**Civil Disobedience Reading Guide**

1. What does Thoreau mean when he says that the government should be an “expedient”?
2. What does Thoreau mean when he says, “I think we should be men first and subjects afterward” (4)?
3. What is the machine in paragraph 8? What is the “friction”?
4. What is Paley’s view of a man’s duty to his government? Does Thoreau agree or disagree? Why?
5. What does he mean by the phrase, “patron of virtue” in paragraph 10? Hint: it is contrasted with the following idea of the virtuous man.
6. According to Thoreau, why is it not enough to merely vote for “the right”?
7. What is a man’s “duty”? Explain.
8. How does his analogy of the man who has been cheated in paragraph 15 connect back to the issue at hand?
9. What is the “it” in paragraph 16?
10. Look up the historical references at the end of paragraph 16 that you don’t know.
11. What is he talking about in paragraph 17?
12. According to paragraph 21, what is the “indispensablest mode” of telling the government you don’t agree with its actions?
13. What does Thoreau suppose would happen if one honest man in Massachusetts would be thrown in jail for refusing to pay taxes?
14. What does he mean when he states, “under a government which imprisons any unjustly, the true place for a just man is also prison” (22).
15. Why is paying taxes “a bloody measure” (22)?
16. What is his argument about the morality of rich men?
17. Explain the purpose / effect of the biblical reference in paragraph 23.
18. What does he mean when he states, “It costs me less in every sense to incur the penalty of disobedience to the State than it would to obey” (24).
19. How does the government commit a “blunder” by putting Thoreau in jail?
20. How does he feel about his neighbors after being released from jail?
21. What is he saying in paragraph 36?
22. What is the only way for a government to be “strictly just” (45)? Use your own words, not his.
23. What are the two main political issues he focuses on in this piece?
24. Is Thoreau an anarchist? Support your answer with evidence from the text.
25. What does it mean to be civilly disobedient?