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Sommario/riassunto	The distinctive American tradition of civil disobedience stretches back to pre-Revolutionary War days and has served the purposes of determined protesters ever since. This stimulating book examines the causes that have inspired civil disobedience, the justifications used to defend it, disagreements among its practitioners, and the controversies it has aroused at every turn. Tracing the origins of the notion of civil disobedience to eighteenth-century evangelicalism and republicanism, Lewis Perry discusses how the tradition took shape in the actions of black and white abolitionists and antiwar protesters in the decades leading to the Civil War, then found new expression in post-Civil War campaigns for women's equality, temperance, and labor reform.

Gaining new strength and clarity from explorations of Thoreau's essays and Gandhi's teachings, the tradition persisted through World War II, grew stronger during the decades of civil rights protest and antiwar struggles, and has been adopted more recently by anti-abortion groups, advocates of same-sex marriage, opponents of nuclear power, and many others. Perry clarifies some of the central implications of civil disobedience that have become blurred in recent times-nonviolence, respect for law, commitment to democratic processes-and throughout the book highlights the dilemmas faced by those who choose to violate laws in the name of a higher morality.
