

Transcendentalism: civil disobedience essay sample



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“ All men recognize the right of revolution; that is, the right to refuse allegiance to and to resist the government...” (53). In Thoreau’s essay, Civil Disobedience, he talks about how the government destroys/corrupts the individuality of a person and how it focuses on major figures instead of the “ people” of America and their beliefs through language and metaphor.

Thoreau’s overall meaning is how the government takes away the individuality of a person. The government tries to get an entire body of people to follow one rule, the rule only major political figures like Washington and Franklin create. The people were only allowed to follow the governments look at things, not really follow the beliefs of the religion. Was their religion, yes, but the government was more important. This is what caused Thoreau to question, why? For a Transcendentalist like Thoreau he did not like the idea of following the idea of one man, to not have a choice in his beliefs. The government was taking away the chance for people to have their own beliefs, to be an individual. In the end though it was the man who had the choice of whether he wanted to obey the government or rebel and have his own beliefs.

The man who chose to “ rebel” will live more freely and have his own thoughts, “ If a man is thought-free, fancy-free, imagination-free, that which is not never for a long time appearing to be to him, unwise rulers or reformers cannot fatally interrupt him” (66). Which leads to the Transcendentalist theme of individuality. To be one’s own person, and have your own thoughts. To not follow the crowd and believe in your own beliefs. Throughout the essay, Thoreau speaks his mind about how the government is taking over the thoughts of others when, those who “ created” the

government did not truly make it. It is all but the following of the rules they followed in the past brought into the present, there is no originality. His essay is about whether man can follow their own path or beliefs or follow everyone around them.

Thoreau compares the government to complicated pieces of machinery that acts as a tool for the people to use to run the country. It is supposed to be a type of guideline, but somewhere along the line-or a piece of the machine- there is friction. Some parts don't work as well as it should and it is because of the injustice that runs through the country. " But it is not the less necessary for this; for the people must have some complicated machinery or other..." (51). His comparison of the government to complicated machinery is a well-developed metaphor to have a greater understanding of its connection to the people. A machine must be made and tested, and when it does not work it must be fixed. When it is being fixed, it should have a better molding of the creators' ideas and wishes. In this case, the government needs to be molded to fit the needs of the people. The mistakes the machine makes(injustice) must be fixed.

During this time slavery was being practiced and Thoreau was appalled by it. Weren't men all equal, if not they were still under the same government. They should be treated the same and have the same rights. " I cannot for an instant recognize that political organization as my government which is the slave's government also". Injustice was given to the slaves who were under the government but treated differently. The way Thoreau uses language helps define his thoughts. As he only states his own thoughts and answers his questions. He has a very complex way to describe things as he mentions <https://assignbuster.com/transcendentalism-civil-disobedience-essay-sample/>

the same theme, just in different ways. Thoreau tries to get his thoughts heard, “ He who gives himself entirely to his fellowmen appears to them useless and selfish; but he who gives himself partially to them is pronounced a benefactor and philanthropist” (53).

Thoreau’s idea of the government and individuality is completely agreeable. The government is there to help guide the people under it, to set down some laws that should be followed so we do not come out of order. But if we were to follow everything the government said, word for word, new discoveries would never be made and individuality wouldn’t exist. Everyone would be one person because no one would rebel against the one idea ruling us all. I see these elements in my everyday life as society tries to take away the true person in one’s self and form them to be like one. To follow the crowd, and what fun would that be if everyone thought and acted the same. School life, Person and social lives are always being tested and seeing if an individual can keep true to themselves or do as everyone else does. Whether it be a hairstyle, clothes or the way kids speak, society tries to mold us into what too they want. It is up to us, the individual to rebel against it and show them who we really are, to be different.

Transcendentalism deals with many themes, it has to do with a person’s own belief and their own connections. Thoreau’s explanation of civil disobedience exploits the need of just how important individuality is. “ All men recognize the right of revolution; that is, the right to refuse allegiance to and to resist the government...” (53).