

Martin Luther Student Page

Introduction:

In this lesson, you will study one of the most important documents of the Protestant Reformation. The Augustinian monk Martin Luther strongly objected to certain practices of the Catholic Church—primarily the sale of indulgences. Luther summarized his objections to this practice in a document referred to as his *95 Theses* (or “statements”). It is said that he posted this document on the church door in Wittenberg on October 31, 1517, though it is not clear whether or not this actually happened. It is true that Luther’s *95 Theses* started a quiet revolution that, in a matter of decades, profoundly altered the religious beliefs and practices of European Christians. Note—“purgatory” is a waystation for souls trapped between heaven and hell. Christians could purchase indulgences for people who were already deceased, and whose souls were presumably suffering in purgatory.

All Web links for this lesson can be found at:
<http://www.socialstudies.com/worldlinks.html>.

Directions:

The 95 Theses

<http://www.luther.de/en/95thesen.html>

Read the document, then answer the following questions:

1. According to Thesis 32, what is the fate of those who believe they will be saved due to their letters of indulgence?

2. Read Theses 36 and 37. According to Luther, what right do “truly repentant Christians” have, and in what do “true Christians” participate?

3. Read Theses 42–51. According to Luther, what are three things Christians should be taught?

4. Read Theses 82 and 86. According to Luther, what shrewd (clever) questions will the laity (ordinary people) ask? ("Crassus" [referred to in Thesis 86] was a rich Roman who lived around the time of Julius Caesar).

Martin Luther: *The Freedom of a Christian*

<http://www.wsu.edu:8080/~dee/REFORM/FREEDOM.HTM>

You do not have to read this entire document; instead, the following questions will direct you to specific paragraphs:

5. Scroll down to the paragraph that begins, "Let us examine the subject..." According to this passage, what is man's twofold nature? What does the Apostle say about this?
6. Scroll down to the paragraph that begins, "What can it profit the soul..." According to Luther, what effect does the health or behavior of the body have on the soul?
7. Scroll down to paragraph that begins, "And so it will profit nothing..." According to Luther, should the body be "adorned with sacred vestments [garments], or dwell in holy places...or pray [and] fast"? Why or why not? What effect will wearing regular clothes and eating and drinking in an ordinary fashion have on the soul?
8. Scroll down to the paragraph that begins, "And, to cast everything aside..." According to Luther, what is necessary for Christian liberty?

