

ENGL 110—Most Common Sentence-Level Grammatical Problems

Titles

The essay “*Civil Disobedience*” by Henry David Thoreau criticizes the moral and social implications of Slavery and the Mexican-American war and prioritizes one’s conscience over the rule of law.

“Civil disobedience” opens directly addressing the government’s power and maintains this stance for the essay’s entirety.

Comma Splice

During the American Revolution the colonists rebelled because of taxation, Thoreau argues that slavery and an unjust war is a better reason.

So he is thrown in jail for not paying them, he says “Under a government which imprisons any unjustly, the true place for a just man is a prison.”

He wants to be a law-abiding citizen however the current laws are not allowing him to be.

Fragments

Because it would mean that the laws are just to everyone.

Also realizing that at this specific time they aren’t ready for the responsibility this may bring upon them.

All these men marching into war and battle against their free will and common sense.

Not because they have the best interest for the country or their moral code, but because they are the most influential group.

Which is one of the main reasons why there is any corruption in government in the first place.

And that society should be constructed according to your own conscience.

Punctuation with Quotes

But Thoreau was totally against slavery saying “I cannot for an instant recognize that political organization as my government which is the slave’s government also.”

He states that “Government is at best but an expedient; but most governments are usually, and all governments are sometimes, inexpedient. (1)”

Thoreau then addresses William Paley's contrary argument which he writes in his chapter of "Duty of Submission to Civil Government", which suggests that man should not revolt against the government for the "inconvenience" it may cause the public.

Thoreau opens his essay by stating his agreement with the motto "That government is best which governs least".

Unspecified "this" and "it"

He believes his government is acting like a tyrant when a sixth of the population are in shackles and enslaved. But Thoreau knows that this wouldn't be convenient for slave owners.

He states his concern with the idea of majority rule, stating that the majority does not guarantee the moral thing will be done, for majorities only obtain power due to their sheer size, making it unfair to the minority.

Thoreau somewhat contradicts himself by stating that democracy is not a flawed system but believes the vote is quite insufficient because it allows the majority to make immoral decisions. It is more of a waiting game where you need patience and perseverance to achieve the things you want.