

Anthem

Study Questions from www.aynrand.org/contests/lessonplans.html

Write complete, thoughtful responses (on other pages, not this one) to the questions you choose to answer.

Detailed Chapter Questions

Chapter I: Respond to four (4) of these questions.

1 a) In a well-organized paragraph, describe the society in which *Anthem* is set. Some areas to consider are the political structure, degree of technology, social relationships, quality of life, and education.

b) Would you want to live in this society? Explain why or why not.

2. In this chapter, Equality states that it is very unusual for men to reach the age of 45. Offer several possible explanations as to why life expectancy is so short in his society.

3. Copy and complete the following chart, and continue to add to your entries as you read each chapter. (The first entry is partially completed, as an example.)

Term and Definition	Examples from <i>Anthem</i> (Find several examples per term)	a) Why is this character or act condemned in <i>Anthem</i> ? b) Should it be condemned? Explain why or why not.
<i>Example (Don't copy this row.)</i> Transgression: the breaking of a law or oath.	<i>Example (Don't copy this row.)</i> Transgression of Preference: Equality chooses International 4-8818 as his friend (p. 30).	<i>Example (Don't copy this row.)</i> a) They are taught that the individual is nothing, mankind is everything, and that everyone must be treated with absolute equality. To choose a friend is to single out, and elevate, one man from the group. Also, choosing a friend requires individual thought, personal choices, and value judgments, all of which are forbidden. They are expected to be mindless, and thus selfless. b) Personal response required.
• Sin		
• Curse		
• Crime		
• Evil		
• Damned		

4. Clearly, Ayn Rand intended Equality to stand out from his “brothers”. Explain how she accomplishes this by contrasting Equality’s physical qualities and character traits to those of his fellow men.

5. Why does the Council of Vocations assign Equality 7-2521 the job of street sweeper? Is it due to error, incompetence, or a more sinister motivation? Explain.

6. When does this novel take place — in the past, the present, or the future? How do you know?

7 a) How would your teachers react if you had Equality’s “curse”? b) Why do Equality’s teachers disapprove of his quick mind?

8. At this point in the novel, does Equality accept the moral teachings of his society? If so, why doesn’t he feel shame or remorse when he knows that he’s committing a crime? Find textual evidence to support your answer.

9. Would you want to be friends with someone like Equality 7-2521? Why or why not?

Chapter II: Respond to three (3) of these questions.

1. Re-read the account of Liberty 5-3000 on page 38. Which character traits are revealed in this brief description?
2. Find several examples of the ways in which this society tries to obliterate each individual's mind (and self!) by quashing personal choices, desires, and values.
3. Contrast Equality 7-2521 with the rest of the men living in this society (pg. 46).
4. Of the whole range of feelings possible to man (joy, excitement, anger, embarrassment, etc.) why is fear the prevalent emotion in this society?
5. Start a personal glossary in which you explain the following terms: the Great Truth, the Unmentionable Times, the Uncharted Forest, the Evil Ones, the Great Rebirth.
- 6 a) What word is Equality struggling to recapture on page 49?
b) In your opinion, why is mentioning this word the only crime punishable by death in this society? How does this word contradict the ideals of this society? What could its rediscovery possibly lead to?

Chapter III: Answer one (1) of these questions.

- 1 a) What does Equality discover in this chapter? b) How important is this discovery? Describe 4 ways in which it would help society and make life easier or more enjoyable.
2. Outline some of the Council of Scholars' beliefs, and Equality's refutation of those beliefs.

Chapter IV: Answer this question

1. Discuss the appropriateness of Equality's new name, "Unconquered".

Chapter V: Answer one (1) of these questions.

1. Equality understands that his invention will benefit mankind greatly; however, this was not his main motivation in conducting his experiments, and it is not the primary source of the great joy he experiences. Explain and discuss.
2. In your opinion, why is Equality so interested in seeing his own image at this point in the novel? What emotion is he feeling?

Chapter VII: Answer this question.

1. The old locks and lack of guards in the Palace of Corrective Detention indicate that prisoners never tried to escape. Why not?

Chapter VIII: Answer one (1) of these questions.

1. Outline four of the Council's reasons for rejecting Equality's invention.
2. What are the real reasons behind the Council's rejection and fear of the gift?
3. What does Equality mean, at the beginning of the chapter, when he says, "We are old now, but we were young this morning" (p. 68)?

Chapter VII: Answer one (1) of these questions.

1. What is Equality experiencing for the first time in this chapter, and what does he feel as a result?
2. Explain why Equality laughs when he remembers that he is "the Damned".
3. What does the Uncharted Forest symbolize in *Anthem*?

Chapter IX: Answer one (1) of these questions.

1. On pages 82 and 83, Liberty contrasts Equality to his fellow men. Paraphrase this passage.

2. In this chapter, Equality questions the morality of his former society. Contrast what he was previously taught about solitude, good, evil, and joy to what he now believes.

Chapter X: Answer this question.

1. Describe the house and its contents in your own words, and explain why Liberty and Equality find it so strange and unique.

Chapter XI: Answer two (2) of these questions.

1. What great discovery does Equality make in this chapter?
2. Explain the following quotes in your own words, and discuss how they can be applied to your life:
 - a) “Whatever road I take, the guiding star is within me”.
 - b) “For the word “We” must never be spoken, save by one’s choice and as a second thought.”
3. What does Equality now realize is the proper goal and purpose of his life?
4. In what ways is “I” like a God?
5. Re-read the incident with the Saint of the pyre (pg. 50). What was he trying to communicate to Equality?

Chapter XII: Answer two (2) of these questions.

1. Why do the main characters take the names Prometheus and Gaea? Why weren’t they allowed to choose their names in their old society?
2. What does Prometheus plan to do in the future?
3. Prometheus reaches the important realization that, “To be free, a man must be free of his brothers”. Cite several examples from *Anthem* that illustrate the truth of this statement.

Creative Writing Activities: Write a 250-500 response to one (1) of these.

1. *Anthem* illustrates the importance of thinking and judging independently and of acting according to our rational principles — even when “our brothers” oppose us. In light of the fact that smoking, drugs, shoplifting, and gang violence often involve peer pressure, write a letter to a teen magazine explaining *Anthem*’s benefits for teenage readers.
2. You are applying for a job to direct the movie version of *Anthem*. Write a letter to the producer in which you try to convince him to hire you. Your letter must indicate:
 - a) Which actors you would cast as Prometheus and Gaea, and why. Think about physical characteristics and personality traits.
 - b) A detailed description of the setting.
 - c) An explanation of the theme of this novel, and why it is particularly relevant and valuable to for modern viewers.
 - d) Other — musical suggestions for certain scenes, costumes, a description of the opening shot, etc.
3. Write a brief letter to Ayn Rand about *Anthem*. You can state your reaction to the text (What did you find particularly surprising? Exciting? Moving?), ask about aspects of the novel that puzzled you, relate the novel to personal experiences, etc.
4. Write the “missing scene” from Chapter 1 in which the Council of Vocations is deliberating Equality’s future profession. Are any of the Council members sympathetic to Equality? If so, would he dare to voice his opinion? Ensure that you reveal the Council’s true motives in assigning Equality the job of street sweeper.
5. Write a factual newspaper article about Prometheus’ escape from jail, his surprise appearance at the World Council of Scholars, and his flight into the Uncharted Forest. Then, write an opinionated editorial about the same events, written by one of his “brothers.”

6. Re-write the meeting between Equality and Liberty from her perspective.
7. Re-write the scene about the Saint at the Pyre from the Saint's perspective. What did he want to communicate to Equality?
8. Write a new ending for *Anthem* in which Prometheus is captured while attempting to rescue his friends. Include a court scene of Equality's trial before the Council for his "sins". How will Equality use his new understanding of morality to defend himself and his actions? (As a possible extension, act out this scene in class, and invite another class to judge.)
9. At the end of the story, Equality confidently declares that he is not afraid of his brothers. He knows that his new home is impassable to them, "For they have nothing to fight me with, save the brute force of their numbers. I have my mind". Write a short story in which the main character's intelligence, resourcefulness, and ingenuity (i.e. his mind!) triumphs over his opponents' brute force or sheer numbers.

Further Questions for Discussion or Written Response: Answer any five (5) of these.

- 1 a) Before reading the novel: The transition from adolescence to adulthood involves developing a personal identity, a sense of self. Write a paragraph that describes you, and explains what makes you uniquely you. Consider your future goals and dreams; what you value in a friend; favorite pets; preferred sports and hobbies; best-loved music, literature, movies, etc.
- b) After reading the novel: Review your pre-reading activity. Which of your personal values, goals, and loves would be allowed in the society portrayed in *Anthem*? Why would any of them be forbidden?
2. In many real and fictionalized totalitarian societies, children live apart from their families. Why would dictatorial leaders enforce this living arrangement?
3. What does Equality finally understand about his society when the Council threatens to destroy his invention?
4. Contrast Equality's view of morality at the end of the novel to that of his society.
5. At first glance, most characters in *Anthem* appear to be near-automatons, blindly conforming to the rest of society. Upon closer study, however, we see that all of the characters in *Anthem* — Equality, International, Liberty, the Council members, everyone — make choices and decisions that affect their lives and their futures, for better or for worse. In short, they all possess the choice to think or not, and that choice determines everything else. Discuss.
6. Many people blame their hardships, poverty, or unhappiness on external conditions. "It's not my fault," they cry, "it's because of the family, class, race, society, or culture into which I was born!" They believe that outside factors control and determine their lives. Use Equality as an example to refute this deterministic view of man.
7. *Anthem* is a heroic and inspiring story about the triumph of the individual's independent spirit. Even though, at the end of the novel, Equality is greatly outnumbered, and modern society lies in ruins, it is a story of liberation and hope — not of despair. Discuss.
8. Aside from very rare exceptions (Equality, the Saint at the Pyre) there is literally no opposition to the leaders in this society. Why is this? What ideas must these men have accepted to live a life of obedience, drudgery, and fear?
9. *Anthem*'s theme is, in Ayn Rand's own words, "the meaning of man's ego." Explain the ways in which the characters and plot in *Anthem* illustrate this theme.
10. To fully control a man, dictators must not only enslave his body, but also destroy his mind. Discuss how the leaders in *Anthem* seek to accomplish this tyrannical end.