



Anthem

By Ayn Rand

Today's

Goals

- The learner will **react to and reflect upon** print and non-print text and personal experiences by **examining situations** from both subjective and objective perspectives.
- The learner will **critically interpret and evaluate** experiences, literature, language, and ideas.
- The learner will **demonstrate understanding of selected world literature** through interpretation and analysis.

Focus questions

- Who is Ayn Rand and why was she writing Anthem?
- What do collectivism, individuality, conformity, and equality mean, and what do they have to do with the book?

Common Themes

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qGDH18R7GfA>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-tJYN-eG1zk>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=btPJPFnesV4>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GPeOkzadr5g>



A glowing lightbulb hanging from a cord against a dark background. The lightbulb is illuminated, casting a warm glow. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

What do all of these songs
have in common?

Anthem



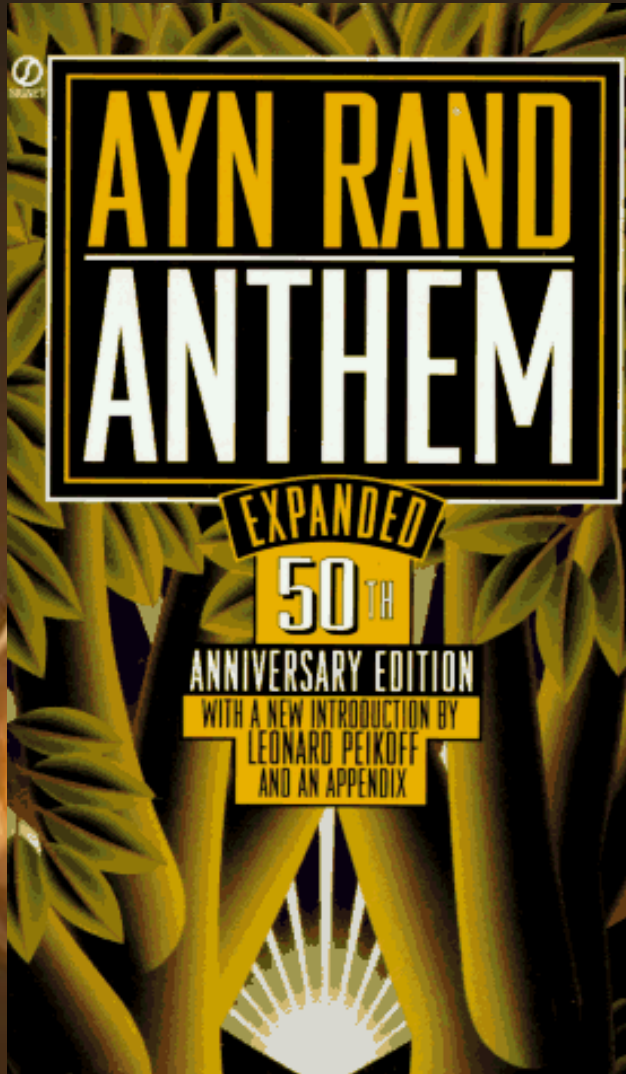
an·them

'anTHəm/

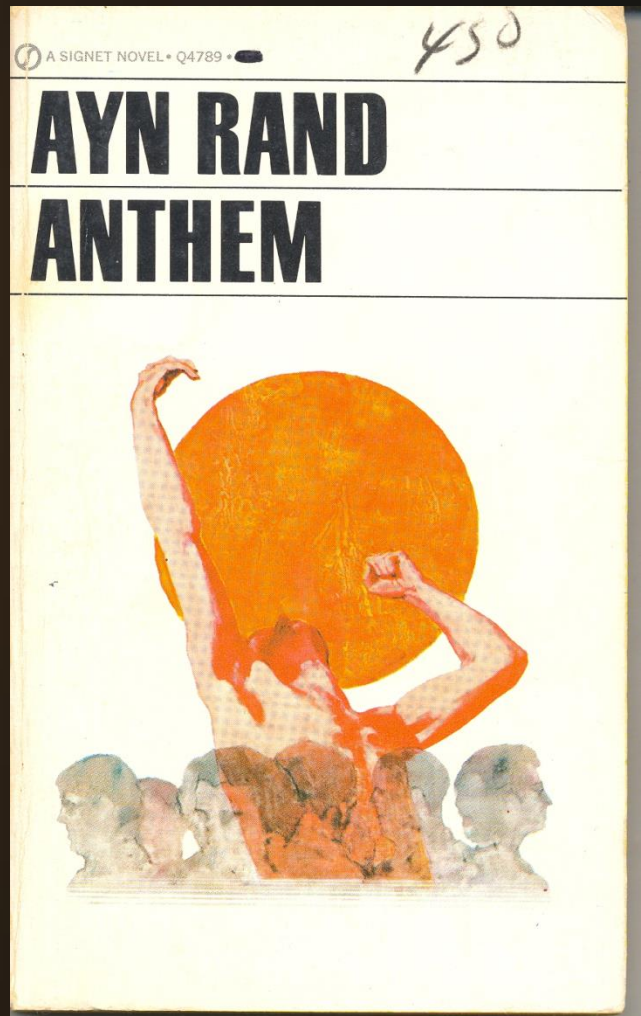
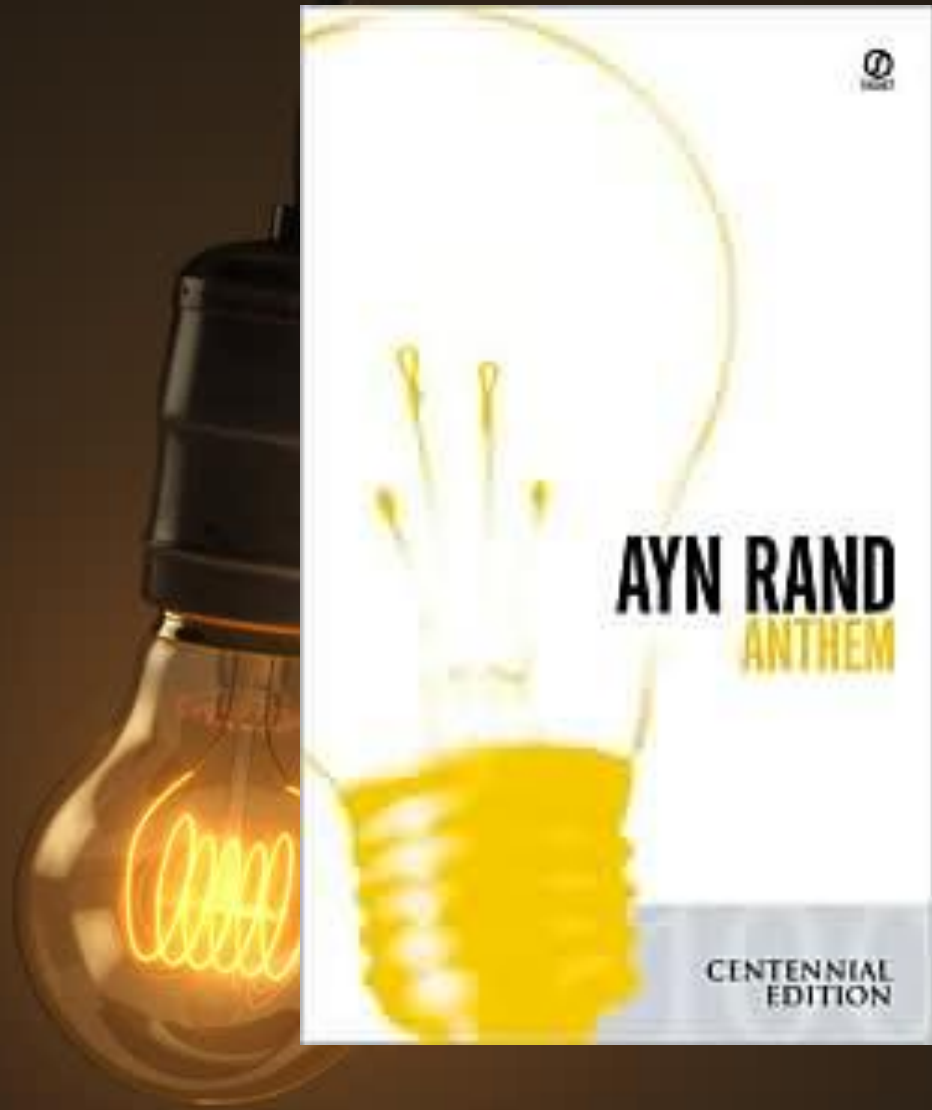
noun

- **1.** a rousing or uplifting song identified with a particular group, body, or cause.

"the song became the anthem for hippie activists"



A Bit About *Anthem*
by Ayn Rand



Who is Ayn Rand?



- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pjaHeALTPgE>

What's going on while she's writing?



- In the summer of 1937, Rand took a break from working on *The Fountainhead* to write the novella called *Anthem*, a short, highly stylized tale of a future dystopia so saturated in collectivism that the word “I” has disappeared from the language.
- First published in England in 1938, *Anthem* was rejected by collectivist-dominated American publishers in the 1930s — an American edition (slightly revised by Rand) did not appear until 1946.

What's going on while she's writing?



- 1937- two years away from the start of WWII.
- Imperial Japan is already at war with China.
- Soviet Russia, the communist have already been in power for 20 years.
- In Fascists Italy, the fascists have been in power since 1922.
- Nazis in Germany have been ruling since 1933.
- Around the world, you can see that these totalitarian collectivists states already existed.

Soviets, Fascists, and Nazis

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6OqKbv5khms>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hu1qoyKNofQ>



How is a piece of literature influenced by the history of the time it was written?

- Regionalism and local color writings are each specific types of Realism. They worked to record a distinctive way of life.
- Regionalism often showed regional dialect, food, clothing styles and customs of that time period.
- Naturalism, like realism, works to accurately portray its subject matter, but naturalism also works to find the scientific theory.
- Each of these writing styles have characteristics that make them stand out from one another but they all seem to also have a common link of showing life realistically of that time period.



How is a piece of literature influenced by the history of the time it was written?



- It is easy to see that current events and issues of the world around them have had an impact on authors and what they have written from the stories in this time period.
- Think: Julia Alvarez wrote a poem and a short story about her experiences.
- So historical events and the study of history influence literature heavily, primarily through broadening the range of topics for writing beyond the modern day and extending the understanding of a popular audience of this new topic
- Because of Rand's experiences, she hated collectivism, and inspired her to write her novels and novellas.

Individualism



- Opposite of Collectivism
- Focuses on the individual action and identity
- “Individualism holds that a civilized society...can be achieved only on the basis of the recognition of individual rights- and that a group, as such, has no rights other than the individual rights of its members.
- In *Anthem*, there is no such thing as “I”. There are no individuals.

Collectivism

A glowing incandescent lightbulb hanging from a black cord against a dark background. The lightbulb is illuminated, casting a warm, yellow glow. The filament is visible through the glass. The cord is attached to a black plastic socket with a textured grip.

- Refers to emphasis on collective rather than individual action or identity.
- “Collectivism holds that man must be chained to a collective and collective thought for the sake of what is called “the common good”. “
- This is illustrated in *Anthem* in such quotes as “
“We are one in all and all in one. There are no men but on the great WE, one, indivisible and forever.

objectivism

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=asery3UeBj4>



Objectivism

A glowing incandescent lightbulb hanging from a cord against a dark background. The lightbulb is illuminated, casting a warm glow. The cord is black and has a black plastic cap at the top.

- Rand's philosophy
- Uses the idea of an "ideal man" I in *Anthem* to show objectivism
- "My philosophy, in essence, is the concept of man as a heroic being, with his own happiness as the moral purpose of his life, with productive achievement as his noblest activity, and reason as he only absolute. "

Conformity

A glowing incandescent lightbulb hanging from a black cord against a dark background. The lightbulb is illuminated, casting a warm, yellow glow. The cord is attached to a black plastic socket with a textured grip.

- Being similar or identical
- To be obedient or compliant without objection
- School uniforms

How does
conformity help us?
Hurt us?

Egoism



- Valuing everything only in reference to one's personal interest; self-interests as a foundation of morality (right vs wrong)
- Rand believes that man's self is his mind, "the faculty of reason." there is no collective brain from which any one can think.
- Rand says she titled the book *Anthem* "because this is my hymn to man's ego"
- For Rand, the self is like a god, but not in the religious sense.
- It is a god in that it is one's highest value, the source of what is good in life on earth.

Free Will



- When people have free will, they can make choices, make up their own mind, make decision and can direct their own lives by the ideas and values they adopt
- In *Anthem* all the character actually have free will, although most will believe that they do not. It appears that all the individuals are brainwashed, with no power to control their own lives
- Even the so-called “robots” who submit to the authorities in this novels have free will: they are robots by choice. No one was force to obey.
- All the character are depressed, without hope, or ambition. They make no effort accomplish anything.
- Ran holds that free will demands “ the choice to think or not”
- Most character have chosen not to think.

Selflessness



- *Anthem* dramatizes the view that the self is destroyed in a collectivist society
- *Selfless* is shown in the following ways:
- In *Anthem* no one has a personal name because under collectivism, individuals are interchangeable
- To prefer one person over another (as a friend or romantic) is a sin known as the “transgression of preference”
- It is wrong to disagree, to have independent thoughts or to ask questions because that makes you different
- Self-assertion is forbidden
- All decisions are made by the “council” in the name of the whole
- Individuals have no rights
- Everything which is not permitted by the law is forbidden

Selflessness continued



- *Anthem* depicts what happens to a society that implements selflessness.
- The result is what Rand believes is a subhuman society, what makes human beings human is having self, which means having a mind
- A selfless individual is a mindless individual
- To practice selflessness, one must abstain from thinking and obey one's masters.
- One must merge himself into the group and obliterate the individual identity.
- The result is a society of mindless robots as found in *Anthem*.

What is Equality?



- the state of being equal, especially in status, rights, and opportunities.
- Is this possible? No right or wrong answer.
- Some believe it is possible, and that is what the GOAL is.
- Other people believe it is unattainable, but should be what society keeps aiming for.
- Others believe equality is a waste of time pursuing since it won't ever happen.

What does Equality 7-2521 tell us before we start reading the book?



Resources

A glowing incandescent lightbulb hangs from a black cord against a dark background. The bulb is illuminated, casting a warm, yellowish glow. The filament inside is visible, and the glass of the bulb is slightly textured. The lightbulb is positioned on the left side of the frame, with its cord extending upwards.

Glossary of Definitions by Ayn Rand. Edited by Allison T. Kunze and Jean F. Moroney. (Second Renaissance Books, 1999).

The Ayn Rand Lexicon. Edited by Harry Binswanger. (Meridian Books, 1986).