

## Lesson 7

## READ THIS STORY #2, Advanced

## Henry Thoreau

There have always been Americans who have marched to the beat of a different drummer. One of those was Henry David Thoreau. He was a naturalist and author who urged his readers to live a simple life.

If he had lived in the late twentieth century, the FBI might have created a large file on Thoreau. He was first jailed for refusing to pay a tax that supported the Mexican-American War.

Thoreau is most famous for his essay entitled “Civil Disobedience.” Civil Disobedience is refusing to comply with a government policy or law if it goes against your conscience. But anyone who refuses to obey a law that he considers to be morally wrong must be willing to accept the consequences of his action. Thoreau was frequently jailed for his actions.

One of the most successful leaders who also promoted Civil Disobedience in the United States was Martin Luther King. In defending his actions, he wrote his now famous “Letter from a Birmingham Jail.”

To raise the awareness about unfair laws or policies, people following the principles of Civil Disobedience may hold demonstrations, distribute petitions, or participate in protest marches. Sometimes these non-violent confrontations get out of hand and become violent.

Thank goodness there are people willing to stand up for their beliefs, and encourage the rest of us to vote to change unjust laws.