**Thoreau’s “Civil Disobedience”**

* **Why would Thoreau's essay be called "Civil Disobedience"?**

Thoreau titles his essay “Civil Disobedience” because he discusses the government power and how society reacts to the governments control.

* **According to Thoreau, what is the definition of a government?**

According to Thoreau, the government “is best which governs least”. Basically stating that the government should only control so little because society acts on their own will, but the government is there to prevent civilians from making unethical or corrupt decisions when necessary.

* **Thoreau suggests that "We should be men first, and subjects afterward." What is the difference between the two? Why do you think Thoreau makes this suggestion?**

Thoreau suggests “we should be men first, and subjects afterward” because he discusses his thoughts on men having conscience and how we have the freedom to act upon what we believe is right. He believes that men will act upon what they believe is right and talks about “a corporation has no conscience, but a corporation of conscientious men is a corporation with a conscience”. He believes that with this conscious, men will act accordingly from right and wrong and will make the best decisions.

* **Do you think Thoreau looks down on soldiers, captains, generals, etc? Support your answer with textual evidence (from what he actually says in his essay).**

Yes, he looks down on them. He looks down on them because they lack the freedom to act upon their own decisions and are there to be “machines” to the government. He sees them merely as “machines” and that soldiers get “no more respect than men of straw or a lump of dirt”. He believes that these men are sacrificing their “humanity” and that no one should have to do that.

* **What examples does he cite of conscientious men that were made the enemies of society (but were later vindicated and are now held in high esteem)?**

Christ, Copernicus, Luther, Washington, and Franklin are all men that he cites that were “crucified” at first or “rebels”. These men were made “enemies” but today are held high by many individuals.

* **How does Thoreau exercise "civil disobedience"? What happens as a result? Does his action fit in with your view of active citizenship? What else would you have done if you were in his shoes during his time period?**

He exercises civil disobedience through stating his opinions and meanings on government and the impact they have when they are too involved. He truly believed the importance of individuality as well as self-reliance of the people. He was passionate about practicing this in his own life spending a night in jail for refusing to pay a tax. I believe that the night he spent in jail he saw things differently and chose to write this piece. He explains, “I saw that the State was half witted, that is was timid as a lone woman with her silver spoons, and that is did not knows its friends from its foes, and I lost all my remaining respect for it, and pitied it.” I would have done the same thing because he showed action to what he believed. Although there were consequences for him, he voiced his opinion and stood up and did not pay the tax. This does fit with my view of active citizenship because he not only voiced his opinion but knew he would be put in jail and didn’t pay it anyway to make a point.