

### Study Questions—Civil Disobedience

1. What, according to Thoreau is the best form of government? (1)  
--What does "expedient" mean? (1)
2. Yet, is Thoreau a "no-government man? Why or why not? (2)
3. Does Thoreau believe that majority rule should prevail? Why or why not? (2)
4. What does Thoreau believe is the role of individual conscience in deciding right and wrong? (2)  
--Do you agree with this statement: "The only obligation which I have a right to assume, is to do at any time what I think right" (2).  
--What is the result of "an undue respect for the law" (2)?
5. Why does Thoreau claim that the US government of his time is not his government? What two major actions of his government is he protesting in this essay (3-4)?  
--How do the things going on in America at the time compare to the Revolution of '75? (3)
6. What is William Paley's view of government, according to Thoreau? (4). Does Thoreau agree or disagree with Paley's view?
7. Does Thoreau believe that voting is an adequate way of changing government policy? Why or why not? (5).
8. What method of resistance does Thoreau advocate in the essay? (7: not paying one's taxes).
9. When does Thoreau advocate that one should actually break the law? (8)
10. What does Thoreau think about conventional channels for redressing wrongs? (i.e. petitioning the governor or the legislature?) (8).
11. How can **one** person change things? (9)
12. What does Thoreau believe to be the only place for a just man under a government that holds slaves and wages an unjust war in Mexico? (9).
13. What is Thoreau's definition of a "peaceable revolution"? (9-10). Which would the state choose—to keep all just men in prison or to give up slavery?

14. What is Thoreau's attitude toward wealthy men? (10).
15. Why did Thoreau not feel "confined" in prison? What part of a man can the state not control? (12).
16. How does Thoreau's view of his countrymen change after he leaves prison? Is it hypocritical for him to let another pay his taxes? (15)
17. Why is Webster a follower and not a leader? (16-17). What is Thoreau's opinion about "defending the Constitution"?
18. What is "purer source of truth" for Thoreau than the Bible and the Constitution? What does he say about those who stand by the Bible and the Constitution? (17).
19. Which form of government does Thoreau feel is better? An absolute monarchy, a limited monarchy, or a democracy? Can he imagine a government even better than a democracy? Where, according to Thoreau, ought power ultimately be located? (18)