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**Henry David Thoreau’s Civil Disobedience**

Thoreau chose the name “Civil Disobedience” because its definition is the very thing he practiced. By refusing to pay taxes and breaking laws, like he did, Thoreau was able to disobey the government in a civil manner, like he wanted everyone else to do. He didn’t want an uproar or war amongst the people and government, rather a nice, neat and civil back off of the government. Thoreau did not want the government to be gone all together just for it to be better. Thoreau refers to the government is a machine and believes that it will eventually wear out and have to be changed. As *men* we have a conscience and can choose wrong from right, *subjects* on the other hand have to do what they are told. When this essay was written, slavery and the Mexican-American war were prominent. Slaves had no choice but to do what they were told, even free men had to abide but rules and regulations. In his statement "We should be men first, and subjects afterward" Thoreau was suggesting that we needed to take a stand and do what we believed was right instead of doing what someone else says to do. Thoreau believed that it was more important to do what was right and not just follow the law. He suggested this because he believed that the government was not always the right choice and that it needed to be changed.

I do not think Thoreau looked down on the men in the military. I believe he understood that they were just ‘victims’ of the government and where doing as they were told by said government. Men and boys were forced to go fight or face repercussions from their government. I believe Thoreau understood that and I don’t think he held them accountable for that actions. He said “they are only a shadow of their humanity; the government shapes them into machines, they have no opportunity to exercise moral sense.” Thoreau exercised his civil disobedience by refusing to pay his taxes and protesting the tax collector. That refusal landed him a night in jail which he believed was the right place for him to live with honor. In today’s day and age such a crime would result in jail time as well as multiple fines. No one likes paying their taxes but it is a necessary evil so that schools, libraries, emergency personnel and many other government run agencies can operate. Without tax money we would not have the police to call when something bad happens, firefighters and EMTs that save peoples lives on a regular basis, or free schools for children. I do not think I would have done anything else if I was in Thoreau’s shoes during that time period, I actually think I probably would’ve payed my taxes.