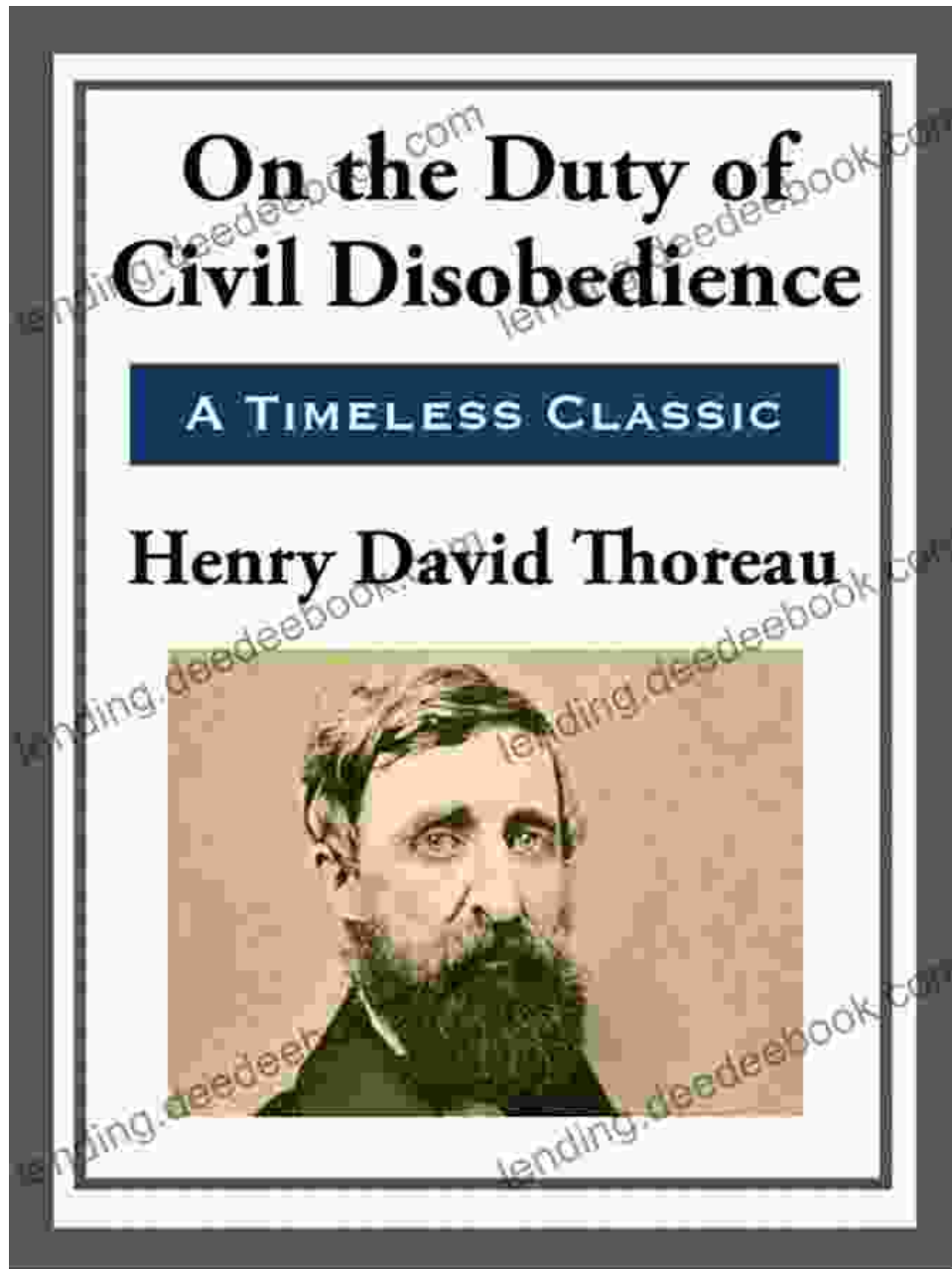


# On the Duty of Civil Disobedience: An American Literary Classic



**On the Duty of Civil Disobedience (An American Litary Classic)** by Henry David Thoreau

★★★★☆ 4.6 out of 5

Language : English

File size	: 1211 KB
Text-to-Speech	: Enabled
Screen Reader	: Supported
Enhanced typesetting	: Enabled
Word Wise	: Enabled
Print length	: 48 pages



Published in 1849, Henry David Thoreau's essay "On the Duty of Civil Disobedience" has become a foundational text in American literature, political philosophy, and social activism. In this influential work, Thoreau argues that individuals have a moral obligation to disobey unjust laws that violate their conscience.

## **Historical Context**

Thoreau's essay was written during a period of heightened tension between the United States and Mexico, with the Mexican-American War raging in the background. Thoreau was a staunch abolitionist who opposed the war and the Fugitive Slave Law, which required free states to assist in the capture and return of escaped slaves to their owners.

Thoreau's refusal to pay taxes in protest of these unjust laws led to his arrest and imprisonment. While in jail, he penned the essay "On the Duty of Civil Disobedience," which further developed his philosophical arguments against government oppression.

## **Philosophical Arguments**

Thoreau's essay presents a powerful case for civil disobedience based on individual conscience and the inherent rights of the individual.

## **Individual Conscience**

Thoreau argues that individuals have a moral duty to obey their own conscience, even when it conflicts with the law. He writes, "If a law is of such a nature that it requires you to violate your own conscience and to become a slave, then it is not your duty to obey it."

## **Government Oppression**

Thoreau also argues that governments have a responsibility to respect the rights and freedoms of their citizens. When a government becomes oppressive and violates the individual's conscience, it loses its legitimacy and the people have a right to resist it.

## **Nonviolent Resistance**

Thoreau advocates for nonviolent resistance as the most effective and morally justifiable form of civil disobedience. He believes that confronting unjust laws with violence only perpetuates a cycle of violence and oppression.

## **Legacy and Impact**

"On the Duty of Civil Disobedience" has had a profound impact on American thought and activism.

## **Influence on Social Movements**

The essay has been instrumental in inspiring social movements throughout history, including the abolitionist movement, the civil rights movement, and

the anti-war movement. Leaders such as Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr., and Nelson Mandela have cited Thoreau's ideas as a source of inspiration in their nonviolent resistance campaigns.

## **Ongoing Debate and Relevance**

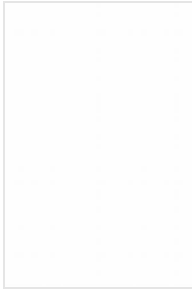
The debate sparked by Thoreau's essay continues to this day, with ongoing discussions about the limits of civil disobedience, the balance between individual conscience and collective responsibility, and the role of nonviolence in political change.

Henry David Thoreau's "On the Duty of Civil Disobedience" remains a powerful and thought-provoking work that challenges us to question the legitimacy of unjust laws, embrace our individual conscience, and work towards a more just and equitable society.

## **References**

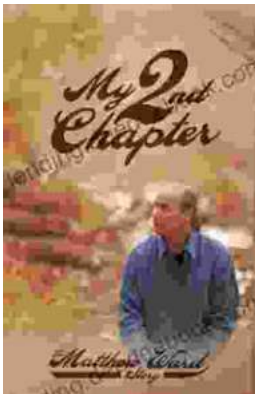
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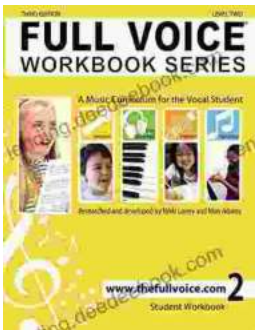
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