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Passage 1, Questions 1-7. Read the following passage from *Civil Disobedience*, by Henry David Thoreau, carefully before you choose your answers.

- I heartily accept the motto, "That government is best which governs least"; and I should like to see it acted up to more rapidly and systematically. Carried out, it finally amounts to this, which also I believe—"That government is best which governs not at all"; and when men are prepared for it, that will be the kind of
- 5 government which they will have. Government is at best but an expedient; but most governments are usually, and all governments are sometimes, inexpedient. The objections which have been brought against a standing army, and they are many and weighty, and deserve to prevail, may also at last be brought against a standing government. The standing army is only an arm of the standing government. The
- 10 government itself, which is only the mode which the people have chosen to execute their will, is equally liable to be abused and perverted before the people can act through it. Witness the present Mexican war, the work of comparatively a few individuals using the standing government as their tool; for in the outset, the people would not have consented to this measure.
- 15 This American government—what is it but a tradition, though a recent one, endeavoring to transmit itself unimpaired to posterity, but each instant losing some of its integrity? It has not the vitality and force of a single living man; for a single man can bend it to his will. It is a sort of wooden gun to the people themselves. But it is not the less necessary for this; for the people must have some complicated
- 20 machinery or other, and hear its din, to satisfy that idea of government which they have. Governments show thus how successfully men can be imposed upon, even impose on themselves, for their own advantage. It is excellent, we must all allow. Yet this government never of itself furthered any enterprise, but by the alacrity with which it got out of its way. It does not keep the country free. It does not settle the
- 25 West. It does not educate. The character inherent in the American people has done all that has been accomplished; and it would have done somewhat more, if the government had not sometimes got in its way. For government is an expedient, by which men would fain succeed in letting one another alone; and, as has been said, when it is most expedient, the governed are most let alone by it. Trade and
- 30 commerce, if they were not made of india-rubber, would never manage to bounce over obstacles which legislators are continually putting in their way; and if one were to judge these men wholly by the effects of their actions and not partly by their intentions, they would deserve to be classed and punished with those mischievous persons who put obstructions on the railroads.
- 35 But, to speak practically and as a citizen, unlike those who call themselves no-government men, I ask for, not at once no government, but at once a better government. Let every man make known what kind of government would command his respect, and that will be one step toward obtaining it.
- After all, the practical reason why, when the power is once in the hands of the
- 40 people, a majority are permitted, and for a long period continue, to rule is not because they are most likely to be in the right, nor because this seems fairest to the minority, but because they are physically the strongest.
- But a government in which the majority rule in all cases can not be based on justice, even as far as men understand it. Can there not be a government in which
- 45 the majorities do not virtually decide right and wrong, but conscience?—in which majorities decide only those questions to which the rule of expediency is applicable? Must the citizen ever for a moment, or in the least degree, resign his conscience to the legislator? Why has every man a conscience then? I think that we should be men first, and subjects afterward. It is not desirable to cultivate a respect
- 50 for the law, so much as for the right. The only obligation which I have a right to assume is to do at any time what I think right. It is truly enough said that a corporation has no conscience; but a corporation of conscientious men is a corporation with a conscience. Law never made men a whit more just; and, by

means of their respect for it, even the well-disposed are daily made the agents on
 55 injustice. A common and natural result of an undue respect for the law is, that you may see a file of soldiers, colonel, captain, corporal, privates, powder-monkeys, and all, marching in admirable order over hill and dale to the wars, against their wills, ay, against their common sense and consciences, which makes it very steep marching indeed, and produces a palpitation of the heart. They have no doubt that it
 60 is a damnable business in which they are concerned; they are all peaceably inclined. Now, what are they? Men at all? or small movable forts and magazines, at the service of some unscrupulous man in power? Visit the Navy Yard, and behold a marine, such a man as an American government can make, or such as it can make a man with its black arts—a mere shadow and reminiscence of humanity, a man laid
 65 out alive and standing, and already, as one may say, buried under arms with funeral accompaniment, though it may be,

“Not a drum was heard, not a funeral note,
 As his corse to the rampart we hurried;
 70 Not a soldier discharged his farewell shot
 O'er the grave where our hero was buried.”

The mass of men serve the state thus, not as men mainly, but as machines, with
 75 their bodies. They are the standing army, and the militia, jailers, constables, posse comitatus, etc. In most cases there is no free exercise whatever of the judgement or of the moral sense; but they put themselves on a level with wood and earth and stones; and wooden men can perhaps be manufactured that will serve the purpose as well. Such command no more respect than men of straw or a lump of dirt. They have the same sort of worth only as horses and dogs. Yet such as these even are
 80 commonly esteemed good citizens. Others—as most legislators, politicians, lawyers, ministers, and office-holders—serve the state chiefly with their heads; and, as they rarely make any moral distinctions, they are as likely to serve the devil, without intending it, as God. A very few—as heroes, patriots, martyrs, reformers in the great sense, and men—serve the state with their consciences also, and so
 85 necessarily resist it for the most part; and they are commonly treated as enemies by it.

1. In lines 3-4, the author describes the ideal government by means of a(n)

- (A) adage
- (B) paradox
- (C) metaphor
- (D) truism
- (E) oxymoron

2. The parallelism in lines 24-25 serves to emphasize

- (A) the author’s bitterness
- (B) the harm done by the government
- (C) the folly of an opposing viewpoint
- (D) the ineffectualness of the government
- (E) the important work to be done in the country

3. In line 32, “these men” is best understood to refer to
 - (A) “the governed” (line 29)
 - (B) those who work in “Trade” (line 29)
 - (C) those who work in “commerce” (line 30)
 - (D) “legislators” (line 31)
 - (E) “those mischievous persons” (lines 33-34)
4. The author’s rhetorical purpose in the third paragraph (beginning in line 35) is most likely to
 - (A) contradict something he said earlier
 - (B) repeat what he said in the previous paragraph
 - (C) add a qualification to his earlier statements
 - (D) align himself with those who favor a strong government
 - (E) assure his readers that he would not encourage law-breaking
5. The effect of the word “subjects” (line 49) is to
 - (A) highlight the danger of blindly following “the legislator”
 - (B) support his assertion that many legislators are intent on harm
 - (C) remind readers that America has not been independent for very long
 - (D) raise the concern that Americans face a threat from other nations
 - (E) inject a note of humor into an otherwise serious essay
6. In the last two paragraphs, the images combine to emphasize the government’s tendency to
 - (A) prevaricate about its intentions
 - (B) dehumanizing those who are governed
 - (C) exaggerate the dangers to the citizenry
 - (D) overreach in its authority
 - (E) assume authority it does not legally possess
7. In the final sentence, the author implies that
 - (A) one must be willing to die for one’s beliefs
 - (B) true heroes see the state as an enemy
 - (C) moral distinctions are best left to the state
 - (D) only men can be “reformers in the great sense”
 - (E) the government is usually wrong

ANSWER EXPLANATIONS
PASSAGE 1

1. **(B) paradox.** It is a paradox, or seeming contradiction, that the “best” government would be one that did not do what it was designed to do—govern. Like all paradoxes, this one has a truth beneath it, at least from Thoreau’s point of view. Thoreau believes true governing should be left to individual men with individual consciences rather than to an impersonal “government.”
2. **(D) the ineffectualness of the government.** Thoreau asserts that government never accomplished anything except by getting out of the way and letting people (“men”) act. The parallelism emphasizes how much government, in fact, does *not* do: “It does not keep the country free [men do]. It does not settle the West [men do]. It does not educate [men do].”
3. **(D) “legislators” (line 31).** Thoreau says that men in trade and commerce have to virtually bounce like rubber balls to avoid the obstacles “legislators are continually putting in their way.” He further says that if one did not take into account that the legislators likely have no ill intentions, “these men” (legislators) would deserve to be “classed and punished” alongside people who put physical obstacles on a railroad track in order to derail a train.
4. **(C) add a qualification to his earlier statements.** After painting the government as not only ineffectual but downright dangerous in the first two paragraphs, Thoreau adds the qualification that as “a citizen” he is not advocating no government at all, but “a better government” that combines the attributes people really desire. He is not contradicting himself—just explaining that his anti-government rhetoric does not mean he wants anarchy.
5. **(A) highlight the danger of blindly following “the legislator.”** Thoreau warns against resigning one’s conscience to a legislator. In allowing the legislator to make decisions for him, a man ceases to be a man and becomes a “subject.” The connotations of this word suggest subservience to an all-powerful monarch, reminiscent of the days before the American Revolution.
6. **(B) dehumanizing those who are governed.** In these paragraphs, Thoreau employs image upon image of men becoming less than human because they blindly obey the government. He refers to soldiers as “small movable forts and magazines” and to marines as “a mere shadow and reminiscence of humanity.” Those who serve the state are “machines . . . on a level with wood and earth and stones . . . wooden men” who are “manufactured.” He says these men “command no more respect than men of straw or a lump of dirt. They have the same sort of worth only as horses and dogs.”
7. **(E) the government is usually wrong.** Thoreau says that men worthy of admiration “serve the state with their consciences,” not just with their heads. Therefore, he says, these men find it “necessary to resist it [the state] for the most part.” The clear

implication of this statement is that the government is usually wrong and so “for the most part” must be resisted.

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