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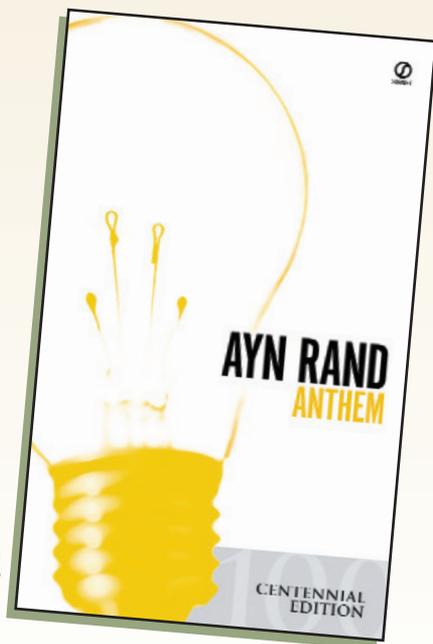
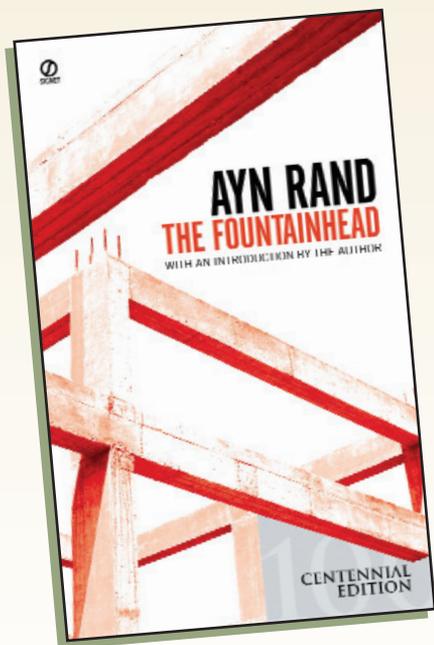
# THE FOUNTAINHEAD

Teachers Guide by Andrew Bernstein, Ph.D.

*and*

# ANTHEM

Teachers Guide by Michael S. Berliner, Ph.D.



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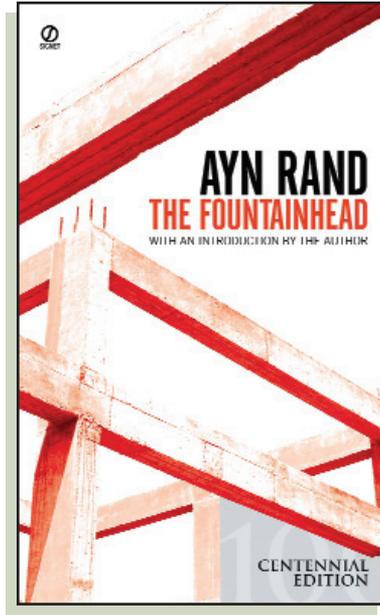
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A Penguin Group (USA) Teachers Guide to Ayn Rand's

# THE FOUNTAINHEAD

## ABOUT THIS GUIDE

**Ayn Rand** (1905–1982) was born in Russia and educated under the Communists, experiencing first-hand the horrors of totalitarianism. She escaped from Russia in 1926 and came to America because it represented her individualist philosophy.

*The Fountainhead*, published in 1943, was Ayn Rand's first great success. It was a best seller then and continues to sell very well today. It was made into a popular movie in 1949 starring Gary Cooper as Howard Roark and Patricia Neal as Dominique Francon.

## INTRODUCTION

*The Fountainhead* has achieved the status of a modern classic because it dramatically concretizes the theme of independence versus dependence, between

following one's own ideas or following those of others. This is of particular importance to high school students who are eager to assert their independence from their parents and need a code of ideas and values to guide them. The student needs to know to what extent he must follow his parents, when it is his right to assert himself against them, when and if he is being improperly influenced by peer pressure, and that it is his right to resist it. He needs to discover that social pressures pushing him toward unsatisfactory career and marriage choices are not irresistible forces defining his life—that he can oppose them successfully and often should. And he needs to discover that unthinking rebellion against the standards of others—being different just to be different—is as abject a form of dependence on them as blind allegiance.

*The Fountainhead* appeals strongly to the young—and I have seen this appeal year after year, with my own high school students—not only because its theme is independence but also because it presents “a noble vision of man’s nature and of life’s potential” (from Ayn Rand’s Introduction to the novel). That Ayn Rand was able to integrate these issues into a plot structure that crackles with conflict can be explained only by the school of writing to which she belongs: *Romantic Realism*. She is a *Romantic* in that she projects men as they might be and ought to be. Although not many men may be currently living up to the ideal of independence, they have the capacity to do so, and a reason why: their success and happiness depend on it. In this, she fundamentally differs from the *Naturalist* school of fiction, which is content merely to present men as they are. (For further elaboration, see Ayn Rand’s *The Romantic Manifesto*.) Ayn Rand is a *Realist* in that her heroes *are* possible and deal with the crucial real-life problems of today; her heroes are never relegated to historical costume dramas, other worlds, or flights of fantasy.

For all the literary and intellectual achievements of *The Fountainhead*, it is but an overture to Ayn Rand’s greatest achievement: *Atlas Shrugged*. For your advanced students, who appreciate *The Fountainhead* and who are looking to go further, there is good news: *Atlas Shrugged* covers in detail the sophisticated themes that *The Fountainhead* begins to explore.

## PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS

### An Overview

HOWARD ROARK is the main character in *The Fountainhead*. He is a struggling young architect in the United States of the 1920s and 1930s. Roark is an early designer in the modern style. He is an innovative genius, but his designs

are often rejected by clients who want them to conform to traditional standards. Roark's refusal to compromise causes him to lose many commissions.

While Roark struggles, PETER KEATING, his rival, rises to the top of the architectural profession. He is a mediocre architect, but gives the public exactly what it is used to. Borrowing from other architects, including Roark, Keating sells out any standards he has ever held in order to reach his goal of winning the approval of other people by any means.

Roark's main antagonist in the novel is ELLSWORTH TOOHEY, who is *the* architectural critic of influence in New York. Toohey, the arch villain in the novel, denounces Roark for his genius and his integrity, but Toohey's campaign to discredit Roark is not seen through by most people.

GAIL WYNAND is Toohey's employer. He is the talented publisher of the *New York Banner*, who uses his newspaper to pander to the lowest public taste and thereby gain popularity and power. Meeting Roark, whom he admires, he is forced into the most agonizing decision of his life: to continue to curry favor with the masses or live instead according to his own standards.

DOMINIQUE FRANCON is the brilliant, passionate woman who loves Roark, but who is convinced that Roark's genius has no chance in a corrupt world. Roark is the catalyst for the resolution of her conflict in the novel.

## Howard Roark

Howard Roark pursues his vision of architecture with an unswerving dedication and morality that has made him an inspiration to readers. The action of the novel centers around the opposition to him from many people, all of whom are variations on the basic theme of the novel—independence versus dependence. There are three major sources of opposition to Roark: (1) from the tradition-dominated elements of society (Peter Keating); (2) from the antipathy of active powerlusters who reject his ideas about life and hate the independence for which he stands; and, (3) from the two figures who love him but have unresolved conflicts which cause them in different ways to oppose Roark (Wynand and Dominique).

At the opening of the novel, Roark is expelled from the prestigious Stanton Institute of Architecture. The scene between Roark and the Dean of the school establishes the conflict of tradition versus innovation. The Dean views Roark as a rebel who opposes all the rules of architecture. He claims that all rules of design come from the great minds of the past, i.e., from other people. Roark disagrees, stating that “what can be done with one substance

must never be done with another. No two materials are alike. No two sites on earth are alike. No two buildings have the same purpose . . . . Every form has its own meaning. Every man creates his meaning and form and goal. Why is it so important—what others have done? Why does it become sacred by the mere fact of not being your own? Why is anyone and everyone right—so long as it's not yourself?" (p. 24) This disagreement is crucial to an understanding of *The Fountainhead*, for the book's central conflict is between people who are *reality*-centered and people who are centered instead on other *people*.

A development of this theme is the case of the Manhattan Bank Building. The board hires Roark to design the building, then ruins Roark's plan by adding a Classic motif. As the chairman of the board explains: "In this way, though it's not traditional architecture of course, it will give the public the *impression* of what they're accustomed to." (p. 196) Roark tries to explain "why an honest building, like an honest man, had to be of one piece and one faith; what constituted the life source, the idea in any existing thing or creature, and why—if one smallest part committed treason to that idea—the thing or the creature was dead; and why the good, the high and the noble on earth was only that which kept its integrity." (p. 197) The chairman replies, "There's no answer to what you're saying. But unfortunately, in practical life, one can't always be so flawlessly consistent." (p. 197) Morality to Roark *is* practical. To the chairman, practicality requires one to compromise one's standards to be popular with others. Roark refuses to change his design, on moral grounds, and loses the job. It is this point that eloquently explains the personality of Peter Keating.

## Peter Keating

Keating rises in his profession by two means: deception and manipulation. Keating is quite willing to be "practical" in order to get commissions. He aspires to be successful as an architect—but the crucial point is that he does not aspire to do good work in architecture. Keating is a mediocrity, but that doesn't matter to him, because he is able to convince the public that he is great. How people perceive him is Keating's fundamental concern. For instance, he becomes an architect not because he loves to build, but because it will gain him "social respectability." He works for Guy Francon, who teaches him how to impress clients by matching ties with socks and wines with foods. He gives up Catherine Halsey (whom he loves) for Dominique Francon (whom he fears) because Dominique's beauty and connections will impress people.

He is an example of a man who never develops values. He is what Ayn Rand calls a "second-hander": he surrenders his capacity for judgment to other

people, and therefore, he focuses not on what he thinks, but on what others think. He designs by copying the masters of the past. Further, he gets Roark to help him whenever he needs it, takes all credit for the designs himself, and then repays Roark by publicly denouncing him. Keating is dependent, as a parasite is, on Roark, on the masters of the past, on the gullibility of the public. Keating rises because certain people support him; and as with all parasites, he falls when the host organisms withdraw their support. Toohey supports Keating for two reasons: (1) so that the leading architect in the country will be under his spiritual control; and (2), to help destroy Roark.

## Ellsworth Toohey

Toohey is the antithesis of Howard Roark. He is the selfless altruist whose entire life revolves around other people; specifically, he wants to rule others by preaching that the individual must sacrifice himself to the group. For example, as a vocational advisor at a New York college, he gains control of his young charges by making them renounce their guiding passions, subsequently filling their now-emptied souls with his own advice and guidance. He postures to the public as a saint of “humanitarian love”—while using this creed to help establish a Big Brother dictatorship, in which everyone selflessly obeys the State, with Toohey as the intellectual ruler behind the throne. With this end in mind, he schemes to gain control of the Wynand papers, worming his handpicked followers into key positions, preparing for the big showdown with Wynand.

Toohey is consistently evil. He is a parasite like Keating, but he is worse because he is not after success in some career, but after power and the destruction of others. He has a vested interest in the dependency of followers. An independent person neither needs him nor will listen to him. Therefore, Roark represents his greatest enemy. Roark cannot be ruled. This is the reason why Toohey hates Roark and cannot stop him, cannot even touch him at a fundamental level. For Toohey is master only of dependent personalities. All of Toohey’s scheming is powerless against the independent judgment of the rational individual.

## Gail Wynand

Wynand rises out of the New York slums to a position of wealth and power through hard work, determination, and brilliance. A man of tremendous creative drive, he is frustrated and angered by the incompetence he encounters in his rise. Since every good idea of his receives the response “you don’t

run things around here,” Wynand sets out to make certain that he does indeed run things. Believing that dominance over others is the only way that real values can be achieved in a world he regards as corrupt, he sets out to dominate public opinion through his newspaper chain—which is aimed at the lowest common denominator among men. He accepts the idea that to be successful he must sacrifice his ideas and play to the prejudices of his readers. All of his innovative talents are then devoted to making his scandal sheet, the *Banner*, the most influential newspaper in New York. Wynand, the man of potential independence, becomes Wynand the demagogue, pandering to the mob in return for their support.

All of Wynand’s actual values and judgments are excluded from the content of his newspaper, finding expression only in his private art collection and in the selection of his wife, Dominique, and closest friend, Roark. Wynand’s nature is such that he *must* admire and love Roark; but the *Banner’s* nature is such that it must oppose and denounce Roark. Wynand mistakenly thinks he can use his power to support Roark, but he finds out otherwise. Wynand believes he must sacrifice his integrity to gain power. One chooses to be either a corrupt success or an honest failure; to Wynand there is no other alternative. This same assumption is shared by Dominique Francon in a different form. It brings her into desperate conflict with everything she loves, especially Roark.

## Dominique Francon

Dominique is an impassioned idealist. She is capable of positive emotion only for the noble, the pure, the exalted. Unfortunately, Dominique regards the world, not as an exalted place where greatness will flourish, not even as an indifferent place where greatness will occasionally rise only to be ignored, but as a malignant place where the rare instances of greatness will be ruthlessly crushed. Hence, she throws down an air shaft a statue of a Greek god which she cherishes, and she joins with Toohey in an attempt to destroy the career of the man she loves. Both are acts of mercy killing—the attempt to kill quickly and painlessly that which has no place in a malignant world. Dominique is idealism combined with pessimism—love of the noble conjoined with the conviction that the noble has no chance in the world. She lives her life in fear that the things she loves are in danger of imminent destruction.

Like Wynand, she believes that one must choose between corrupt success and noble failure. Unlike Wynand, she repudiates such a success, opting instead to take no value from a corrupt world. In effect she withdraws from the world, her first-rate mind unused in any serious attempt at a successful career. After

the agony of the Stoddard Temple trial, she removes herself from active participation in the ongoing struggle. Only with the Cortlandt dynamiting, years later, does Dominique once again take an active role in the conflict of the drama. Then she observes that Roark *can* make a success of himself on his terms, and that Keating, Toohey, and Wynand ultimately fail.

## THE CLIMAX OF THE NOVEL

The climax of *The Fountainhead* is Roark's dynamiting of the government-sponsored Cortlandt Homes housing project, which Roark designed secretly at Keating's request—on condition that his design be faithfully followed. But Keating allows government bureaucrats to deface and alter the design. The climax resolves all the major conflicts. For Roark, the dynamiting is his assertion of the creator's right to that which he creates versus the second-handers who wish to control his work—and ultimately his life. (Note that Roark had no recourse to the courts because he is not permitted to sue the government, and he dynamites Cortlandt to set up a test case, not as an act of anarchy.) For Keating, the Cortlandt affair means the final exposure and collapse of his second-hand method of living. For Dominique, her choice to help Roark with the dynamiting means she has finally understood that evil is impotent and cannot fundamentally hurt the good. For Wynand, his failed attempt to use the *Banner* to promote, for once, his own values, to defend Roark, brings him face to face with the inescapable contradiction that one cannot achieve noble ends by corrupt means. For Toohey, the trial is a test of whether he has succeeded in his lifelong quest to inculcate collectivism. Roark's acquittal and Wynand's closing of the *Banner* leave Toohey helpless. Toohey cannot shackle the creators such as Roark, if they are willing to fight openly and proudly for their rights.

## PHILOSOPHICAL THEMES IN ROARK'S SPEECH

Ayn Rand wrote in her letter “To the Readers of *The Fountainhead*”:

“*The Fountainhead* started in my mind as a definition of a new code of ethics—the morality of individualism. The idea of individualism is not new, but nobody had defined a consistent and specific way to live by it in practice. It is in their statements on morality that the individualist thinkers have floundered and lost their case. They had nothing better to offer than vulgar selfishness which consisted of sacrificing others to self. When I realized that that was only

another form of collectivism—of living through others by ruling them—I had the key to *The Fountainhead* and to the character of Howard Roark.”

In analyzing *The Fountainhead*, it is important to see the ways in which this conflict between independent and dependent methods of cognition are manifested, both in the novel and in real life. There are many.

The first involves the false alternative between conformity and nonconformity. The conformist is the person who lives life in accordance with the judgment and standards of others. This person's attitude is: “if you believe it, then I believe it,” and his life is lived in order to satisfy the expectations of others. At root, this is a cognitive issue, for the essence of conformity is the subordination of reason to faith; of surrendering one's own thinking and living via unquestioning obedience to the beliefs of others. The Dean is one example of conformity, but Peter Keating is the best example. Real life provides a plethora of conformists: the religious believer who embraces whatever religion in which his parents raised him, the child who allows his family to pressure him into or out of his own career choice or romantic involvement, the teenager who sacrifices his own beliefs to win acceptance from his peers, the businessman or politician who compromises his ideals and panders to the public; all of these, and countless others, are variations on the theme of conformity.

The conventional view is that the opposite of the conformist is the nonconformist, when, in reality, the nonconformist also is ruled by the judgment of other people. The nonconformist lives in reaction against the judgment and standards of others. His attitude is: “if you believe it, then I'm against it.” At root, the nonconformist surrenders his mind to others, for by living in blind rebellion against their values, his life also is dominated by them. The drug-addicted hippies of the 1960s, who lived their lives in rebellion against the values of their middle-class parents, are a good example. The conformist is eager to discover the conclusions of others so he might follow them; the nonconformist is similarly eager to discover the conclusions of others in order to rebel. But both are primarily focused on the beliefs of others; neither is concerned with formulating his own conclusions, with thinking independently.

The independent thinker is a third category, separate from the others. The Howard Roark type is neither a conformist nor a nonconformist but an individualist, one who lives on his own terms. The source of the difference is cognitive: the individualist forms his own standards and his own values by means of relying on his own judgment. He is a thinker, neither a follower nor a rebel. American history abounds with innovators who are perfect examples: Fulton, Edison, the Wright Brothers, etc.

The conformist and nonconformist are both psychological dependents, dominated by others, unwilling to stand alone. Only the individualist is psychologically independent, cognitively free of others, standing alone, forming his own conclusions by logical assessment of the facts. Truth, the individualist recognizes, is not a matter of the relationship between an idea and the facts of reality. Truth is objective, not collective or intersubjective. An individualist's commitment to the facts, not to the beliefs of others, is the source of his ability to stand alone.

It is this ability to stand alone that lies at the heart of a second manifestation of the novel's theme. Rich in layers of philosophical insight, at one level *The Fountainhead* shows the struggle of a great innovator against the entrenched beliefs of a conservative society. Roark and his mentor, Henry Cameron, are early designers in the modernist style, fighting against an uncritical adherence to traditional dogmas in the field of architecture. Historically, many who had never seen buildings greater than two stories in height rejected the new skyscraper in fear; just as many rejected the steamboat, the airplane, the electric light; just as many today reject nuclear power. The implicit thinking of this traditionalist mentality is: "Other people have never done it this way; therefore, it's no good." Observe the slavish obedience to the beliefs of others that this way of "thinking" contains.

But the innovator is an independent person. He sees with his own eyes and thinks with his own brain. Because of this, he discovers new facts, invents new methods, explores new lands. If Columbus had adhered to society's beliefs, he would have stayed home. Similarly Edison, Fulton, Marie Curie, Frank Lloyd Wright would never have formulated new truths nor persevered in the decades-long struggle to demonstrate them had they been followers of public taste. The innovator is a person of fiercely independent judgment; because of this, he fights a terrible struggle against those who cling to established standards; because of this, he carries mankind out of the caves into modern civilization.

At this level, *The Fountainhead* is an impassioned defense of the free thinker against the stifling restrictions of conventional norms. It is this struggle of the innovator, and his many successes, that explains the meaning of the book's title: independent judgment as the fountainhead or original source of all human progress and prosperity. "The great creators—the thinkers, the artists, the scientists, the inventors—stood alone against the men of their time," says Roark in his climactic courtroom speech. "Every great new thought was opposed. Every great new invention was denounced. The first motor was considered foolish. The airplane was considered impossible. The power loom was considered vicious. Anesthesia was considered sinful. But the men of unborrowed vision went ahead. They fought, they suffered and they paid. But they won."

The key statement to the whole conception of *The Fountainhead* is in Roark's speech: "I wished to come here and say that I am a man who does not exist for others. It had to be said. The world is perishing from an orgy of self-sacrificing." All the rest of the book is a demonstration of how the principles of egoism and altruism work out in people and in the events of their lives.

Howard Roark is an egoist—an exponent of rational self-interest. He thinks for himself, using his reasoning mind. Reason is that attribute that distinguishes man from the animals and the proper egoist from the altruist. Ellsworth Toohey is an advocate of altruism, "the doctrine which demands that man live for others and place others above self." (p. 680)

The egoist creates in order to survive and to flourish. "The creator's concern is the conquest of nature. The parasite's concern is the conquest of men." (p. 679) Ayn Rand chose architecture as the career of her hero because, she says, "a builder is one of the most eloquent representatives of man's creative faculty." The antithesis of a builder is a destroyer, a dependent, a second-hander. Altruism demands unthinking dependency and obedience to the norms established by others or by the ruler. Men who live by it must become parasites. Thus the historical struggle between the individual and the collective. Whether the collective is the church, the state, the race, or the proletariat, the clash is always between the "common good," which holds that it has a right to each man's life and productive achievement, and the individual who holds that he has a right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

Howard Roark states at the trial that "the only good which men can do to one another and the only statement of their proper relationship is—Hands off!" Now observe the results of a society built on the principle of individualism. This, our country . . . . It was based on a man's right to the pursuit of happiness. His own happiness. Not anyone else's. A private, personal, selfish motive." (p. 683) The antithesis of our free society is one based on collectivism, such as Communist Russia or Nazi Germany. Roark says, "Now, in our age, collectivism, the rule of the second-hander and second-rater, the ancient monster, has broken loose and is running amuck . . . . It has reached a scale of horror without precedent. It has poisoned every mind. It has swallowed most of Europe. It is engulfing our country."

The tampering with Roark's design of Cortlandt homes is an example of altruism. Some faceless men on an architectural committee decide to change his plans for no reason except that the individual, the creator who has done the thinking and the work, has no right to the product of his labor. This is sacrifice in practice. Once he has done his job, his work is considered pub-

lic property, his rights are sacrificed to the collective. Roark fights these men by destroying his own creation on the principle that since he built it, then he must have the right to keep what he has built. To shackle creators, to count on them to innovate, design, produce, but then to expropriate their creations for others who did nothing to earn it, is a great injustice. The independent minds, the Galileos, the Edisons, the Aristotles, carry the rest of mankind forward on their backs. This is the message of Roark's speech and the significance of the title *The Fountainhead*. The meaning is: the ego is the fountainhead of human achievement and progress. The ego is the individual man's reasoning mind.

## **SUGGESTED STUDY QUESTIONS**

1. Dominique Francon loves Roark and struggles to destroy him. Why?
2. How does Howard Roark exemplify the fact that reason must be used to solve man's problems, rather than relying on others' judgments or one's emotions? Why is the dynamiting of Cortlandt *not* an example of irrationality?
3. Keating gives up art for architecture and Catherine Halsey for Dominique Francon. Why are these major betrayals for him, necessitating his failure in life?
4. What is Toohey's ultimate purpose in trying to control the *Banner*?
5. How do Keating's and Roark's paths to success differ? Which one in the end is the real success?
6. Why does Toohey ultimately fail in his manipulations against Roark?
7. What does Ayn Rand mean by the terms "first-hander" and "second-hander"?
8. Why does the courtroom verdict at the Cortlandt trial mean the psychological destruction of Gail Wynand?
9. If you had the opportunity to meet Howard Roark, what would you ask him?
10. Is Roark a moral man, a practical man, both, or neither?
11. What does Ayn Rand mean by individualism, and why are the Founding Fathers of the United States individualists?
12. Why does Roark say that refusal of the Manhattan Bank Building contract is "the most selfish thing you've ever seen a man do"?

## **EXTENDING LEARNING**

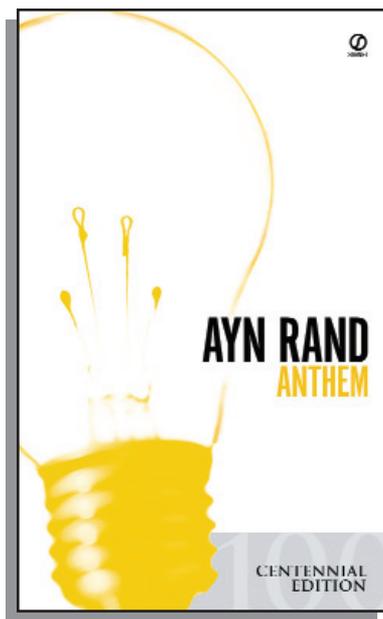
Visit the Ayn Rand Institute's Web site: [www.aynrand.org](http://www.aynrand.org)

## **ESSAY CONTESTS**

Essay contests on both *The Fountainhead* (for 11th and 12th graders) and *Anthem* (for 9th and 10th graders) are sponsored annually by the Ayn Rand Institute. Forty-seven prizes in all are awarded, with the top prize a cash award of \$10,000. For complete details, write the Ayn Rand Institute at PO Box 57044, Irvine, CA 92619-7044

## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR OF THIS GUIDE**

*The Fountainhead* teachers guide has been prepared by Dr. Andrew Bernstein. Dr. Bernstein received his Ph.D. in philosophy from the Graduate School of the City University of New York. He has taught literature at the high school level and currently teaches philosophy at Pace University and at State University of New York at Purchase.



A Penguin Group (USA) Teachers Guide to Ayn Rand's

# ANTHEM

## ABOUT THIS GUIDE

**Ayn Rand** (1905–1982) was born in Russia and educated under the Communists, experiencing firsthand the horrors of totalitarianism. She escaped from Russia in 1926 and came to America because it represented her individualist philosophy. *Anthem*, written in 1937, is Ayn Rand's novelette about the essence of collectivism. It was published in England in 1938, went into a limited American edition in 1946, and was then published by New American Library in 1961.

## THEME

“It is a sin to write this. It is a sin to think words no others think and to put them down upon paper no others are to see . . . . There is no transgression blacker than to do or think alone.” So begins *Anthem*, whose theme is, in

Ayn Rand's words, "The meaning of man's ego." *Anthem* projects a completely collectivized society, a society in which the word "I" no longer exists.

*Anthem* is not just a story about the individual being swallowed by the collective. It is also an identification of how that can happen, what ideas people must first accept before such a totalitarian society can take hold. And *Anthem* is not merely a story about the horrible, depressing life of people in a collectivist society; it is also about the triumph of the individual's independent spirit, the triumph of those who reject the ethics of collectivism.

## **THE VALUE OF ANTHEM FOR YOUNG STUDENTS**

*Anthem* contains many elements that appeal strongly to young readers. It is an exciting and inspiring story, with heroic characters risking their lives for their ideals. It has mystery, carrying students into a science-fiction world of the future. It portrays events with grand significance, challenging readers to decide not just what will happen to particular characters, but what the world *should* be like.

*Anthem* raises ethical and political issues at a time in the lives of young people when such issues are beginning to take on critical importance: Who am I? Is it possible to stand on my own? The book asks basic questions about society: If we could choose what kind of society to have, what should we choose? What is the moral and just society? Does my life belong to the group? Do I have the right to pursue my own happiness? Can a society without freedom be productive?

*Anthem* serves as an introduction to what Ayn Rand called her *Romantic Realist* approach to literature. Her fiction is *Romantic* because she portrays "not the random trivia of the day," not the folks-next-door, but "the timeless, fundamental, universal problems and *values* of human existence." *Romanticism* contrasts with *Naturalism*, which holds that people are crushed by social forces and cannot control their own destiny. Ayn Rand's fiction is *Realist* because she deals with real problems of normal people (not monsters, superhumans or robots). *Anthem* carries the same heroic view of the individual as her later novels, *The Fountainhead* and *Atlas Shrugged*. *Anthem* also provides an introduction to the ideas she was later to develop into a full, systematic philosophy, which she called "Objectivism."

## SUMMARY OF THE STORY

When the story begins, sometime in the distant future, the hero (known only as Equality 7-2521) is a young man in his late teens or early twenties. Speaking in the first person plural (*Anthem* is his diary), he describes his society and his attitude towards it.

The society is controlled by the World Council, which directs every aspect of every individual's life. Each citizen's life has been controlled from birth: he is conceived in the Palace of Mating. Instead of living with his parents, he first lives in the Home of Infants. As he grows older, he moves to the Home of Students, then to a special home for those of his assigned vocation, and, finally, at old age, to the Home of the Useless. Citizens are constantly barraged with propaganda from the leaders, who preach the glory of working for one's brothers and the duty of fulfilling "the needs of society." The alternative is death: "If you are not needed by your brother men," proclaim the Teachers, "there is no reason for you to burden the earth with your bodies." It is clear that the citizens have accepted the morality of altruism, which advocates sacrifice to others. As a consequence, the leaders do not rule by physical force or even by the threat of force: they don't need to. The citizens have no personal desires—they have either given them up voluntarily or never formed them. Citizens obey the leaders without question. Those who have any doubts about their society feel guilty that they do.

As Equality 7-2521 begins to describe his life, it becomes clear that the society he lives in has no industry or technology. There are no factories, no machines, almost nothing at all that is man-made. His days are filled with drudgery and routine. Although capable of great intellectual achievement, he has been assigned the job of Street Sweeper. This assignment was not the result of bureaucratic incompetence; on the contrary, the leaders recognized his ability and considered it to be a threat.

But he has come upon the remains of a subway entrance from the Unmentionable Times, many years in the past, when there was a prosperous industrial society. Even to think of these times has been forbidden. His individuality still alive, he defies the rules and returns again and again to the subway and to the fascinating technological remains from the past. Down in the subway, he works on abandoned wires and equipment, and he eventually rediscovers electricity and reinvents electric light.

He presents his light bulb to the Council of Scholars, believing that they will welcome such a labor-saving, time-saving, life-saving device. However, the Council

is frightened by his invention and by his daring to come up with something on his own: “What is not thought by all men,” they cry, “cannot be true . . . . What is not done collectively cannot be good.” When the Council threatens to destroy the light bulb, he admits to himself that his society is evil.

Fleeing with his invention, he escapes to the Uncharted Forest. He knows that the leaders are afraid to venture into the unknown, either intellectually or physically. There he is joined by a young girl with whom he had earlier fallen in love, despite the ban on personal love and friendships. Now named “Prometheus” and “Gaea,” they find a well-preserved house from the Unmentionable Times.

In the house is a library of books from those times, and they thus discover the ideas that made possible the freedom and prosperity of the past: man is a separate individual, with a self that is the source of creativity; it is wrong to live for others; conformity, obedience and sacrifice are the cause of human unhappiness and destruction. It is, he now knows, “my eyes which see,” “my mind which thinks,” “my will which chooses . . . . Neither am I the means to any end others may wish to accomplish. I am not a tool for their use. I am not a servant of their needs. I am not a bandage for their wounds. I am not a sacrifice on their altars.” In these books, he has discovered the word he has been struggling to identify: the word “I.”

## **UTOPIAS AND ANTI-UTOPIAS**

This type of fiction is often called “anti-utopian,” meaning that the world presented is the world as it should *not* be. Other well-known anti-utopian novels, such as *1984* and *Brave New World*, present collectivism as the worst-possible society. In those books, the society is tyrannical yet has a highly technological economy—a combination that Ayn Rand did not believe possible. She held that economic progress depends upon freedom, that the uncoerced mind is the source of technology, prosperity and progress. Thus the collectivist society she depicts is stagnant and primitive.

## **PHILOSOPHICAL MEANING**

Philosophical issues arise throughout the story, but they are dramatized in action—in the hero’s struggle against his society; they do not appear as philosophic speeches. In this union of ideas and dramatic action, Ayn Rand was unique: she was a philosopher, who wrote nonfiction works on a wide range of philosophic issues; but she was also a novelist, who wrote exciting

stories with profound philosophic content. In her novels, she dramatized her philosophy, making those issues alive, concrete and real, showing readers how that philosophy applies to the events of men's lives.

## Individualism vs. Collectivism

The principal political issue in *Anthem*—and in society at large—is the issue of individualism vs. collectivism. The society depicted in *Anthem* is a collectivist society. “Collectivism,” Ayn Rand wrote, “means the subjugation of the individual to the group—whether to a race, class or state does not matter.” In such a society, the individual is *owned* by the group; he has no right to a private existence, which means no right to lead his own life, pursue his own happiness or use his own property. The individual exists only as part of the group, and his worth is determined by his service to the group.

The alternative to collectivism is individualism, the view advocated by Ayn Rand. “Individualism,” she wrote, “regards man—every man—as an independent, sovereign entity who possesses an inalienable right to his own life, a right derived from his nature as a rational being.” Individualism does not mean that one can do whatever he feels like doing; it means that *every* man is an individual and has the same rights. “An individualist is a man who says: ‘I will not run anyone’s life—nor let anyone run mine. I will not rule or be ruled. I will not be a master nor a slave. I will not sacrifice myself to anyone—nor sacrifice anyone to myself.’”

## Selflessness

*Anthem* dramatizes Ayn Rand's view that the self is destroyed in a collectivist society. How is the lack of self—or *selflessness*—shown? No one has a personal name, for, under collectivism, individuals are interchangeable. To prefer one person to another (as a friend or romantic partner) is to commit the cardinal sin: the Transgression of Preference. As in Nazi or Communist societies, it is wrong to disagree, to have independent thoughts, even to ask questions, because to do those things sets one apart from others. Self-assertion is forbidden. All decisions are made by the Council in the name of the whole. Individuals have no rights. No individual choice is allowed by the government: “everything which is not permitted by law is forbidden.” *Anthem* depicts what happens to a society that implements selflessness. The result, according to Ayn Rand, is a subhuman society: what makes human beings human is having a self, which means having a mind. A selfless individual is a mindless individual. To practice selflessness, one must abstain from think-

ing and obey one's masters. To practice collectivism, one must merge himself into the group, and the only way to do this is to obliterate individual identity and individual thought. The result is the kind of society found in *Anthem*, a society of mindless robots, people with no motivation, no ambition, no hope. They are unable to create anything, and the society they live in has no room for creativity.

## Egoism

If lacking an ego means that one has become a robot, what, for Ayn Rand, is the exact meaning of egoism? Egoism means "concern with one's own interests." It means that oneself, rather than others, is the proper beneficiary of one's action. Equality 7-2521 is egoistic. He lives for his own happiness; he doesn't sacrifice himself to others, nor does he sacrifice others to himself. The egoism he manifests is exactly what the leaders try to eradicate: ambition, wanting things for oneself, wanting to learn, wanting a career that makes *him* happy, loving someone, thinking for himself. Equality 7-2521 represents the unconquerable human spirit, the affirmation of life. In contrast, almost all of his fellow citizens are gray, passive, nonentities; as such, they are the living dead.

Chapter 11 ends with "This god, this one word: 'I,'" and the final words of the book refer to the "sacred word: EGO." Does this mean that egoism is a religion, with the worship of God replaced by the worship of self? No. Ayn Rand has said that she chose the title *Anthem* "because this is my hymn to man's ego." For Ayn Rand, the self is *like* a god, but is not a god in the religious sense. The ego or self is a "god" in that it is one's highest value, the source of what is good in life on Earth.

## Free Will

One of the oldest and most important philosophic issues is the problem of free will vs. determinism. Those, like Ayn Rand, who advocate free will, contend that people can make choices, can make up their own minds, can make decisions, can direct their own lives by the ideas and values they adopt. Those who advocate determinism contend that people are by nature in the grip of forces beyond their control, that their beliefs and values are the result of some force such as God, other people, the stars, economic conditions, instincts or one's racial heritage.

*Anthem* shows what it means to have free will, and it does so in a particularly interesting way. It depicts a world where people's lives *seem* to be determined

but it's actually a world where people have free will. Students often believe that in *Anthem* only the heroic characters have free will, that the masses are indeed brainwashed, with no power to control their own lives. However, as Ayn Rand presents them, even those who submit to the authorities have free will. They are robots, but they are robots *by choice*: they were not forced to obey; they do so because they voluntarily abdicated the responsibility to think for themselves. They are depressed, without hope or ambition; they make no effort to accomplish anything; they merely obey and go along with orders. Ayn Rand holds that free will means “the choice to think or not.” Most of the citizens have chosen *not* to think, which leaves them no alternative but to do whatever they're told to do.

How is free will manifested in *Anthem*? Prometheus relies on his own judgment rather than take the beliefs of his leaders as automatically true. His rediscovery of electricity is the prime example of free will: he himself initiates the thinking required to understanding the world around him; this is what makes him independent. Neither he nor his friends are bound by tradition. That the past is “unmentionable” does not prevent them from mentioning it; that the forest beyond their city is “uncharted” does not prevent them from reaching it. And this is the ultimate meaning of a free-will approach to life: the future is open to man; what you attain is up to you; your values and your ultimate happiness are achievable. In Ayn Rand's view, man has the power to think and direct his life; he isn't doomed to a life of despair and defeat. If he is willing to rely on himself rather than be pushed by events, he can, like the heroic characters in *Anthem*, achieve self-confidence.

## **SUGGESTED STUDY QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES**

1. Why did Ayn Rand name her main characters “Prometheus” and “Gaea”? Look these names up in a book on mythology. Compare the myths about Prometheus and Gaea to the story of these two characters.
2. In her Foreword to *Anthem*, Ayn Rand summarizes her political views. What laws that we have today do you think she would agree with, and which would she oppose?
3. What might it be like to live in a society where there are no “selves” and “we” has replaced “I”? In your classroom, construct the “ideal society” as envisioned by the Council of Scholars.

4. Prometheus's intellectual activities are illegal in his society. Throughout history, many great innovators, such as Copernicus, Galileo, Watt and Fulton have faced ridicule and even legal attacks. Research the struggle faced by one of these individuals. Write a dialogue between that person and Prometheus. How would Prometheus try to encourage that person?
5. Why did Prometheus try to convince the Council of Scholars that his invention merited their support? If a government council thinks that an invention will not benefit the community, should the invention be banned? Compare the situation in the novel to such government agencies as the Federal Drug Administration and the Federal Aviation Administration, which allow new products or new air routes only if they will "benefit the community."
6. For Prometheus, life in the Uncharted Forest is quite different from what he has known. Write two brief messages that Prometheus might want to send to any two characters who are still in the City.
7. Read about a "positive" utopia, such as in Plato's *Republic* or Thomas More's *Utopia*, and compare with *Anthem*.
8. Read about a "negative" utopia, such as in George Orwell's *1984* or Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*. Write a letter to Ayn Rand comparing the world of the future in one of those books to the world of the future in *Anthem*.
9. Compare the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the garden of Eden to the story of Prometheus and Gaea. For what "sins" were each condemned?
10. Which nations do you think are the most like the society in *Anthem*? Which are the least like it?
11. What is "collectivism"? Which of our laws today are collectivist?
12. Is the world of *Anthem* more like the United States of 1776 or the United States today?
13. Compare the idea of equality as used in the Declaration of Independence to the idea of equality as practiced in *Anthem*.
14. The absence of industrial technology and other man-made inventions characterized the society of *Anthem*. Compare this to the society aimed at by environmentalism.
15. Ayn Rand held that freedom is a prerequisite for economic progress. Is this view confirmed by the histories of the U.S.S.R. and the People's Republic of China?

## AN OBJECTIVIST BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Ayn Rand's Novels

*We the Living* (1936): Set in Soviet Russia, this is Ayn Rand's first and most autobiographical novel. Its theme is: "the individual against the state, the supreme value of a human life and the evil of the totalitarian state that claims the right to sacrifice it."

*Anthem* (1938): This novelette depicts a world of the future, a society so collectivized that even the word "I" has vanished from the language. *Anthem's* theme is: the meaning and glory of man's ego.

*The Fountainhead* (1943): The story of an innovator—architect Howard Roark—and his battle against a tradition-worshipping society. Its theme: "individualism versus collectivism, not in politics, but in man's soul; the psychological motivations and the basic premises that produce the character of an individualist or a collectivist." Ayn Rand presented here for the first time her projection of the ideal man.

*Atlas Shrugged* (1957): Ayn Rand's complete philosophy, dramatized in the form of a mystery story "not about the murder of a man's body, but about the murder—and rebirth—of man's spirit." The story is set in a near-future America whose economy is collapsing due to the inexplicable disappearance of the country's leading innovators and industrialists—the "Atlases" on whom the world rests. The theme is: "the role of the mind in man's existence—and, as corollary, the demonstration of a new moral philosophy: the morality of rational self-interest."

### Ayn Rand's Other Fiction

*Night of January 16th* (1934): A courtroom play in which the verdict depends on the sense-of-life of jurors selected from the audience.

*The Early Ayn Rand* (1984): A collection of stories and plays written by Ayn Rand in the 1920s and 1930s, plus passages cut from *The Fountainhead*.

### Ayn Rand's Nonfiction

*For the New Intellectual* (1961): A collection of the key philosophical passages from her novels. The 48-page title essay sweeps over the history of thought, showing how ideas control the course of history and how philosophy has served for the most part as an engine of destruction.

*The Virtue of Selfishness* (1964): Ayn Rand's revolutionary concept of egoism. Essays on the morality of rational selfishness and the political and social implications of such a moral philosophy. Essays include: "The Objectivist Ethics," "Man's Rights," "The Nature of Government" and "Racism."

*Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal* (1966): Essays on the theory and history of capitalism, demonstrating that it is the only moral economic system, i.e., the only one consistent with individual rights and a free society. Includes: "What Is Capitalism?" "The Roots of War," "Conservatism: An Obituary" and "The Anatomy of Compromise."

*Introduction to Objectivist Epistemology* (1967): The Objectivist theory of concepts, with Ayn Rand's solution to "the problem of universals," identifying the relationship of abstractions to concretes. Includes an essay by Leonard Peikoff, "The Analytic-Synthetic Dichotomy." The second edition (1990) includes transcripts of Ayn Rand's workshops on her theory—containing her answers to questions about her theory raised by philosophers and other academics.

*The Romantic Manifesto* (1969): Ayn Rand's philosophy of art, with a new analysis of the Romantic school of literature. Essays include: "Philosophy and Sense of Life," "The Psycho-Epistemology of Art" and "What Is Romanticism?"

*The New Left: The Anti-Industrial Revolution* (1971): Ayn Rand's answer to environmentalism, "progressive" education and other contemporary antireason movements.

*Philosophy: Who Needs It* (1982): Everybody needs philosophy—that is the theme of this book. It demonstrates that philosophy is essential in each person's life, and shows how those who do not think philosophically are the helpless victims of ideas they accept passively from others. Essays include "Philosophical Detection," "Causality Versus Duty" and "The Metaphysical Versus the Man-Made."

*The Ayn Rand Lexicon: Objectivism from A to Z* (1986): A mini-encyclopedia of Objectivism, containing the key passages from the writings of Ayn Rand and her associates on 400 topics in philosophy and related fields. Edited by Harry Binswanger.

*The Voice of Reason: Essays in Objectivist Thought* (1989): Philosophy and cultural analysis, including "Who Is the Final Authority in Ethics?" Also "Religion Versus America" by Leonard Peikoff, and "Libertarianism: The Perversion of Liberty" by Peter Schwartz.

*The Ayn Rand Column* (1991): A collection of Ayn Rand's columns for the *Los Angeles Times*, and other essays.

*Ayn Rand's Marginalia* (1995): Notes Ayn Rand made in the margins of the works of more than twenty authors, including Barry Goldwater, C. S. Lewis and Ludwig von Mises. Edited by Robert Mayhew.

*Letters of Ayn Rand* (1995): This collection of more than 500 letters offers much new information on Ayn Rand's life as philosopher, novelist, political activist and Hollywood screenwriter. Edited by Michael S. Berliner.

*Journals of Ayn Rand* (1997): An extensive collection of Ayn Rand's thoughts—spanning forty years—on literature and philosophy, including notes on her major novels and on the development of the political philosophy of individualism. Edited by David Harriman.

## Works by Leonard Peikoff

Leonard Peikoff, Ayn Rand's legal and intellectual heir, is the pre-eminent authority on Objectivism.

*The Ominous Parallels: The End of Freedom in America* (1982): The Objectivist philosophy of history—through an analysis of the philosophical causes of Nazism, and their parallels in contemporary America.

*Objectivism: The Philosophy of Ayn Rand* (1991): This is the definitive, systematic statement of Ayn Rand's philosophy, based on Dr. Peikoff's thirty years of philosophical discussions with her. All of the key principles of Objectivism—from metaphysics to art—are presented in a logical, hierarchical structure.

## EXTENDING LEARNING

Visit the Ayn Rand Institute's Web site: [www.aynrand.org](http://www.aynrand.org)

## ESSAY CONTESTS

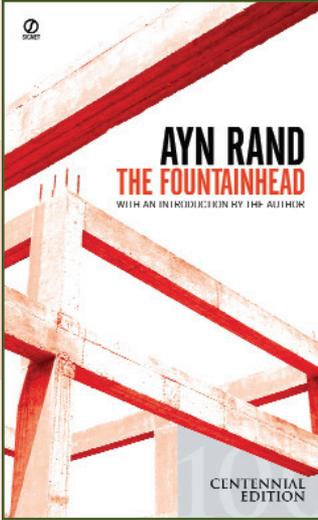
Essay contests on both *The Fountainhead* (for 11th and 12th graders) and *Anthem* (for 9th and 10th graders) are sponsored annually by the Ayn Rand Institute. Forty-seven prizes in all are awarded, with the top prize a cash award of \$10,000. For complete details, write the Ayn Rand Institute at PO Box 57044, Irvine, CA 92619-7044

## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR OF THIS GUIDE**

*The Anthem* teachers guide has been prepared by Dr. Michael S. Berliner. Dr. Berliner taught philosophy and philosophy of education at California State University, Northridge, where he served as chairman of the Department of Social and Philosophical Foundations of Education. He regularly used *Anthem* in his introductory courses to illustrate the meaning of independence. He received his Ph.D. in philosophy from Boston University and is the former executive director of the Ayn Rand Institute.

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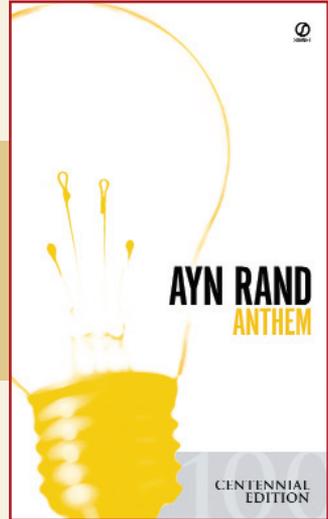
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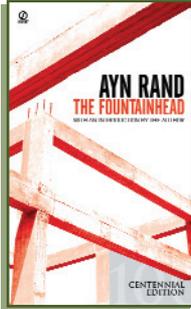
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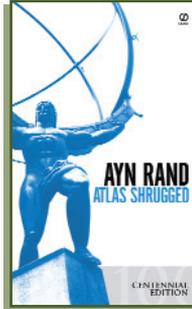
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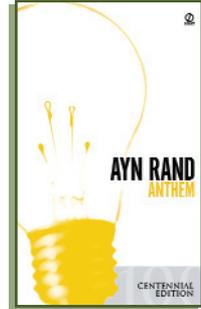
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*Anthem*  
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## NONFICTION:

*Philosophy: Who Needs It* (ISBN:0-451-13893-7)

*The Romantic Manifesto* (ISBN: 0-451-14916-5)

*The Virtue of Selfishness* (ISBN: 0-451-16393-1)

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