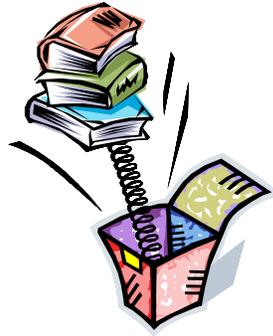


Whittier Public Library's

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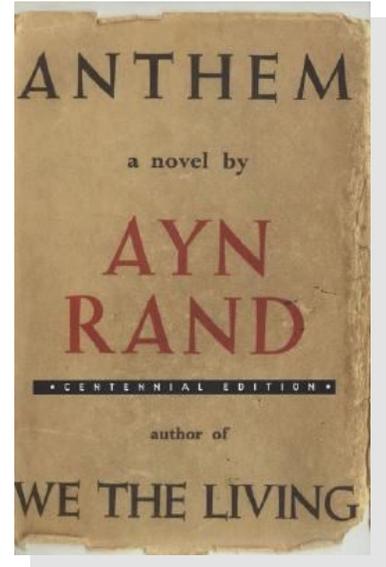
WHITTIER PUBLIC LIBRARY

ANTHEM

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About the Book

He lived in the Dark Ages of the future. In a loveless world he dared to love the woman of his choice. In an age that had lost all trace of science and civilization, he had the courage to seek and find knowledge. But these were not the crimes for which he would be hunted. He was marked for death because he had committed the unpardonable sin: He had stood forth from the mindless human herd. He was a man alone. Ayn Rand's classic tale of a future Dark Age of the great "we" - a world that deprives individuals of name, independence, and values - anticipates her later masterpieces, *The Fountainhead* and *Atlas Shrugged*."



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About the Author



Ayn Rand was born Alissa Rosenbaum, the child of Zinovy and Anna Rosenbaum, in St. Petersburg, Russia, on February 2, 1905. From an early age Rand decided to become a writer. Her early influences included adventure fiction and American movies. The Russian Revolution of 1917 caused her father, a successful chemist, to lose much of his wealth. Communism's intellectual constraints gave Rand a loathing of Communism and all related doctrines. Nevertheless, Rand completed her schooling in Russia, majoring in history at the University of Petrograd, and then took courses at the State Institute of Cinematic Arts. Her knowledge of history and her background in the cinema would serve her well as a writer.

(Continued on page 2)

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Rand eventually left the Soviet Union in 1926 and went to Chicago, staying briefly with her cousins the Portnoys before moving to Hollywood. During this time, she changed her name from Alissa Rosenbaum to Ayn Rand. In Hollywood, she worked as a film extra, then moved to scriptwriting. She met and fell in love with actor Frank O'Connor, whom she claimed inspired her fictional heroes. The two were married in 1929. Though their marriage was often strained, it lasted until O'Connor died in 1979. Gradually Rand gained modest literary success. Her earliest works were *We the Living* (1936), a novel of the Russian Revolution, the courtroom drama *Night of January 16th* (1936), and the futuristic short novel *Anthem* (1938). She and O'Connor eventually moved to New York to work on *The Fountainhead* (1943).

The Fountainhead received some favorable reviews and slowly climbed onto the best-seller list. Following its publication, Rand returned to Hollywood to work again as a screenwriter. After receiving a fan letter from a young man named Nathaniel Branden, Rand and he formed a close personal and professional relationship. Branden, his wife Barbara, and others joined Rand for discussions of her philosophy. During the 1940's and 1950's, Rand worked on several screenplays, including the screenplay for *The Fountainhead*. Her main project, however, was an expansion of the themes expressed in *The Fountainhead*. The new novel was *Atlas Shrugged* (1957) — Rand dedicated it to Frank O'Connor and Nathaniel Branden.

After the publication of *Atlas Shrugged*, Rand devoted her time to producing nonfiction works expounding on her philosophy of Objectivism, including *For the New Intellectual* (1961), *The Virtue of Selfishness* (1964), *Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal* (1966), and *The Romantic Manifesto* (1969). Much of the material for these books came from the journals she was producing: *The Objectivist Newsletter* (1962-1965), *The Objectivist* (1966-1971), and *The Ayn Rand Letter*

(1971-1976). Other contributors to these journals included Nathaniel and Barbara Branden, Leonard Peikoff, and Alan Greenspan, the future head of the Federal Reserve System. Rand also took part in the Nathaniel Branden Institute and taught classes in Objectivist philosophy.

Revelations about Rand's extramarital affair with Nathaniel Branden damaged her image, and in 1968 she and Branden dissolved their partnership. Overall, though, she became a fixture on the intellectual scene, sometimes discussing public issues on television. Rand died in New York in 1982. Following her death, Peikoff, Rand's intellectual heir, edited *The Early Ayn Rand: A Selection from Her Unpublished Fiction* (1984), containing some early stories and discarded sections from her novels. Other posthumous works include *Letters of Ayn Rand* (1995) and *Journals of Ayn Rand* (1997).

Bernardo, Jr., Anthony, and Jr. Anthony Bernardo. "Ayn Rand." *Magill's Survey Of American Literature, Revised Edition* (2006): 1. *Biography Reference Center*. Web. 23 July 2014.

Further Reading

Other works by Ayn Rand:

Atlas Shrugged
The Fountainhead
We the Living

If you liked *Anthem*, you might like:

1984 by George Orwell
A Clockwork Orange by Anthony Burgess
Fahrenheit 451 by Ray Bradbury
The Handmaid's Tale by Margaret Atwood
The Hunger Games by Suzanne Collins

Discussion Questions

1. In a world that places the good of society above all else, why is a man with a revolutionary invention that would benefit everyone forced to run for his life?
2. Why is the hero willing to risk being burned at the stake in order to discover the meaning of the unspeakable word “I”?
3. As fires ravaged the cities of the world at the close of the Unmentionable Times, what crucial values did men lose? What was gained or lost at the Dawn of the Great Rebirth of society?
4. What does Equality 7-2521 discover in the Uncharted Forest that removes his original dread of the place?
5. Compare the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden with the story of Equality 7-2521. For what “sins” were each condemned? In what ways are Equality 7-2521 and Adam similar? How do they differ?
6. *Anthem* is set in a totalitarian future. But unlike the societies depicted in Orwell’s *1984* and Huxley’s *Brave New World*, *Anthem* presents a future in which candles and glazed windows are the latest advances. What point about technology was Ayn Rand making by portraying such a primitive future, and how do the events of the story establish that point?
7. For each of the following quotations, explain its role in the story and its wider significance:

“It is a sin to write this. It is a sin to think words no others think.”

“I wished to know the meaning of things. I am the meaning.”

“I owe nothing to my brothers, nor do I gather debts from them.”

<http://aynrandeducation.org/teacher-resources/anthem.html#questions>

Q & A with the Author

A high school teacher had assigned *Anthem*, Ayn Rand's novelette to her tenth grade English classes. She wrote to Miss Rand, reporting that her students enjoyed the book because of the "unique ideas and theories presented"; however, the students raised questions about the book which the teacher was unable to answer, and she asked the author for help. Printed below are some of the questions, and Miss Rand's answers (from *The Objectivist Calendar*, June 1979).

Did you model your characters after particular individuals?

No. All the characters are invented by me.

How did you decide upon the names for the characters in the book?

Since the people had no concept of individuality, they could not have individual names—only numbers. I patterned the numbering after telephone numbers, with the prefixes consisting of statist slogans, some good, but hypocritical for that society (such as Liberty)—others, ironic on my part (such as "Equality" for the hero, who is obviously a genius, and not the intellectual "equal" of average men).

What race is Equality?

Any race—since he represents the best possible to all races of men.

When Equality went into the forest, wasn't he afraid after he heard about those who never returned?

No, he was not afraid, because he had the adventurous courage of a scientist who always wants to study the unknown. Besides, he did not want ever to return to his hometown, to the slavery of a collectivist state.

How were the people in the Unmentionable Times destroyed?

They were destroyed by the kind of philosophy they accepted. They rejected reason, egoism, individualism and freedom—and they accepted mysticism, altruism, collectivism and dictatorship. The society presented in *Anthem* is the ultimate logical consequence and perfect embodiment of that vicious philosophy. Observe that the slogans of that philosophy are preached all around us today. If you don't like the kind of society you saw in *Anthem*, it is that philosophy that you have to reject and oppose.

How can the Council of Scholars make decisions without thinking?

They make decisions by the guidance of their feelings and by blind obedience to a government-prescribed dogma.

What was the tunnel used for in the Unmentionable Times?

It was a subway.

Why did this society come to be, and how could it get so out of hand that almost everything was a transgression?

The reason, [with respect to] both parts of the question, lies in the philosophy that men accepted (see my answer to the fifth question). When men have no rights, they are expected to live for the sake of others, anything they do for their own sake would be regarded by their rulers as a transgression.

Who picked the people for the World Council?

The gang entrenched members of the World Council would choose its own members and perpetuate itself. As an example of such politics, see the government of Soviet Russia.

Why was unhappiness against the law?

Because the rulers wanted no complaints; they wanted the slaves to pretend to be satisfied with the conditions of their existence.

Why was 40–45 considered old?

Because life was so hard in such a society that men were worn out and few were able to survive to the age of 45. It is a historical fact that in primitive, pre-industrial societies, men's life expectancy was 20 years. (It is 72 today.)

How long did it take you to write Anthem?

About three months.

How did you get the idea for the theme?

I got the idea in my school days in Soviet Russia, when I heard all the vicious attacks on individualism, and asked myself what the world would be like if men lost the word "I."

What kind of religions existed in this society?

The worship of the state, of the collective, was that society's religion.

Why did you choose the title *Anthem*?

Because this story is my hymn to man's ego.

<http://aynrandeducation.org/teacher-resources/anthem/anthem-qa.html>