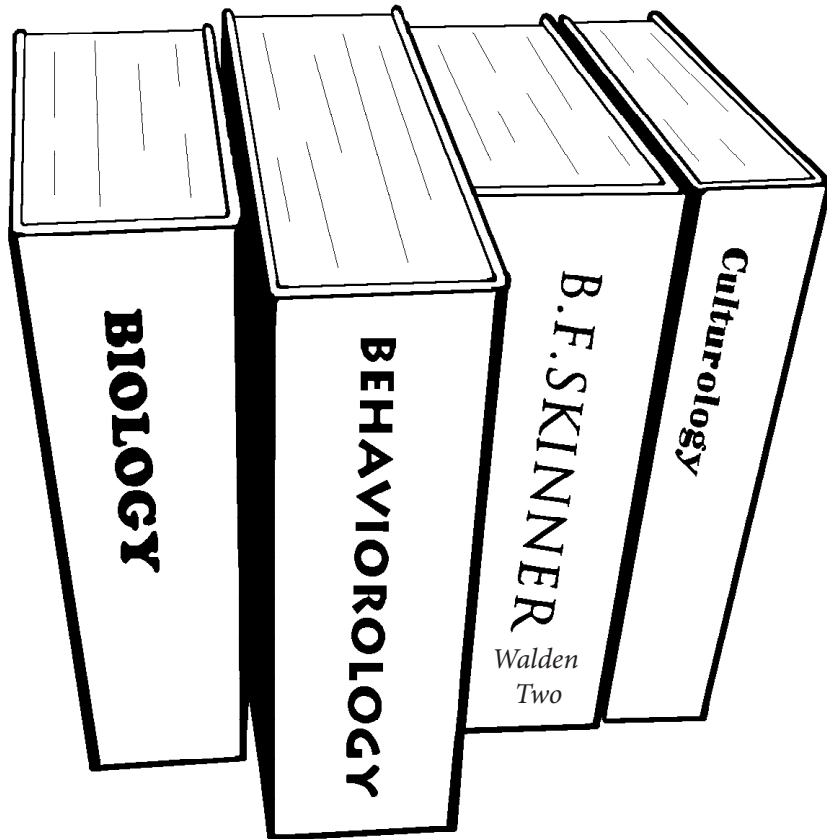


Study Questions for B. F. Skinner's *Walden Two*



Stephen F. Ledoux and ??? 1976–2012



To the Student and Teacher

About *Walden Two* and Other Books

Walden Two was first published over 60 year ago, in 1948. In the decades since then, many millions have read it, and courses from many disciplines have required it (e.g., “Utopian Analysis” in English Literature, “Utopian Analysis” in Behaviorology, and various philosophy courses). My first version of these study questions was used over 35 years ago. However, while the authorship of *Walden Two* is absolutely clear, the authorship of the current study questions is somewhat less so. Several authors have written such study aids for this novel over the years, and they have been inspired by each other’s work. Given that extensive history, the extent to which the current study questions may or may not owe a debt to the work of others cannot be specified. For that reason, these study questions are provided free of charge. (They may also be reproduced, and distributed for free, as long as *all* pages, from the cover to the last study question, are included!)

Some other points are also of particular importance for students and other readers. Firstly, these study questions presume that you are at least using the “Reissued” edition of *Walden Two*, published in soft cover in 1976; this edition, and later ones, contained “Walden Two Revisited” which was Skinner’s new introduction to the novel.

More importantly, even though working in administrative units having psychology labels, Skinner never accepted the status, as the fundamental cause of human behavior, that the psychology discipline attributed to a variety of putative, mystical, body-dwelling, behavior-initiating self-agents. Instead, he was committed both to developing a natural science of behavior, and to trying to change psychology into that natural science. (Psychology uses scientific methods but, as a discipline, it refuses to limit its considerations to natural events as independent variables and dependent variables, a limitation required for natural science disciplinary status.)

Thus, in a very real sense, Skinner was never really a “psychologist,” and when, in *Walden Two*, he uses the word “psychology” to refer to the natural science of behavior that he was exemplifying in the novel, he is referring to what today is called *behaviorology*. When he wrote *Walden Two*, the possibility may still have existed that efforts to change traditional psychology into a natural science might succeed. Since then, however, the psychology discipline has indicated a determination *not* to change in this way, which led to the separation of the developed natural science of behavior, as the behaviorology discipline, in 1987. (See the *References* for details.)

The point is that, without this information, the reader can be left thoroughly confused by Skinner’s usage of “psychology” wherever he means the natural science of behavior rather than traditional psychology. Now, the reader can reduce that confusion by thinking “behaviorology” whenever he or she comes across this usage of “psychology” in the novel.

For more details about behaviorology, see these resources:

☞ Ledoux, S. F. (2012a). Behaviorism at 100. *American Scientist*, 100 (1), 60–65.

☞ Ledoux, S. F. (2012b). Behaviorism at 100 unabridged. *Behaviorology Today*, 15 (1), 3–22.

☞ Ledoux, S. F. (2014). *Running Out of Time—Introducing Behaviorology to Help Solve Global Problems*. Ottawa, Canada: BehaveTech Publishing (ISBN 978-1-927744-02-4).

☞ Ledoux, S. F. (2015). *Origins and Components of Behaviorology—Third Edition*. Ottawa, Canada: BehaveTech Publishing (ISBN 978-1-927744-08-6).

☞ Ledoux, S. F. (2017). *What Causes Human Behavior—Stars, Selves, or Contingencies?* Ottawa, Canada: BehaveTech Publishing (ISBN 978-1-927744-14-7).

☞ www.behaviorology.org (the web site of *The International Behaviorology Institute*) where you can find details about these books along with the articles published in *Journal of Behaviorology* and its precursor *Behaviorology Today*.

Also, Dr. Lawrence Fraley has addressed some of the areas that, in his new (1976) introduction to *Walden Two*, Skinner implies are worthy of receiving attention now, rather than waiting for utopia to happen:

☞ Fraley, L. E. (2012). *Dignified Dying—A Behaviorological Thanatology*. Canton, NY: ABCs (ISBN 978-1-882508-16-7).

☞ Fraley, L. E. (2013). *Behaviorological Rehabilitation and the Criminal Justice System*. Canton, NY: ABCs (ISBN 978-1-882508-20-4).

Also, I previously addressed utopian community development; see:

☞ Ledoux, S. F. (1985.) Designing a new *Walden Two*—Inspired Community. *Communities Magazine: Journal of Cooperation*, No. 66, Spring (April), 28–32, 84.

About Using These Study Questions

These study questions focus the reader's attention on many of the particular points that surround different topics arising in various chapters of *Walden Two*. They also bring to the reader's attention various general themes and trends that crop up regularly throughout the book.

The study questions are of several kinds, and the answers to the majority of them are found directly in the book. Most questions are on the contents of particular chapters, and the numbers for such chapters appear in parentheses after the question.

Write your answers, using the same numbers as the questions' numbers, **in a separate notebook dedicated to this use**. *Phrase your answers in your own words, and write them out using complete sentences that incorporate the questions so that you will not need to look back at these questions, wondering what questions your answers answer!*

To **enjoy the book** as well as study it, read each chapter, or set of chapters, (or even the whole book) completely before trying to answer these questions.♣

Study Questions for B.F. Skinner's *Walden Two*

Study Questions for the Introduction and Chapters 1–8 (pp. v–59)

[Page and Chapter numbers are from the 1976 soft cover edition.]

Walden Two actually has a general study question related to all the more detailed ones: How are the policies of the Walden Two community portrayed as providing some scientific solutions to the problems that are otherwise present in today's society? You should continually focus on recognizing, and being able to discuss, these problems and the policies and strategies for their solution as they arise in various chapters.

You need not feel compelled to agree with the perspective of the book; indeed, given *our* culture's somewhat successful (and generally superstitious) conditioning of public and private behaviors that conflict with the conditioning in the Walden Two community, you may find yourself substantially disagreeing with the book, although perhaps only initially. In any case, you should continually take three steps while studying this novel: (1) Recognize your emotional reactions to the book's parts, regardless of whether they are favorable or unfavorable. (2) React intellectually to all the book's parts, regardless of your emotional reaction. And (3), for parts to which you object, be able to state what the author's response could be to your objection (even if you still disagree).

After noting that the layout of these study questions does *not* provide room for answers on these pages, here is a selection of some more explicitly important topics, by chapter, along with other points of information for your consideration:

1. Relate the basic plot and characters. (1)
2. What is "Walden Two" as described in the book? (2)
3. Describe the relation between cooperative housing and avoiding the common duplication of goods, spaces, appliances, etc. (3)
4. Why are separate children's quarters preferred? (3)
5. What is the "experimental attitude"? (And, why is it important?) (4)
6. How do Walden Two residents approach the issues of clothing and styles? (5)
What about the utilization of physical space (dining rooms, lounges, etc.)? (6)
7. What are the benefits of staggered work schedules in this community? (7)

8. How are the various issues surrounding work approached? For example: job selection, worker alienation, the labor credit system (how it works and the reasons for its use), productivity (how, for example, 4 hours can be as good as 8 hours), etc. (8)
9. What are the basic forms, and functions, of the various branches of the community's government, and what are people's motivations for serving. (8)
10. How is the traditional problem of brain versus brawn handled? (8)
11. Relate and comment on the preference for avoiding any unnecessary consumption of goods. (8)
12. Describe visitors' privileges and responsibilities. (8)
13. Also, what is the *author's* relationship to the Burris and Frazier characters, and what is Walden Two's purpose for using behavior engineering? †

Study Questions for Chapters 9–19 (pp. 60–145)

14. What is the role of modern technology in a planned / "intentional" / experimental community. (9)
15. Why would it be good to build your own room? (10)
16. Elaborate the benefits of less labor time leading to more leisure time (and even how this distinction itself can fade) where the result is an increase in the variety of activities available (or discoverable) for expressing personal abilities and creativity in the arts and sciences. (11)
17. Describe the Walden Two community's approach to the various aspects of child rearing (e.g., child care, aircribs, nursery temperature, and self-control). In particular, relate the benefits of multiple parents (benefits for the adults as well as for the children) as well as the benefits of careful and *gradual* ethical and emotional training *by planned design rather than by deferring to the vagaries of accident (i.e., coincidence)*. Also, explain in more general terms the importance / value of design over accident (i.e., coincidence). (12)
18. Describe the Walden Two community's educational practices, and the motivations for studying. (13)
19. What is behavior engineering and why is it important? (13)
20. In more detail now, what are the DISadvantages of accident (i.e., coincidence) and the Advantages of design? (14)

21. Describe “lollipop training.” How does it work? Why is it done? (14)
22. What is the Walden Two community’s solution to the problem of childhood disruptions (e.g., from home to school)? (15)
23. What is the Walden Two community’s approach to the changeable cultural practices surrounding these considerations: (a) marriage and child-bearing (16); (b) child rearing (12, as already covered); and (c) the family, especially the changes that remove current **disadvantages** while improving current **advantages**, including conditions that lead to childhood **security** rather than childhood **insecurity** (17 & 18).
24. Describe the steps that the Walden Two community takes to avoid the problems that contributed to the failure of earlier communities. (19)
25. Also, why do entertainment notices generate such excitement? ✂

Study Questions for Chapters 20–27 (pp. 146–226)

26. Describe “The Good Life,” Walden Two style. (20)
27. In Walden Two style, explain each of these topics or issues: (a) The use and mis-use of force (20); (b) The “Walden Code”(20); (c) Competition vs. cooperation (20); (d) “Bad behavior” and its treatment (20); (e) Joining the community (21); (f) The “Ghosts in the machine” (22); And (g) the medical facility tour (22).
28. Describe Walden Two’s similarities with, and differences from, other utopias. (23)
29. How does Walden Two relate with the government of the larger culture? (23)
30. How does Frazier view politics, public relations, religious practices, etc.? (23)
31. With indoctrination being avoided, at least within Walden Two, why do the community’s young people “choose to stay?” (24)
32. Briefly, what were the overall results of Burris’ private investigation? (25)
33. Why can’t Burris “subscribe” (yet)? (26)
34. Describe each of these considerations: (a) community fission; (b) taking in new members; (c) the office of information; and (d) internal and external politics (including the problem/ solution of control and counter-control). (27) ✂

Study Questions for Chapters 28–36 (pp. 227–301)

35. What is the “importance” of philosophy? (28)
36. (a) What is the importance of the fact that *you* are a product of a particular culture and so are heir to its still changeable practices, both good and bad? (b) How does this relate to whether you mostly like, or mostly dislike, *Walden Two* (i.e., how thoroughly have you unconditionally surrendered to *your* culture’s practices, for better or worse, etc.)? (c) Is there any reason why you should still try to change poor practices? Explain. (28)
37. *Elaborate on each of these general issues* that were described during Castle’s “final estimate” attack (29):
- ✦ The fact that behavior technology exists but, as with any science, can be used or abused; (Witness physics, and both landing people on the moon, and producing [in the name if costly electricity] hazardous nuclear waste products that will be extremely dangerous for far longer than we have been a species...)
 - ✦ The difference between freedom and the feelings of freedom (and reinforcement, and punishment);
 - ✦ Frazier’s old and confused use (on page 246) of negative reinforcement as punishment; [Note: Behaviorological research has shown that punishment is more complicated—and can be more effective but has greater risks—than is covered in this chapter.]
 - ✦ Democracy (with Walden Two exhibiting more of its virtues and less of its defects);
 - ✦ Frazier’s views on voting;
 - ✦ How planners do not become despots.
38. Describe the role of practice in the test of theory. (30)
39. What was the pigeonhole that Burriss was forced to use to classify Castle? (31)
40. What was Frazier’s strongest motive for working at Walden Two? (32)
41. Briefly elaborate on behavioral (now called behaviorological) epistemology as a (natural) science of science. (33)
42. What is love? (33)
43. What was the real meaning of the escaped–sheep episode (as opposed to Castle’s blind interpretation)? (34)
44. What does Chapter 35 add to the education issue? (35)
45. Burriss wrote his story at whose request? (36)
46. Anything else???

