

Introduction to Ayn Rand's *Anthem*

Who is Ayn Rand?

Born: February 2, 1905

City: St. Petersburg, Russia

According to a brief biography, found at the Ayn Rand Institute's website, Ayn Rand was a Russian- American novelist, known for works such as *The Fountainhead* and the novella *Anthem*. She studied history and philosophy at the University of Petrograd. Eventually, she left her home in Russia for the United States.



("Rand.")

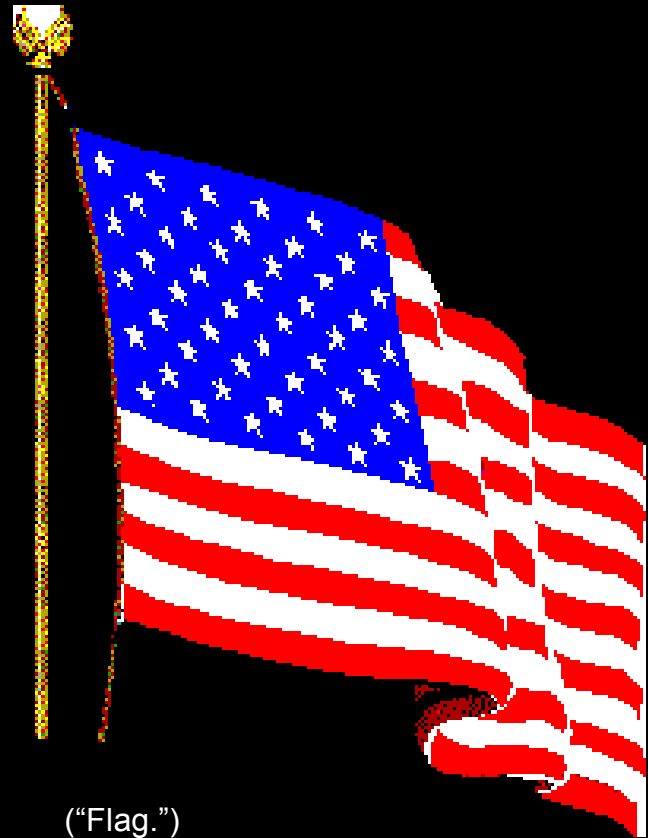
What's Going on in Russia?

Before Rand left Russia for the United States, **communism** settled in Russia ("A Brief Biography of Ayn Rand").

According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, **communism** is a government system in which goods are owned in common and are available to all as needed.

What's Going on in Russia?

Rand opposed communism heavily. She believed in the rights of the individual, and despised the collectivist society of Russia. She took America as her notion of an ideal society ("A Brief Biography of Ayn Rand").



("Flag.")

What's Going on in Russia?

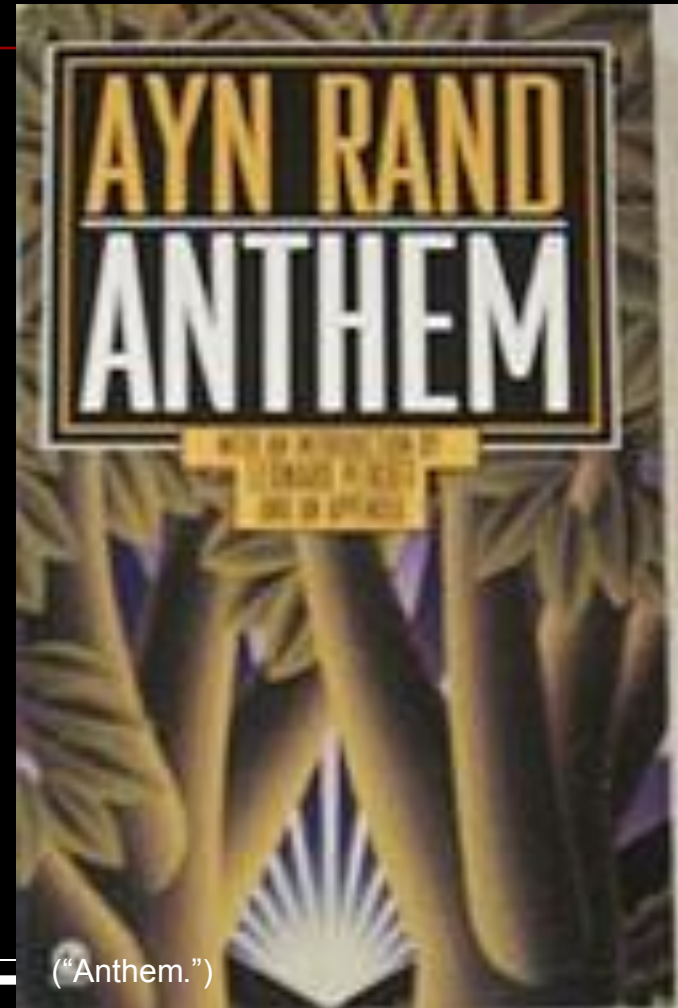
Rand's hatred of **collectivism** in Russia is what inspired her novella *Anthem* ("A Brief Biography of Ayn Rand").

According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, **collectivism** refers to an emphasis on collective rather than individual action or identity.

Anthem

Rand wrote *Anthem* in 1937, after moving to America ("A Brief Biography of Ayn Rand").

Anthem is a **novella**, meaning it is shorter and less complex than a novel, but longer and more complicated than a short story.



Anthem

Let's talk for a minute!
How does culture affect literature?



Themes Within *Anthem*

There are going to be four major themes that we discuss as we read *Anthem*:

Collectivism

Individualism

Conformity

Equality

Themes Within *Anthem*

As we already discussed, according to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, **collectivism** refers to an emphasis on collective rather than individual action or identity.

Themes Within *Anthem*

A great example of collectivism would be participating on a team. When you think of the New York Yankees, you think of a group of people, working together, for one common purpose.



Themes Within *Anthem*

We will see collectivism in *Anthem*, because the society that our main character lives in is a collectivist society.

Themes Within *Anthem*

Another theme within *Anthem* is **individualism**, which is the opposite of collectivism. Individualism focuses on individual action and identity.

Themes Within *Anthem*

Individuality is the theme of Lady Gaga's "Born This Way," and can be illustrated by part of the lyrics.

"I'm beautiful in my way,
'Cause God makes no
mistakes.

I'm on the right track, baby
I was born this way.
Don't hide yourself in
regret,
Just love yourself and
you're set.

I'm on the right track,
baby.
I was born this way."

Themes Within *Anthem*

Though *Anthem* is about a collectivist society, our main character **Equality 7-2521** decides to rise against his society and claim individuality.

Themes Within *Anthem*

The theme of **conformity** is closely related to the theme of individuality. According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, to **conform** means to be similar or identical, or to be obedient or compliant.

Themes Within *Anthem*

An example of conformity would be school uniforms.



Themes Within *Anthem*

In *Anthem*, Equality 7-2521 is expected to conform to society, but he goes against these expectations.

Themes Within *Anthem*

Equality is the final theme within *Anthem* that we will discuss. **Equality** occurs when things are like (the same) in status, quality, nature, etc.

Themes Within *Anthem*

Let's talk for a minute!

Does equality truly exist? Why or why not?



Themes Within *Anthem*

Our main character in *Anthem* is named Equality 7-2521. Before even reading this book, what might this tell us about his society? Are people in collectivist societies truly equal?

Works Cited

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