

Civil Disobedience

Henry David Thoreau

Why does Thoreau move from 'governs not at all' to asking immediately for a better government?

TOTAL TIME

PASSAGE

30 minutes	Least government becomes better government
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FIND THE ANCHOR TEXT

Use the Anchor Text Table of Contents in the Enhanced Reader to open the START anchor. Then use the dropdown to select the END anchor.

SECTION / LOCATION	Essay - opening paragraphs
START	I heartily accept the motto,—“That government is best which governs least;”
END	Let every man make known what kind of government would command his respect
PASSAGE ID	sec-cd-01

THE MOVE

Qualify a provocative principle before it becomes a slogan

WHY THIS PASSAGE

Thoreau opens with a radical-sounding principle about government disappearing, but immediately redirects the argument toward better government rather than simple absence. The qualification prevents the motto from functioning as an easy slogan.

MARK

Underline the two mottos about governing least and governing not at all. Circle the later demand for a government worthy of respect. Star the sentence that keeps the opening principle from becoming a simple call for no government.

NOTICE

- What is provocative about the opening motto?
- What practical political demand follows it?
- How does qualification change the difference between a principle and a slogan?

THINK

Answer provisionally: Why does Thoreau move from 'governs not at all' to asking immediately for a better government? Choose the strongest interpretation you can defend from this passage alone.

WRITE

Write a short evidence-based response to: Why does Thoreau move from 'governs not at all' to asking immediately for a better government? Use at least two details from the assigned passage and explain how they support your interpretation.

CLOSE

Name the single detail that most changed or sharpened your interpretation, and explain why.

STRONG ANSWER	Thoreau qualifies the radical slogan because his real demand is not simply absence of government but a government worthy of moral respect. The qualification prevents a provocative principle from becoming a simplistic program.
EVIDENCE	Use the two governing mottos and the later call for 'better government.'
WATCH FOR	Do not quote 'governs not at all' as if it were the entire argument. Follow what Thoreau says immediately afterward.
SOLO	Read the exact passage independently.
SUPPORTED	Use narration and sentence highlighting while reading the same passage.
LISTENING	Listen to the exact passage; visual following is optional. Same question and evidence demand.

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START ANCHOR	I heartily accept the motto,—“That government is best which governs least;”
END ANCHOR	Let every man make known what kind of government would command his respect

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OPEN THE MARKED PASSAGE IN TUMBLELIT

SOLO: read independently. SUPPORTED: use narration + highlighting. LISTENING: listen to the exact passage. The question and evidence task stay the same.

1. **MARK** - Underline the two mottos about governing least and governing not at all. Circle the later demand for a government worthy of respect. Star the sentence that keeps the opening principle from becoming a simple call for no government.
2. **NOTICE** - What is provocative about the opening motto? What practical political demand follows it? How does qualification change the difference between a principle and a slogan?
3. **THINK** - Answer provisionally: Why does Thoreau move from 'governs not at all' to asking immediately for a better government?
4. **WRITE** - Write a short response using at least two pieces of evidence from this passage.

Use evidence from the assigned passage. Show what you noticed and how the text supports your interpretation.