

Individual Learning Packet

Teaching Unit

The Fountainhead

by Ayn Rand

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Objectives

By the end of this unit, the student will be able to:

1. define objectivism and explain whether he or she subscribes to it as a belief system.
2. decide which character he or she most identifies with: Dominique, Keating, Roark, Wynand, Toohey, Steven Mallory, or Katie.
3. explain which character is the most common type of person in American society today.
4. determine how Ayn Rand feels about socialism and capitalism.
5. describe how Rand feels about the influence of religion on the modern world.
6. explain how Rand feels about the guilt complex or altruism.
7. describe the economic, philosophical, political, and social viewpoints Rand expresses.
8. understand how Rand feels about religion in America.
9. define and cite examples of the following literary terms: narrator; point of view
10. explain the significance of the title of the book
11. demonstrate how imagery plays a central role in characterization
12. define and give examples of dramatic, situational, and verbal irony in the novel
13. analyze character dialogue and provide opinions as to authorial beliefs and ideas expressed in that dialogue
14. evaluate *The Fountainhead* on the basis of realism
15. identify and explain flaws and benefits of objectivist thinking
16. discuss how obesity and alcohol consumption are used to connote character flaws

The Fountainhead

Study Guide Teacher's Copy

All references come from the Signet Fiction Edition of *The Fountainhead* copyright, 1943.

Part One: Peter Keating

Chapter 1

Vocabulary

gargoyle - grotesque animal-shaped waterspout

indomitable - unconquerable

latitude - freedom of action or choice

1. When Roark explains his views that he does not want to follow traditional architecture to the Dean, what does the Dean first mistake as the cause for his beliefs?

Youthful idealism. The Dean asks him how old he is, and seems relieved when Roark answers "22." (Pg. 25) The Dean seems to believe that Roark is being youthfully idealistic when he says that he wants to create his own era and spend his life doing something he enjoys rather than simply copying the traditional styles. Roark's view of life is very rare, because he is so confident of his ideals of perfect architecture he refuses to compromise, even for the possibility of staying at Stanton. As Rand would say, he refuses to "sell out" like most people would in his situation.

2. What does the Dean mean when he says "an architect is not an end in himself. He is only a small part of a great social whole"? (Pg. 26)

The Dean is referring to a common sentiment in today's society that mankind is a cooperative society. In other words, no man has a value for anything he could do alone, but his value lies in the utility his skill has in the world's economy. Does he help the world go around? If so, then he is a spoke in the wheel, and keeps things moving, but is not important individually. Roark disagrees with his, and believes that he individually should be recognized as an important contributor.

3. What is the metaphorical meaning of the description of the initial scene?

The images suggest a paradoxical combination of powerful movement and paralysis. There is a "frozen explosion," the "stillness of one brief moment in battle when thrust meets thrust...in a pause more dynamic than motion." This paradox is heightened by the supposition that the world is "suspended in space, an island floating on nothing" (Pg. 15) This is, of course, the paradox of Howard Roark—talent and energy held motionless by forces that he is not willing to appease. A naked Howard Roark foreshadows the candid, honest Roark that is expelled from architectural school and seeks employment with his idol—even though his idol is penniless.

4. How is Howard's reaction to his surroundings in the initial scene evocative of the Objectivist view of man's place in the universe?

"These rocks,' [Howard thinks] 'are here for me, waiting for the drill, the dynamite and my voice..." (Pg. 16) The Objectivist worldview is centered on human desire and possibility and sees the rest of the physical universe as means to those ends.

5. How is the description of the old Stanton church an expression of the Objectivist view of religion?

The church has "wooden buttresses supporting nothing" and "traceries of imitation stone" (Pg. 16) The objectivist thinker sees religion as an empty construction seeking to provide explanations that simply do not exist—this emptiness is echoes in the literally empty building and the affectively empty integrity of the false masonry.

6. How does Howard Roark's architectural vision differ from that of his peers?

Whereas Roark's peers and fellow students have been trained to mimic older forms, particularly classical forms, in architecture, Roark has an inner vision that his drawings follow. It differs wildly from the vision his instructors would have him see.

7. What is the author's purpose in having the dean of Roark's architectural school referring to his teaching methods as part of a "sacred tradition"? (Pg. 23)

The objectivist tendency to look down on all religious impulses carries over to dogmatic architects—the use of the word "sacred" refers not to things holy, but to things kept safe from innovation by small minds.

8. What is the central tenet of Howard Roark's architectural vision?

"A building is alive, like a man. Its integrity is to follow its own truth, its one single theme, and to serve its own single purpose. A man doesn't borrow pieces of his body. A building doesn't borrow hunks of its soul. Its maker gives it the soul and every wall, window and stairway to express it." (Pg. 24) This expresses the Objectivist view that there is no central truth except human advancement.

9. What is the "important difference" that Roark discovers between himself and other men? (Pg. 27)

Roark knows that he has a "central impulse" behind his actions, but he can discern no such impulse in the actions of others (Pg. 27).

Chapter 2

Vocabulary

dadoes – the lower portion of the wall of a room, decorated differently from the upper section, as with panels.

davenport – sofa

inexorably – doomed to happen; incapable of being stopped

tenacious – tough; bounces back

utility – the service of the good of society in general, rather than the individual

1. How is Peter Keating described?

He is Peter Keating, star student of Stanton, president of the student body, captain of the track team, member of the most important fraternity, voted most popular man on campus. He assumed the crowd was there to see him graduate, and was glad there was no peer to rival him in that crowd.

2. When Peter reflects on Howard Roark during the commencement banquet, how does he feel?

He appears to feel a guilty sense of relief that Howard has been expelled from Stanton because he knows about Howard's talent for architecture, and was envious that someone might out-achieve him. Peter is a very competitive man, and he feels a bit guilty when he thinks about how Howard could easily find his way out of a problem, even though he was younger and a year behind Peter in school.

3. How does Peter's mother manipulate him into taking the job with Francon & Heyer in New York City rather than going to Paris for a degree from the Art School?

She gently reminds him that if he does not take the job with Francon, then Francon will have to offer it to his next highest competitor, Schlinker. She knows this will play off his competitiveness and make him take the job with Francon. Peter's mother is, like Peter, extremely interested in what others think of her.

4. How does Peter react when Howard tells him he is going to work for Henry Cameron?

With horror, because, although Cameron was once a well-respected architect, he is now considered crazy and never given any work. Howard is going to him simply because he wants to learn to build, and he is not impressed by the prestige of Francon's firm.

5. What is Howard Roark's belief about advice?

He believes that, if you ask advice of another, you do not really know what you want in life. This is mystifying to him, because he knows and has always known what he wants out of life.