasures are extravagant and luxurious; sunk in lust and looking for **P8**  
 pleasure, men undergo (again and again) birth and decay.

**20** Men, driven on by thirst, run about like a snared hare; held in **fetters** and bonds, they **P9**  
 undergo pain for a long time, again and again.

Men, driven on by thirst, run about like a snared hare; let therefore the mendicant **P10**  
 drive out thirst, by striving after passionlessness for himself.

He who having got rid of the forest (of lust) (i.e. after having reached **Nirvana**) gives **P11**  
**25** himself over to forest-life (i.e. to lust), and who, when removed from the forest (i.e.  
 from lust), runs to the forest (i.e. to lust), look at that man! though free, he runs into  
 bondage.

Wise people do not call that a strong fetter which is made of iron, wood, or hemp; **P12**  
 far stronger is the care for precious stones and rings, for sons and a wife.




**30** That fetter wise people call strong which drags down, yields, but is difficult to undo; **P13**  
after having cut this at last, people leave the world, free from cares, and leaving  
desires and pleasures behind.

Those who are slaves to passions, run down with the stream (of desires), as a spider **P14**  
runs down the web which he has made himself; when they have cut this, at last, wise  
**35** people leave the world free from cares, leaving all affection behind.

Give up what is before, give up what is behind, give up what is in the middle, when **P15**  
thou goest to the other shore of existence; if thy mind is altogether free, thou wilt not again  
enter into birth and decay.

If a man is tossed about by doubts, full of strong passions, and yearning only for **P16**  
**40** what is delightful, his thirst will grow more and more, and he will indeed make his fetters  
strong.

If a man delights in quieting doubts, and, always reflecting, dwells on what is not **P17**  
delightful (the impurity of the body, &c.), he certainly will remove, nay, he will cut the fetter  
of Mara.

**45** He who has reached the **consummation**, who does not tremble, who is without **P18**  
thirst and without sin, he has broken all the thorns of life: this will be his last body.




He who is without thirst and without affection, who understands the words and their interpretation, who knows the order of letters (those which are before and which are after), he has received his last body, he is called the great sage, the great man. **P19**

**50** I have conquered all, I know all, in all conditions of life I am free from taint; I have left all, and through the destruction of thirst I am free; having learnt myself, whom shall I teach?' **P20**

The gift of the law exceeds all gifts; the sweetness of the law exceeds all sweetness; the delight in the law exceeds all delights; the extinction of thirst overcomes all pain. **P21**

**55** Pleasures destroy the foolish, if they look not for the other shore; the foolish by his thirst for pleasures destroys himself, as if he were his own enemy.

The fields are damaged by weeds, mankind is damaged by passion: therefore a gift bestowed on the passionless brings great reward. **P22**

The fields are damaged by weeds, mankind is damaged by hatred: therefore a gift **60 bestowed** on those who do not hate brings great reward. **P23**

The fields are damaged by weeds, mankind is damaged by vanity: therefore a gift bestowed on those who are free from **vanity** brings great reward. **P24**

The fields are damaged by weeds, mankind is damaged by lust: therefore a gift bestowed on those who are free from lust brings great reward. **P25**




# TEXT #6

## *We Grow Accustomed to the Dark*

**Emily Dickinson**  
**Commonweal, 1862**

<http://www.poemhunter.com/poem/we-grow-accustomed-to-the-dark/>

We grow **accustomed** to the Dark  
When light is put away  
As when the Neighbor holds the Lamp  
To witness her Goodbye

**5** A Moment - We uncertain step  
For newness of the night  
Then - fit our Vision to the Dark  
And meet the Road - erect

And so of larger - Darkness  
**10** Those Evenings of the Brain  
When not a Moon disclose a sign  
Or Star - come out - within

The Bravest - grope a little  
And sometimes hit a Tree  
**15** Directly in the Forehead  
But as they learn to see

Either the Darkness alters  
Or something in the sight  
Adjusts itself to Midnight  
**20** And Life steps almost straight.




# TEXT #7

## *The Examined Life*

Cornel West

Zeitgeist Films, 2011

<http://www.archivefire.net/2011/02/cornel-west-on-truth-and-finitude.html>

### (Excerpted transcription from the Documentary)

"A philosopher is a lover of wisdom. It takes tremendous discipline. It takes P1  
tremendous courage to think for yourself, to examine yourself. That **Socratic imperative**  
of examining yourself requires courage in a way William Butler Yeats used to say, 'It takes  
more courage to examine the dark corners of your own soul, than it does for a soldier to  
5 fight on the battlefield.' Courage to think critically. Courage is the enabling virtue for any  
philosopher, for any human being I think in the end. Courage to think, courage to love,  
courage to hope.

Plato says philosophy is a **meditation** on, and a preparation for, death. By death P2  
what he means is not an event, but a death in life. Because there's no rebirth, there's no  
10 change, there's not transformation without death. And therefore, the question becomes  
how do you learn how to die. Of course Montaigne talks about that in his famous essay, 'To  
Philosophize is to Learn How to Die.' You can't talk about truth without talking about  
learning how to die.




I believe that Theodore Adorno was right when he says, 'The condition of truth is to **P3**

**15** allow suffering to speak.' That gives it an **existential** emphasis, you see. That if we're really talking about truth as a way of life as opposed to truth as a set of propositions that correspond to a set of things in the world. Human beings are unable to ever gain any monopoly of Truth capital T. We might have access to truth small t, but they're fallible claims about truth. We could be wrong. We have to be open to revision and so on. So

**20** there is a certain kind of mystery that goes hand in hand with truth. This is why so many of the existential thinkers be they religious like Meister Eckhart or Paul Tillich, or be they secular like Camus and Sartre, that they are **accenting** our **finitude** and our inability to fully grasp the ultimate nature of reality, the truth about things, and therefore you talk about truth being tied to the way to truth because once you give up on the notion of fully

**25** grasping the way the world is, you're gonna talk about what are the ways in which I can sustain my quest for truth.

How do you sustain a journey, a path toward truth, the way to truth? So the truth talk **P4**

goes hand in hand with talk about the way to truth. And scientists can talk about this in terms of **deducing** evidence and drawing reliable conclusions and so on. And religious

**30** folk can talk about this in terms of surrendering one's arrogance and pride in the face of divine revelation and what have you. But they're all ways of acknowledging our finitude and our **fallibility**."




# TEXT #8

## *The Genealogy of Morals*

Friedrich Nietzsche

Doubleday, 1887

<http://www2.southeastern.edu/Academics/Faculty/jbell/nietzschegenealogy.pdf>

### XXII

Man, with his need for self-torture, his **sublimated** cruelty resulting from the cooping up of his animal nature within a **polity**, invented bad conscience in order to hurt himself, after the blocking of the more natural outlet of his cruelty. Then this guilt-ridden man seized upon religion in order to **exacerbate** his self-torture to the utmost. The thought of being

5 in God's debt became his new instrument of torture. He focused in God the last of the opposites he could find to his true and **inveterate** animal instincts, making these a sin against God (hostility, rebellion against the "Lord," the "Father," the "Creator"). He stretched himself upon the contradiction "God" and "Devil" as on a rack. He projected all his denials of self, nature, naturalness out of himself as **affirmations**, as true being,

10 **embodiment**, reality, as God (the divine Judge and Executioner), as **transcendence**, as eternity, as endless torture, as hell, as the **infinitude** of guilt and punishment. In such psychological cruelty we see an insanity of the will that is without parallel: man's will to find himself guilty, and **unredeemably** so; his will to believe that he might be punished to




all eternity without ever expunging his guilt; his will to poison the very foundation of  
**15** things with the problem of guilt and punishment and thus to cut off once and for all his  
escape from this **labyrinth** of obsession; his will to erect an ideal (God's holiness) in order  
to assure himself of his own absolute unworthiness. What a mad, unhappy animal is man!  
What strange notions occur to him; what perversities, what **paroxysms** of nonsense, what  
bestialities of idea burst from him, the moment his is prevented ever so little from being a  
**20** beast of action! ...All this is exceedingly curious and interesting, but dyed with such a  
dark, somber, **enervating** sadness that one must resolutely tear way one's gaze. Here no  
doubt, is sickness, the most terrible sickness that has wasted man thus far. And if one is still  
able to hear – but how few these days have ears to hear it! – in this night of torment and  
absurdity the cry *love* ring out, the cry of rapt longing, of redemption in love, he must turn  
**25** away with a shudder of invincible horror. ...Man harbors too much horror; the earth has  
been a lunatic asylum for too long.




# TEXT #9

## *Meditations on First Philosophy*

René Descartes

The Liberal Arts Press, 1641

Credit: Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/phi/desc/med.txt>

### FOURTH MEDITATION

“For in order to be free, it is not necessary for me to be **indifferent** about the choice **P1** of one or the other of the two contraries, but rather, the more I lean to one, either because I see clearly that it contains the **preponderance** of both goodness and truth or because God so guides my private thoughts, the more freely do I choose and embrace it. And

**5** certainly, divine grace and natural understanding, far from diminishing my liberty, rather augment and strengthen it. Moreover, that indifference which I feel when I am not more moved toward one side than the other by the weight of some reason is the lowest degree of liberty, and is rather a defect in the understanding than a perfection of the will. For if I always understood clearly what is true and what is good, I would never need to **deliberate**

**10** about what judgment and what choice I ought to make, and so I would be entirely free without ever being indifferent.




From all this I recognize, on the one hand, that the cause of my errors is not the power of willing considered by itself, which I have received from God, for it is very ample and perfect in its own kind. Nor, on the other hand, is it the power of understanding or **15 conceiving**; for since I conceive nothing except by means of this power which God has given me in order to conceive, no doubt everything I conceive I conceive properly, and it is not possible for me to be deceived in that respect. **P2**

Whence, then, do my errors arise? Only from the fact that the will is much more ample and far-reaching than the understanding, so that I do not restrain it within the **20** same limits but extend it even to those things which I do not understand. Being by its nature indifferent about such matters, it very easily is turned aside from the true and the good and chooses the false and the evil. And thus it happens that I make mistakes and that I sin. **P3**




# EXTENDED READING

## *A letter written by Rainer Maria Rilke from Muzot*

August 11, 1924

*Poetry, Language, Thought*

Martin Heidegger

<http://tinyurl.com/b59rkel>

### (Excerpt)

“However vast the ‘outer space’ may be, yet with all its sidereal distances it hardly bears comparison with the dimensions, *with the depth dimensions of our inner being*, which does not even need the spaciousness of the universe to be within itself almost unfathomable. Thus, if the dead, if those who are to come, need an abode, *what* refuge could be more

5 agreeable and appointed for them than this imaginary space? To me it seems more and more as though our customary consciousness lives on the tip of a pyramid whose base within (and in a certain way beneath us) widens out so fully that the farther we find ourselves able to descend into it, the more generally we appear to be merged into those

10 things that, independent of time and space, are given in our earthly, in the widest sense worldly, existence.”




# EXTENDED READING

## *Emile or On Education* Jean Jacques Rousseau J. Néaulme, 1762

### Book I, Page 64

Reason alone teaches us to know good and evil. **Conscience**, which makes us love **P1**  
the one and hate the other, is independent of reason, but cannot grow strong without its  
aid. Before reaching years of reason, we do good and evil **unconsciously**. There is no  
moral character in our actions, although there sometimes is in our feeling toward those  
**5** actions of others which relate to us. A child likes to disturb everything he sees; he breaks,  
he shatters everything within his reach; he lays hold of a bird just as he would lay hold of  
a stone, and strangles it without knowing what he is doing.

Why is this? At first view, philosophy would account for it on the ground of vices **P2**  
natural to us--pride, the spirit of domination, self-love, the wickedness of mankind. It  
**10** would perhaps add, that the sense of his own weakness makes the child eager to do  
things requiring strength, and so prove to himself his own power. But see that old man,  
infirm and broken down, whom the cycle of human life brings back to the weakness of  
childhood. Not only does he remain immovable and quiet, but he wishes everything  
about him to be in the same condition. The slightest change disturbs and **disquiets** him;




15 he would like to see stillness reigning everywhere. How could the same powerlessness, joined to the same passions, produce such different effects in the two ages, if the primary cause were not changed? And where can we seek for this difference of cause, unless it be in the physical condition of the two individuals? The active principle common to the two is developing in the one, and dying out in the other; the one is growing, and the other is

20 wearing itself out; the one is tending toward life, and the other toward death. Failing activity concentrates itself in the heart of the old man; in the child it is superabounding, and reaches outward; he seems to feel within him life enough to animate all that surrounds him. Whether he makes or unmakes matters little to him. It is enough that he changes the condition of things, and that every change is an action. If he seems more

25 inclined to destroy things, it is not out of perverseness, but because the action which creates is always slow; and that which destroys, being more rapid, better suits his natural **sprightliness**.

While the Author of nature gives children this active principle, he takes care that it shall do little harm; for he leaves them little power to indulge it. But no sooner do they

30 look upon those about them as instruments which it is their business to set in motion, than they make use of them in following their own **inclinations** and in making up for their own want of strength. In this way they become disagreeable, **tyrannical, imperious**, perverse, unruly; a development not arising from a natural spirit of domination, but creating such a spirit. For no very long experience is **requisite** in teaching how pleasant it

35 is to act through others, and to need only move one's tongue to set the world in motion.




As we grow up, we gain strength, we become less uneasy and restless, we shut ourselves more within ourselves. The soul and the body put themselves in equilibrium, as it were, and nature requires no more motion than is necessary for self-preservation. But the wish to command outlives the necessity from which, it sprang; power to control others awakens and gratifies self-love, and habit makes it strong. Thus need gives place to whim; thus do prejudices and opinions first root themselves within us.
