***Anthem* Reading Guide**

Do this reading guide on your own piece of paper; each part should be on a separate piece of paper. Write in pen or type your answers.

Part 1 Background: *Anthem*, by Ayn Rand, is considered a dystopian or anti-utopian novel. Read the following definitions before you start reading the novel.

According to *Merriam-Webster*, a **dystopia** is “an imaginary place where people are unhappy and usually afraid because they are not treated fairly.” In this imaginary place, “people lead dehumanized and often fearful lives.”

According to Dr. Michael S. Berliner, the director of the Ayn Rand Institute, an **anti-utopia** is “the world presented […] as it should not be.”\*

**Collectivism vs. Individualism**

“The principal political issue in Anthem—and in society at large—is the issue of individualism vs. collectivism. The society depicted in Anthem is a collectivist society. ‘Collectivism,’ Ayn Rand wrote, ‘means the subjugation of the individual to the group—whether to a race, class or state does not matter.’ In such a society, the individual is owned by the group; he has no right to a private existence, which means no right to lead his own life, pursue his own happiness or use his own property. The individual exists only as part of the group, and his worth is determined by his service to the group.

The alternative to collectivism is individualism, the view advocated by Ayn Rand. ‘Individualism,’ she wrote, ‘regards man—every man—as an independent, sovereign entity who possesses an inalienable right to his own life, a right derived from his nature as a rational being.’ Individualism does not mean that one can do whatever he feels like doing; it means that every man is an individual and has the same rights. ‘An individualist is a man who says: “I will not run anyone’s life—nor let anyone run mine. I will not rule or be ruled. I will not be a master nor a slave. I will not sacrifice myself to

anyone—nor sacrifice anyone to myself”’” (Berliner).\*

**Structure and Logistics**

*Anthem* is narrated by Equality 7-2521, the novel’s main character. He is a first person narrator, but because he is a part of a society that values the group over the individual and subjugates the good of the individual to the needs and promotion of the group, he refers to himself with second person plural pronouns (we, us, etc.) rather than the first person pronouns (I, me, my, etc.) of a typical first person narrator. He believes so completely in collectivism that he cannot even refer to himself as an individual but rather as a part of the larger group.

Part 2 Response Questions: For each set of chapters, you will be responding to a question that asks you to recall details from the novel, explain why things in the novel are the way that they are, and then make a connection to the world today. These responses must be written in **paragraph form** and must reference specific examples from the novel and from your own experiences/knowledge.

*Chapter I*: Equality 72521 was taught as a child to recite a pledge which states: "We are nothing. Mankind is all. By the grace of our brothers are we allowed our lives. We exist through, by, and for our brothers who are the state. Amen” (Rand 21). What do you think happens to the personality and sense of individuality in a child when he is taught that he is "nothing?" How do the people in this story seem to feel about their lives? How is Equality 72521 different from the others?

*Chapter II*: Equality 72521 suddenly found that he was happy to be alive. Why? How does being happy improve a person’s overall quality of life?

*Chapters III-VI*: Equality 72521 first experiences a sense of accomplishment and pride. How do we know that he is proud of his invention? Why was he excited about this? Have you ever created something of which you were proud? Tell about it.

*Chapters VII-VIII*: Describe Equality 72521's first day in the Uncharted forest. What was his reaction when he saw his reflection for the first time? How is his own face different from the faces of his brothers? Explain why you think he looked different from the others in his society.

*Chapters IX-XII*: Discuss the use of the word "we" in this book. Do you think it is harmful for men to be treated as if they are not individuals, but instead just a part of a group? Explain.

Part 3 Characters

1. Briefly describe the following characters:

* Equality 7-2521
* International 4-8818
* Liberty 5-300

2. Write a paragraph about how Equality 7-2521 changes as a character over the course

of the novel. Be sure to use and cite specific details from the novel.

Part 4 Literary Elements: Write at least a paragraph about each of the following literary elements.

1. Identify Rand’s use of irony throughout the novel.

2. Explain the symbolism of the lightbulb.

The reading guide is due at the beginning of class on **Friday, February 26**.

*\*These definitions are taken from A Teacher’s Guide to the Signet Edition of Ayn Rand’s Anthem.*