Have you ever been outraged with the government? Have you ever looked for the moral high ground in a political argument? Have you ever faced the hard choice of breaking a law when you had no respect for that law? Did you ever ask the question, “Why are things the way they are?”

If you are a person with a deep civic duty, then you have asked yourself these kinds of questions. If you are a person with a religious commitment, then you have to be concerned with righting the wrongs that a government commits against the people. If you are concerned about humanity, then you have to be concerned about the relationships people have with each other and with their government.

Henry David Thoreau was a famous writer in American history. One of his ideas was that “Government rules best that rules least.” Thoreau championed the right of the individual against the tyranny of government. He wrote a famous essay called *Civil Disobedience*.

If you are angry about the horrible social conditions that are plainly visible in communities everywhere around us, then read Thoreau. It’s easy to complain about the government. Moving from complaint to direct action is much harder. Thoreau’s ideas on civil disobedience represent a way forward out of apathy. He offers a strategy for the disinherited, the poor, and the powerless. He shows that there is power in just one resister. Every person can stand up to an oppressive government.
Thoreau Gives Guidance
By Alderman
Brian Benford

I am writing this to myself as a reminder of my duty to serve justly and with honor. . . .

In 1974 the Vietnam War was still very fresh in my mind as color TV graphically placed dead soldiers in my living room for me to contemplate their fate. At family gatherings, my elders would preach that this war was a result of an unjust government. We collectively discussed that this was not a war that benefited black people or anyone for that matter except the corporate powers that be. . . .

Over the years, I have searched for and found inspiration in Thoreau’s words and actions. I ran for public office because I was so damn tired of complaining how corrupt our government is. In this crazy world we live in, I think Thoreau’s words should call us all to action. If we are not willing to make our government just, we are part of the problem. I especially like how he chastised folks who claimed they are patriotic by defending the government through right and wrong. I like the notion that one is patriotic who fights to make an unfit government just.

I wake up every morning anticipating my duty to repair our government. I believe that this movement has to take place on the local level first before we can impact Washington. With each rally or anti-war protest I attend, I am empowered by others to keep up the fight until our government reflects the great people it represents. I sense for the rest of my life I’ll turn to Thoreau for guidance and inspiration.

Thoreau versus a CEO
By Cameron Daniels

Thoreau’s doctrine pertains to the concept of natural law and insists that we are human beings with inalienable rights. He argues that within a true democracy the individual has to be able to resist any act he or she feels is unjust. . . . The government he mentions can be a token for any institution and the individuals in it.

Let’s take your current occupation as a business executive. One could substitute the rules that you abide by as the “laws” in your particular government.

Pretend you have had an assistant with you for three years and the two of you have grown very close. One day your boss comes in and tells you that your assistant has to be fired on company policy because of a felony he got when he was 16. Thoreau would argue that you have every right to protest the termination if your conscience tells you it is unjust. Thoreau would insist that you should not be forced by the majority or the ones in power to act upon something to which you object.

Use Words, Not Weapons
By Curtis Williams

. . . My advice to men, women, black, white, brown, green, and yellow is to be aware. If you feel a law is unfair or if the government needs to be put into its place, challenge authority not with a bomb or suicide mission or any type of violence. The best way to fight a bully is truly with kindness. This saying is the best way to get my point across. “Sticks and stones may break my bones but words will never hurt me.” False! Words are the most powerful things in the world. To use them in a non-violent manner could be stronger
than any weapon. To future generations, I challenge you to read this book, study it—and not just the book but the title “Civil Disobedience”—and if it does not open your eyes, I fear our future will be lost.

Son, Be Proud of Your School
By Katy Farrens
Your school, Keishawn, [Thoreau Elementary School] was named after Henry David Thoreau because he ... practiced non-violent resistance and would use it any time he thought he was unfairly being treated by the government and its “unjust laws.” . . . You should never have to . . .

Are My Hands Clean?
By Oroki Rice
. . . Reading Thoreau’s *Civil Disobedience* I am forced to look at myself and my own actions and how much I really am willing to put my life on the line for what I believe. Early in our Odyssey Project I said that I would be willing to die for my children and their children. I also said that the memories of my ancestors whose bones lie on the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean call for me to keep their stories alive at all costs. . . . But I have to admit that I’ve never had to really have my life threatened for a cause. . . .

I remember the Sweet Honey in the Rock song, *Are My Hands Clean?* The song traces one blouse, from inception to acquirement:

Henry David Thoreau

I wear garments touched by hands from all over the world
35% cotton, 6% polyester,
the journey begins in Central America
In the cotton fields of El Salvador
In a province soaked in blood
Pesticide-sprayed workers
toil in burning sun
Pulling cotton for two dollars a day.
. . . These lyrics ask us as consumers in the global north to think about the reality and origin of these products consumed by us daily. . . . Are My Hands Clean?

Apply Thoreau
By Lakeitha Sanyang
. . . Thoreau said, “I cannot for an instant recognize that government as my government which is the slave’s also.”
. . . Read this book and see where you can apply it. You’ve always said to me that you don’t think the economy is right and that there aren’t any jobs for people, especially poor people. You want to help and always say you wish there were things you could do or say that could change things. Read this book on civil disobedience and apply it. It helps you to know that you don’t have to tolerate some things because you do have a voice.
Be an Agent of Justice  
By Lily Komino

Six months ago my friend’s nephew applied to join the U.S. Army and was accepted. His main aim in joining the Army was the assurance of getting a full scholarship for higher education. He was naive about the system, thinking that he would train and live at the barracks. That was his illusion. He received an order to prepare for departure to Iraq.

He claims to be all right about fighting in a genuine war but not the one he is supposed to go to. He feels that will make him part of invading another people’s country, with the full propaganda of the government. He is scared to back off because of the probability of being charged with contempt.

After I finished reading the principles of Thoreau’s *Civil Disobedience*, I called his aunt and gave the message of encouragement to be delivered to him. He can do what he thinks is right. Accepting wrongdoing is like damaging a wound, which will never heal.

He needs to stand so that other citizens will be encouraged to have good morals. It is time for the government to be alerted to its faults and do better.

He needs to be the agent of justice, even if it will cost him to break the law. Others will do better if they know how to stand for the public good.

Stand Up and Don’t Be Counted  
By Molinda Henry

To individuals who have chosen, as I have, not to avail themselves of the voting process, I offer the following observations.

We are of kindred spirit. I was pleasantly surprised by Henry David Thoreau’s position on government: “But a government in which the majority rules in all cases cannot be based on justice, even as far as men understand it. Must the citizen ever for a moment, or in the least degree, resign his conscience to the legislator? Why has every man a conscience then?”

This statement supports my assertion that it is my civic duty not to participate in the voting process as a form of non-violent protest against our present government. My refusing to support a government I have little or no respect for is to me a form of civil disobedience. I would not discourage any individual from acting upon their conscience. I have chosen to stand up and not be counted.

An Address to Graduating Students  
By Angela McAlister

What is civil disobedience, and why might it one day matter to you?... In facing difficult times here with the “powers that be” on college campuses throughout the state, students stood their ground while going against the grain. They felt some students were unfairly barred from joining certain organizations on campus, a practice handed down for generations.

When they fought the system through protests, marches, and boycotts, that’s civil disobedience. When students had non-violent sit-ins in places where they were not welcome because of the color of their skin, that’s civil disobedience. When Dr. King marched on Washington for the civil rights of all people, that’s civil disobedience. These people civilly carried out their “fight” without physical violence and eventually provoked change.

What will you do when it comes your time to stand up for what you believe in? Will it be through physical activity or the activity of civil disobedience? It’s your choice, but what’s the best choice, one that satisfies for a moment, or one that lasts a lifetime?

Good luck to you all!
Writer Spotlight: Jane Austen

Sample Five-Paragraph Profile of an Artist. Some students have been asking what teachers mean if they assign a five-paragraph paper. Generally that means an introduction setting up three points, three body paragraphs developing those three points, and a conclusion. That’s only one way to write a paper—not a magic formula. Some students have also been asking about how to document sources. There are many styles for that. This essay uses one standard way for documenting any quotation or important fact: brief internal citation and a full listing on the “Works Cited” page at the end.

“Men have had every advantage in telling their own story. . . . Education has been theirs in so much higher degree; the pen has been in their hands,” says the heroine of Jane Austen’s final novel (Austen, *Persuasion* 234). Famous British author Jane Austen (1775-1817) overcame her era’s prejudice against women, created a new kind of heroine, and succeeded in writing six novels that remain popular today as both books and films. When Jane Austen was born in England in 1775, no colleges were open to women. Conduct books urged young women to be silent and modest. For example, one etiquette book of 1774 advised young women to hide their intelligence: “If you have any learning, keep it a profound secret, especially from men” (Gregory 27). Instead, Jane Austen read widely and wrote books that demonstrated her brilliance. She chose, however, to hide the fact she was an author. When a creaky swing door announced that visitors were coming, she quickly would take out a sewing basket to cover up the manuscript papers on her desk (Auerbach 8). Austen published her books with the anonymous phrase “by a lady” on the title page.

Jane Austen’s novels presented to the world a radically different kind of heroine than in earlier novels. Traditional heroines were usually quiet, delicately beautiful young women who receive marriage proposals from a Mr. Right solely because of their dazzling looks. Instead, Austen’s Elizabeth Bennet jumps over fences, makes jokes, speaks up when angry, and attracts a husband because of her “liveliness of mind” (Austen, *Pride and Prejudice* 380). Other Austen heroines tell stories, nurse the sick, read books, and accept marriage proposals only from men who love them as equals.

All six of Jane Austen’s novels—*Northanger Abbey, Sense and Sensibility, Pride and Prejudice, Emma, Mansfield Park, and Persuasion*—remain popular classics. Jane Austen fan clubs boast thousands of members around the world, and websites allow readers to share their “obsession with all things Austen” (www.pemberley.com). All six Austen novels have been filmed many times, and several have been adapted to modern settings. For example, *Emma* became *Clueless*, with Austen’s 18th-century British heroine transformed into a spoiled California Valley Girl, and *Pride and Prejudice* became the recent *Bride and Prejudice*, set in twentieth-century India.

Twenty years after Jane Austen’s death in 1817, the Poet Laureate of England still insisted, “Literature is not the business of a woman’s life” (Southey 547). Despite prejudice against women writers, Jane Austen became a famous novelist whose heroines continue to inspire readers and filmgoers today.

Works Cited


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Chapter 1
It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife.

However little known the feelings or views of such a man may be on his first entering a neighbourhood, this truth is so well fixed in the minds of the surrounding families, that he is considered as the rightful property of some one or other of their daughters.

"My dear Mr. Bennet," said his lady to him one day, "have you heard that Netherfield Park is let at last?"

Mr. Bennet replied that he had not.

"But it is," returned she; "you want to tell me, and I have no objection to hearing it."

Mr. Bennet made no answer.

"Do not you want to know who has taken it?" cried his wife impatiently.

"You want to tell me, and I have no objection to hearing it."

This was invitation enough.

"Why, my dear, you must know, Mrs. Long says that Netherfield is taken by a young man of large fortune from the north of England; that he came down on Monday in a chaise and four to see the place, and was so much delighted with it that he agreed with Mr. Morris immediately; that he is to take possession before Michaelmas, and some of his servants are to be in the house by the end of next week."

"What is his name?"

"Bingley."

"Is he married or single?"

"Oh! single, my dear, to be sure! A single man of large fortune; four or five thousand a year. What a fine thing for our girls!"

"How so? how can it affect them?"

"My dear Mr. Bennet," replied his wife, "how can you be so tiresome! You must know that I am thinking of his marrying one of them."

"Is that his design in settling here?"

"Design! nonsense, how can you talk so! But it is very likely that he may fall in love with one of them, and therefore you must visit him as soon as he comes."

"I see no occasion for that. You and the girls may go, or you may send them by themselves, which perhaps will be still better; for, as you are as handsome as any of them, Mr. Bingley might like you the best of the party."

"My dear, you flatter me. I certainly have had my share of beauty, but I do not pretend to be any thing extraordinary now. When a woman has five grown up daughters, she ought to give over thinking of her own beauty."

"In such cases, a woman has not often much beauty to think of."

"But, my dear, you must indeed go and see Mr. Bingley when he comes into the neighbourhood."

"It is more than I engage for, I assure you."

"But consider your daughters. Only think what an establishment it would be for one of them. Sir William and Lady Lucas are determined to go, merely on that account, for in general, you know they visit no new comers. Indeed you must go, for it will be impossible for us to visit him, if you do not."

"You are over-scrupulous, surely. I dare say Mr. Bingley will be very glad to see you; and I will send a few lines by you to assure him of my hearty consent to his marrying which ever he chuses of the girls; though I must throw in a good word for my little Lizzy."

"I desire you will do no such thing. Lizzy is not a bit better than the others; and I am sure she is not half so handsome as Jane, nor half so good humoured as Lydia. But you are always giving her the preference."

"They have none of them much to recommend them," replied he; "they are all silly and ignorant like other girls; but Lizzy has something more of quickness than her sisters."

"Mr. Bennet, how can you abuse your own children in such way? You take delight in vexing me. You have no compassion on my poor nerves."

"You mistake me, my dear. I have a high respect for your nerves. They are my old friends. I have heard you mention them with consideration these twenty years at least."

"Ah! you do not know what I suffer."

"But I hope you will get over it, and live to see many young men of four thousand a year come into the neighbourhood."

"It will be no use to us if twenty such should come, since you will not visit them."

"Depend upon it, my dear, that when there are twenty I will visit them all."

Mr. Bennet was so odd a mixture of quick parts, sarcastic humour, reserve, and caprice, that the experience of three and twenty years had been insufficient to make his wife understand his character. Her mind was less difficult to develop. She was a woman of mean understanding, little information, and uncertain temper. When she was discontented, she fancied herself nervous. The business of her life was to get her daughters married; its solace was visiting and news.
Elizabeth Barrett Browning eloped. Unlike most men of the 19th century, Robert Browning had no interest in dominating his wife; instead, he wanted a marriage of soul-mates and a partnership of equals. “I abhor the execrable policy of the world’s husbands, fathers, brothers, and domineerers in general,” Robert Browning insisted.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Robert Browning are famous today because of their success both as poets and as a loving married couple. On a wedding anniversary, Elizabeth Barrett Browning surprised her husband with a gift of 44 love sonnets, including the famous “How Do I Love Thee?” sonnet reprinted on many valentines today.

In addition to writing about love, Elizabeth Barrett Browning also tackled controversial topics in her poems such as the horror of slavery, the plight of poor children, and the unfair conditions for women. By finding the courage to write, she paved the way for other women to become authors.

**Sonnet Number 43**

How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.
I love thee to the depth and breadth and height
My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight
For the ends of Being and ideal Grace.
I love thee to the level of every day’s
Most quiet need, by sun and candlelight.
I love thee freely, as men strive for Right;
I love thee purely, as they turn from Praise.
I love with a passion put to use
In my old griefs, and with my childhood’s faith.
I love thee with a love I seemed to lose
With my lost saints, I love thee with the breath,
Smiles, tears, of all my life! and, if God choose,
I shall but love thee better after death.
A lot of funny things happen on the journey, and it reminded me of bumbling family vacations when I was younger. You may be stuck together, but each time is full of memories you will cherish in later years.

**Movie Review**

**Which comes first, work or family?**

**RV**

Columbia Pictures,
Robin Williams and
Jeff Daniels, PG

Reviewed by Tiffani Puccio

This is a great family movie about a workaholic father (Williams) who decides to rent an RV for a cross-country journey to bring his family closer together. No one in the family is thrilled about this decision because their trip to tropical Hawaii was cancelled for a road trip in the “Big Green Toad.”

Williams does his work on the down-low so his family doesn’t find out. The family gains closeness until they find out that it all his to do with work. Williams then has to decide what is more important, family or work.

A dynamic time of change

by Derrick Washington

This break was one of the most interesting periods in my life. Every dynamic in my life changed. I don’t think I have ever been challenged as much as I have been in this period of my existence.

First, my son’s mother and I decided that living together for his sake was causing more harm than good. So even though I’m aware that it is important for my child to be raised in a loving, two-parent household, I will be reduced to seeing him outside his household. Now my job is to make sure he gets what he needs from a distance. I won’t get to see him wake, eat dinner, or go to bed, but I’ll adjust.

On a lighter note, I’m now the sole owner of my barbershop for the first time. That’s been a whole new set of challenges, but I wouldn’t change it for the world. I’ll keep pushing forward till I can’t push any further.

Last, I made some important contacts who are more than willing to help us with the Odyssey junior and A.C.T.I.O.N. (Active Citizens Together Involved in Our Neighborhoods) programs. Most recently, I met with Tommy McNeal, a very important Mason, who said he and his lodge would talk it over and help however they can. So, if Brian Benford is still willing to give us space at the Neighborhood House, we can work on the final phase, transportation, which I expect to obtain from Pastor Gee or some other church.

All in all it was an up-and-down break, so I’m happy we’re back.
Movie Review

“If you’re not first, you’re last”

Talledega Nights: The Ricky Bobby Story
Will Ferrell, R
Reviewed by Tiffani Puccio

The story starts out as Ricky Bobby (Ferrell) is having career day at school. His family shows up and tells the class that they shouldn’t listen to what everyone else tells them; they should do what makes them happy. Before he gets put out of the school by school security, he tells them, “If you’re not first, you’re last.”

Ricky grows up and is on the pit crew for a losing Nascar team.

In the middle of the race, their driver decides the team sucks and leaves the race. Ricky decides to race the car and wins the race. He embarks on a career as a Nascar driver. I won’t ruin the rest of the plot for you.

I highly recommend this movie. If you have ever seen Elf, Old School, or Kicking and Screaming, you know that Ferrell is just too funny. I was skeptical of seeing this movie because it’s about Nascar. However, it makes fun of almost every aspect of Nascar, which makes it even funnier. If you’re in the mood for some serious side cramps from laughing so hard, you should definitely check this movie out.

Movie Review

Movies teach the value of holding to a dream

Field of Dreams
Pursuit of Happyness
Reviewed by Sandra Ramirez

In Field of Dreams the main character hears a voice from a cornfield telling him, “If you build it, he will come.” No one else hears the voice, and the people in the town think he’s crazy.

He has a vision of a baseball field in his cornfield, and the next day he cuts down his cornfield, which is not easy for him, because it’s how he supports himself and his family. But he believes in his dreams, and after he cuts down the cornfield, wonderful things start to happen.

Pursuit of Happyness is about dreams, too, but in a different way. It’s about a family—a wife, a husband, and a little boy—struggling because they don’t have enough money. Only the wife has a job, in the laundry room of a hospital, but the husband is hardly looking for a job. His wife decides to leave him because she’s tired of the family’s economic situation. She goes to New York, and her husband and the little boy stay in San Francisco.

The husband (Will Smith) sees a man getting out of a nice car in front of a large business building. All the employees are smiling and look happy. He says to the man from the nice car, “You must need to go to college to get a job in the company,” but the man says, “No, you only need to be good with numbers and be nice to people.”

His Odyssey begins; his dream is born in that moment. He wants to work in that company.

He can’t make rent, he doesn’t have food to eat, and he has to take care of his little boy, and at the same time, he is always well dressed, with tie and shiny shoes, and no one knows all the struggles he’s going through. He works hard to get the job and the life he wants. He studies and doesn’t waste time, and he gets what he wants.

“Son,” he tells his little boy, “never let anyone tell you you can’t. When you have a dream… go and get it.”
I am more than grateful that you entered our Odyssey. The work that you did with us opened doors that some had thought sealed. I personally have been made braver to show up in life as the woman I have been called to be.

Oroki Rice

I am writing this letter to thank you for helping me find my speaking voice and being more comfortable in front of large crowds. Anyone in our class can tell you that prior to your visit I had not spoken two lines in front of the class. Your presence really helped me overcome the fears I had about public speaking. From now on, whenever I have to speak to a large crowd, I will always go back to the drill when we had to walk across the circle; and I have you to thank for that.

Cameron Daniels

I wanted to tell you how your visit inspired me. For a person, like yourself, who has many accolades around the world, to take time out of your busy schedule to come to Wisconsin to work with us (in the cold!) is truly a blessing. I believe that you
awakened a lot of people in this class. You helped them find their voice.

_Tiffani Puccio_

Hey man, I would like to thank you for helping me tear down yet more walls of higher education. I realize now that acting can help you in day-to-day life. It helps you look people in the eye and come across as you want to. So Baron, keep the fight up, man, and come back soon. We appreciate you and love your work. To be or not to be, that is the question.

_Derrick Washington_

One of the things that I picked up from you (aside from reading/acting instructions) was a comment you made comparing the verbal exercises you gave us to the scales/chords that musicians practice to learn the vocabulary of their instruments. I love those kinds of connections. I am always amazed whenever I see the arts overlapping and intersecting. So all that nonsensical stuff you had us doing that sounded like silly gibberish was designed to help one develop good diction and eventually a mellifluous voice.

_Tillman Morris_

When I was a little girl, my dream was to become an actress, but many things came along and I had to keep my dream in a box. After I met you at class, I started looking to open that box and get my dream out and make it real. It made me remember all the
fun and the realization I used to feel when I was younger. I used to participate in plays a lot because it was one of the ways to entertain people in war times in my country [El Salvador].

Sandra Ramírez

Thank you for your time, talents and dedication to our class. I will never forget how you opened our eyes, hearts and minds. I really appreciate how you gave us voice.

Over the years I have had the pleasure of attending many plays and productions. I will never forget my classmates performing in that lobby. I owe these great performances to you. Bravo.

Brian Benford

In each of us a celestial being lies quietly hidden from view. With just a little breath and cheers you brought it from its depth. I recited Macbeth. Did I do that? Yes, I did, and like a pro! Never did I imagine the skill to make the words flow.

Thank you

Molinda Henry
Thank you so much for your theatre workshops with us on *Raisin in the Sun* and *Macbeth*, as well as for private coaching outside of class. The extra time you spent helping us with breathing exercises and pronunciation was encouraging and educational. I shall always remember to use my Macbeth voice when speaking out in public.  

*Juanita Wilson*

Thank you again for helping some of us find our voice. A lot of people see me as a shy and quiet person, but the last two weeks that you were here changed me. I had such a good time pretending to be someone else. Thank you again for taking the time off from your busy schedule to come to “cold Wisconsin” to show us how much fun theater can be.  

*Sonia Spencer*

Baron, thank you so much for coming to help direct our Odyssey 2006-2007 class. Braving the week in the cold weather of Wisconsin is no small feat!! You have truly shown me a clear way to turn around and ‘give back’ when my life’s Odyssey has brought me to cross that path. I will not forget your positive attitude and your contagious zest for life. I appreciated how you gave our class your “personal” experiences to show us that we all had ‘a little more’ in us than we even thought possible.

The movie you suggested I rent called “A Day without A Mexican” [with Baron Kelly as an INS official] was very good. I certainly thought that the same idea could be applied to this country as a whole about what it would be like without the contributions of black people.  

*Mary Wells*

You are a special man, and I appreciate black men like yourself. There just aren’t enough of our African American men who give back and help people get to where they are.  

*Angel Lightfoot*
Shakespeare’s Sonnet 29
“When in disgrace with fortune and men’s eyes”

When in disgrace with fortune and men’s eyes,
I all alone beweep my outcast state,
And trouble deaf Heaven with my bootless cries,
And look upon myself, and curse my fate,
Wishing me like to one more rich in hope,
Featur’d like him, like him with friends possess’d,
Desiring this man’s art, and that man’s scope,
With what I most enjoy contented least:
Yet in these thoughts myself almost despising,
Haply I think on thee,—and then my state
(Like to the lark at break of day arising)
From sullen earth) sings hymns at heaven’s gate;
For thy sweet love remember’d such wealth brings
That then I scorn to change my state with kings’.