

# ANTHEM • Read More



The story of *Anthem* was initially conceived by Ayn Rand in the early 1920s as a play.

In 1937 Ayn Rand was doing architectural research for her novel *The Fountainhead* “but there was no writing I could do yet, and I had to take time off once in a while to write something. So I wrote *Anthem* that summer of 1937.”

Originally published in England, it was dismissed by publishers in the United States (“the author doesn’t understand socialism”). It was finally published in pamphlet form in 1945, then in 1961 by New American Library as a mass-market paperback.

*Anthem* has now sold 2.5 million copies and continues to sell more than 60,000 copies every year.

*Anthem* (1946), a novelette in the form of a prose poem, depicts a grim world of the future that is totally collectivized. Technologically primitive, it is a world in which candles are the very latest advance. From birth to death, men’s lives are directed for them by the State. At Palaces of Mating the State enacts its eugenics program; once born and schooled, people are assigned jobs they dare not refuse, toiling in the fields until they are consigned to the Home of the Useless.

This is a world in which men live and die for the sake of the State. The State is all, the individual is nothing. It is a world in which the word “I” has vanished from the language, replaced by “We.” For the sin of speaking the unspeakable “I,” men are put to death.

Equality 7-2521, however, rebels.

Though assigned to the life work of street sweeper by the rulers who resent his brilliant, inquisitive mind, he secretly becomes a scientist.

Enduring the threat of torture and imprisonment, he continues in his quest for knowledge and ultimately rediscovers electric light. But when he shares it with the Council of Scholars, he is denounced for the sin of thinking what no other men think. He runs for his life, escaping to the uncharted forest beyond the city’s edge. There, with his beloved, he begins a more intense sequence of discoveries, both personal and intellectual, that help him break free from the collectivist State’s brutal morality of sacrifice. He learns that man’s greatest moral duty is the pursuit of his own happiness. He discovers and speaks the sacred word: I.

*Anthem*’s theme is the meaning and glory of man’s ego.