 Anthem by Ayn Rand

Resource 24

Crafting a new world

“And we know well that there is no transgression blacker than to do or think alone.”

* Consider the opening line: “It is a sin to write this”. What questions does this raise for the reader?
* By orienting the reader in this way, what relationship is being formed between the reader and the persona writing?
* Read the first two paragraphs and look at Rand’s use of pronouns. Circle or highlight them. What impact or effect does this have?
* How is a tone of oppression and restriction created in these first two paragraphs?

Reading on…

“Thus has it been ever since the Great Rebirth, and farther back than that no memory can reach.”

Rand creates a new world in Anthem. How does she use language to shape and develop this dystopic world. Consider the diction, invented lexicon, proper nouns and tone.

* How is this new world established in the opening pages of the narrative?
* Read:

But we must never speak of the times before the Great Rebirth, else we are sentenced to three years in the Palace of Corrective Detention. It is only the Old Ones who whisper about it in the evenings, in the Home of the Useless. They whisper many strange things, of the towers which rose to the sky, in those Unmentionable Times, and of the wagons which moved without horses, and of the lights which burned without flame. But those times were evil. And those times passed away, when men saw the Great Truth which is this: that all men are one and that there is no will save the will of all men together.

Consider the verb whisper. What tone does this create? How does it shape and position us as readers?

* The formality of language used in the in the narrative also helps to establish the new world presented in the story. Find examples that reflect this formal style. What do you think is the intended purpose of these language choices?
* As the narrative progresses, so does the fleshing out of the dystopic society. Where in the narrative and in what other ways do we see this world created in the text?

Character development in anthem

Still, we must also write, for — may the Council have mercy upon us! — we wish to speak for once to no ears but our own.

Rand uses her protagonist and narrative conventions to connect with the audience. We are positioned to empathise and consider the values of the context and of our society. The development of her protagonist is used to philosophically engage the reader to consider the importance of self amidst a contextually driven comment about collectivism.

Our name is Equality 7-2521,

* The character of Equality 7-2521 is on a journey of self-development. How does he see himself in the opening sections of the narrative?
* In what ways does Rand use narrative techniques to connect Equality 7-2521 to the reader?
* “We are one in all and all in one. There are no men but only the great WE, One, indivisible and forever.” How does the narrative told in the collective first person impact the representation of the world in which Equality 7-2521 lives?
* Compare and contrast the beginning and the end of the story. How does it reflect the development of the character? Look at quotes such as:
  + We would accept our Life Mandate, and we would work for our brothers, gladly and willingly, and we would erase our sin against them, which they did not know, but we knew. - Chapter 1
  + Still, without reason, as we stood there by the hedge, we felt our lips drawn tight with hatred, a sudden hatred for all our brother men. Chapter 2
  + “So let us choose our names. I have read of a man who lived many thousands of years ago, and of all the names in these books, his is the one I wish to bear. He took the light of the gods and brought it to men, and he taught men to be gods. And he suffered for his deed as all bearers of light must suffer. His name was Prometheus.” Chapter 12
  + Here, on this mountain, I and my sons and my chosen friends shall build our new land and our fort. And it will become as the heart of the earth, lost and hidden at first, but beating, beating louder each day. And word of it will reach every corner of the earth. And the roads of the world will become as veins which will carry the best of the world’s blood to my threshold. And all my brothers, and the Councils of my brothers, will hear of it, but they will be impotent against me. And the day will come when I shall break the chains of the earth, and raze the cities of the enslaved, and my home will become the capital of a world where each man will be free to exist for his own sake. Chapter 12
* How does the narrative structure help us emotionally connect with the characters and their evolution? In what ways do you feel a connection to the characters in the narrative?
* The narrative structure of the story often sees each chapter beginning with the character stating where he is and then goes on to recount what has happened. How does this journal form impact the story and our connection with Equality 7-2521?
* How does the discovery of the light bulb align with the character development of Equality 7-2521?
* A narrative tool used by Rand to build characterisation is her choice of names. In what ways are the names given to the citizens ironic? What does Equality 7-2521 and Liberty 5-3000’s changing of their names highlight about their progression. In what ways do these new names represent their new-found identity?
* We can see that Ayn Rand’s Anthem falls into one of the seven story archetypes: The Quest. Research Joseph Campbell’s The Hero’s Journey, identify the integral stages of the quest and map the stages of Equality 7-2521’s journey.

Allusion and symbolism in anthem: using other narratives to build a new one

“I stand here on the summit of the mountain.”

Allusion:

Rand uses the conventions of narrative to build and enhance the central ideas of her speculative story.

* What parallels can be drawn from Plato’s allegory of the cave and the world of Anthem. Complete the following table:

| Element of Plato’s Cave | Link in Anthem |
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* Can you identify other narratives that may also draw on the ideas of Plato’s narrative explanation about reality?
* Can we see the ideas of Plato’s allegory in the modern world? Think about what the ‘shadows’ might be in modern society.
* Read:

“My dearest one, it is not proper for men to be without names. There was a time when each man had a name of his own to distinguish him from all other men. So let us choose our names.”

Consider the selection of names made by Equality 7-2521 for himself and the Golden One in the beginning of chapter 12.

Who are Prometheus and Gaea?

* What conclusions do you think Rand wants us to make by using these allusions?
* What power do these allusions have in developing the central ideas of the narrative?

Symbolism:

* How does Rand use the setting of the Uncharted Forest symbolically?

“And beyond the City there lies the plain, and beyond the plain, black upon the black sky, there lies the Uncharted Forest. We do not wish to look upon the Uncharted Forest. We do not wish to think of it. But ever do our eyes return to that black patch upon the sky. Men never enter the Uncharted Forest, for there is no power to explore it and no path to lead among its ancient trees which stand as guards of fearful secrets. It is whispered that once or twice in a hundred years, one among the men of the City escape alone and run to the Uncharted Forest, without call or reason. These men do not return.”

Where else is it spoken about and what role does it play?

* Consider the imagery of water and Liberty 5-3000. Where are these links made and what impact is this the symbolism supposed to have?

Context and anthem

“We are one in all and all in one. There are no men but only the great WE, One, indivisible and forever.”

At its core, Anthem is narrative that speaks beyond the experiences of Equality 7-2521 to a broader contextual issue. Rand wrote Anthem in 1938. Living in both Russia and America, her context heavily influenced by her experiences of communism and the outplaying of this. Further information about Ayn Rand and her philosophy of objectivism can be found at [the atlas society](https://atlassociety.org/): https://atlassociety.org/

* Find quotes that highlight aspects of the government and its control over society in the story. Draw parallels between communism and the experiences of those in Russia to those experienced in the narrative.
* How has Rand use her narrative to speak to those outside of her context?
* How might this narrative have been received at its time of publishing?
* In what ways can the ideas of the narrative be translated to the context in which we live?
* Originally Rand titled the story ‘Ego’. How might this have changed a response to the narrative?
* Consider the actual title; Anthem. What is an anthem? Why has she chosen this as the title? How does it reflect what the intentions of the narrative?
* Consider one of the final lines of the narrative: “For the coming of that day shall I fight, I and my sons and my chosen friends. For the freedom of Man. For his rights. For his life. For his honor.” How are the ideas of the title reflected in the closing lines?

Ideas and anthem

“I am. I think. I will.”

Idea explored in Anthem:

| Example | Technique | Effect/Analysis | Link to Rand’s context | Link to our own context |
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