

Civil Disobedience

Part 3

by Henry David Thoreau

Pre-Reading Vocabulary Practice

Optional Post-Reading Quiz Included

Practice words: aloof, compact, discrimination, enlightened, fatalist, fountainhead, pretext, propriety, prudence, sanction

PRE-READING ACTIVITY

Vocabulary Preview 2

Answer Key — Preview 3

Caution: share only if self-checking

OPTIONAL POST-READING QUIZ

Vocabulary in Context 4

Answer Key — In Context 5

Caution: do not share with students

About the Pre-Reading Activity (open-dictionary; ungraded or completion grade):

Students preview 10 words from the upcoming reading, each in a sentence that supports understanding. They choose the best meaning from 3 choices.

About the Optional Post-Reading Quiz (use after reading, or skip):

Same words, now in real excerpts from the text, with questions that build reading and analytical skills.

Vocabulary Sections for this Essay:

Section 1 · Part 1 · Thoreau on government and conscience

Section 2 · Part 2 · Unjust laws and the duty to resist

Section 3 · Part 3 · The individual and the State

***Bold = this section.** Other sections are available at [verbalworkout.com](https://www.verbalworkout.com).*



verbalworkout.com

(all resources free)

Vocabulary Preview

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Name _____ Date _____ Period _____

Read each prompt. Then choose the best meaning for the bold word.

1. The new student remained **aloof** at the party, watching from a corner.

- A. distant and uninvolved
- B. calm and relaxed
- C. nervous and shy

2. The two nations signed a **compact** to protect each other from attack.

- A. a formal agreement
- B. a written declaration
- C. a temporary ceasefire

3. She judged the entries with keen **discrimination**, spotting flaws no one else noticed.

- A. fair treatment of every entrant
- B. quick speed and efficiency
- C. skill in telling fine things apart

4. An **enlightened** ruler listens to many views before making a law.

- A. fair and widely well-liked
- B. guided by reason and knowledge
- C. cautious and slow to act

5. My grandfather was such a **fatalist** that he shrugged at every piece of bad news.

- A. one who expects the worst always
- B. one who doubts everything
- C. one who believes fate rules all

6. Many call ancient Greece the **fountainhead** of Western philosophy.

- A. the highest peak
- B. the central hub
- C. the original source

7. He gave a flat tire as a **pretext** for arriving late.

- A. a sincere word of apology
- B. a false, made-up reason
- C. a genuine cause for delay

8. She questioned the **propriety** of texting during the funeral service.

- A. correctness of conduct
- B. timing of the action
- C. wisdom of the decision

9. He acted with **prudence** when everyone around him panicked.

- A. careful good judgment
- B. bold, fearless courage
- C. quick, sharp cleverness

10. The new club could not meet on campus without the **sanction** of the principal.

- A. financial support or funding
- B. official approval or permission
- C. personal advice or opinion

Reading Helpers

(Not quizzed — helpful for this text.)

Orpheus — in Greek myth, a musician whose playing was so beautiful it could move rocks, trees, and beasts; Thoreau alludes to a power he cannot claim

thought-free, fancy-free, imagination-free — mentally independent: free to think and imagine without being controlled by rulers or reformers

ANSWER KEY

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#	KEY
1	A
2	A
3	C
4	B
5	C
6	C
7	B
8	A
9	A
10	B

Vocabulary in Context

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Name _____ Date _____ Period _____ Score _____ / 10

Read each excerpt carefully. Then choose the best answer to each question.

1 "... like a good Mussulman and fatalist, I should endeavor to be satisfied with things as they are, and say it is the will of God."

As it is used in the passage, the word 'fatalist' most nearly describes someone who

- A. accepts events as fixed and unchangeable
- B. bows to religious authority alone
- C. dreads the worst in every outcome

2 "... each year, as the tax-gatherer comes round, I find myself disposed to review the acts and position of the general and State governments, and the spirit of the people to discover a pretext for conformity."

The passage most strongly suggests that, in seeking a 'pretext for conformity,' Thoreau wants

- A. an excuse to go along with the laws
- B. a public reason to demand reform
- C. solid proof that the laws are just

3 "They may be men of a certain experience and discrimination ..."

In context, the word 'discrimination' emphasizes a person's

- A. strong dislike of new ideas
- B. skill in telling fine things apart
- C. unfair treatment of certain groups

4 "Still, his quality is not wisdom, but prudence. The lawyer's truth is not Truth, but consistency or a consistent expediency."

Which choice best describes Thoreau's attitude toward Webster, whose quality he calls 'not wisdom, but prudence'?

- A. scorn for a careless thinker
- B. awe at his deep wisdom
- C. admiration, but only for his caution

5 "Because it was part of the original compact—let it stand."

It can reasonably be inferred that Webster calls slavery part of 'the original compact' to argue that it

- A. must stand as part of a binding pact
- B. is only a small, minor concern
- C. should end now that times have changed

6 "... under the responsibility to their constituents, to the general laws of propriety, humanity, and justice, and to God."

According to the passage, Webster says slave states must answer to their constituents, to God, and to the general laws of

- A. trade and commerce
- B. right and decent conduct
- C. war and defense

7 "... gird up their loins once more, and continue their pilgrimage toward its fountainhead."

The image of a 'pilgrimage toward its fountainhead' primarily functions to suggest that truth

- A. flows from a hidden mountain spring
- B. lies beyond established authorities
- C. is fixed once and never sought again

8 "... to be strictly just, it must have the sanction and consent of the governed."

According to the passage, a strictly just government must have the consent of the governed and their

- A. approval and authorization
- B. fear of punishment
- C. obedience and their taxes

9 "There will never be a really free and enlightened State until the State comes to recognize the individual as a higher and independent power, from which all its own power and authority are derived, and treats him accordingly."

The author most likely pairs 'enlightened' with 'free' to stress that a just State must be guided by

- A. tradition and old custom
- B. the will of its rulers
- C. reason and knowledge, not ignorance

10 "... if a few were to live aloof from it, not meddling with it, nor embraced by it, who fulfilled all the duties of neighbors and fellow men."

The passage most strongly suggests that Thoreau's imagined State would let some citizens

- A. take part in every public duty
- B. be cast out for their silence
- C. live apart yet remain good neighbors

ANSWER KEY

Vocabulary in Context

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#	KEY	NOTE
1	A	
2	A	
3	B	Here 'discrimination' carries its older sense of discernment, not the modern sense of unjust treatment.
4	C	Character comprehension. The section grants Webster genuine respect ('almost the only sensible and valuable words'), so the key is admiration with limits, not scorn.
5	A	'Compact' here means a binding agreement (the Constitution), not the everyday 'small' sense.
6	B	
7	B	Theme comprehension. 'Fountainhead' is figurative here: truth's ultimate source, above Bible and Constitution.
8	A	'Sanction' here means approval, the opposite of its 'penalty' sense.
9	C	
10	C	

Teacher Context: Part 3

Thoreau reflects on his relationship to the many who coerce him and weighs his readiness to conform against the demands of conscience. He critiques Webster and the absence of legislative genius in America, and closes by imagining a State that would at last treat the individual with respect. Section runs to the end of the essay.