

## A Primary Source Analysis THOMAS PAINE'S - COMMON SENSE

name:

The following paragraphs are excerpts from Thomas Paine's Common Sense.  
Use these paragraphs below to help you answer the included questions.

### Paragraphs from Common Sense

Paragraph #55 - In the following pages I offer nothing more than simple facts, plain arguments, and common sense: and have no other preliminaries to settle with the reader than that he will divest himself of prejudice and prepossession...that he will not put off, the true character of a man, and generously enlarge his views beyond the present day.

Paragraph #58 - The sun never shined on a cause of greater worth. 'Tis not the affair of a city, a county, a province, or a kingdom, but of a continent—of at least one eighth part of the habitable globe...Now is the seed time of continental union, faith and honor.

Paragraph #61 - I have heard it asserted by some that as America hath flourished under her former connection with Great Britain, that the same connection is necessary towards her future happiness, and will always have the same effect. Nothing can be more **fallacious** than this kind of argument. We may as well assert that because a child has thrived upon milk, that it is never to have meat, or that the first twenty years of our lives is to become a precedent for the next twenty...for I answer roundly that America would have flourished as much, and probably much more, had no European power had anything to do with her...

Paragraph #63-64 - ...We have boasted the protection of Great Britain without considering that her motive was interest not attachment; and that she did not protect us from our enemies on our account; but from her enemies on her own account,...it is the nearest and only true way of proving enemyship, if I may so call it. France and Spain never were, nor perhaps ever will be, our enemies as Americans, but as our being the subjects of Great Britain.

Paragraph #65 - ... But Britain is the parent country, say some. Then the more shame upon her conduct. Even brutes do not devour their young, nor savages make war upon their families; ...and the phrase parent or mother country hath been jesuitically adopted by the king and his parasites with a low papistical design of gaining an unfair bias on the credulous weakness of our minds....Hither have they [emigrants to the Americas] fled, not from the tender embraces of the mother, but from the cruelty of the monster; and it is so far true of England that the same tyranny which drove the first emigrants from home pursues their descendants still.

Paragraph #71-72 - I challenge the warmest advocate for **reconciliation** to show a single advantage that this continent can reap by being connected with Great Britain. I repeat the challenge: not a single advantage is derived....But the injuries and disadvantages we sustain by that connection are without number...the alliance...or dependence on, Great Britain, tends directly to involve this continent in European wars and quarrels, and sets us at variance with nations who would otherwise seek our friendship, and against whom we have neither anger nor complaint.

**Paragraphs from Common Sense**

Paragraph #73 - Europe is too thickly planted with kingdoms to be long at peace, and whenever a war breaks out between England and any foreign power, the trade of America goes to ruin, because of her connection with Britain... Everything that is right or natural pleads for separation. The blood of the slain, the weeping voice of nature cries, 'TIS TIME TO PART. Even the distance at which the Almighty hath placed England and America is a strong and natural proof that the authority of the one over the other was never the design of Heaven.

Paragraph #82 - As to government matters, it is not in the power of Britain to do this continent justice. The business of it will soon be too weighty and intricate to be managed, with any tolerable degree of convenience, by a power so distant from us and so very ignorant of us;...To be always running three or four thousand miles with a tale or a petition, waiting four or five months for an answer which, when obtained, requires five or six more to explain it in, will in a few years be looked upon as folly and childishness.—There was a time when it was proper, and there is a proper time for it to cease.

Paragraph #83 - Small islands not capable of protecting themselves are the proper objects for kingdoms to take under their care, but there is something absurd in supposing a continent to be **perpetually** governed by an island. In no instance hath nature made the satellite larger than its primary planet; and as England and America, with respect to each other, reverses the common order of nature, it is evident that they belong to different systems: England to Europe, America to itself.

Paragraph #86 -...No man was a warmer wisher for a **reconciliation** than myself before the fatal nineteenth of April 1775, but the moment the event of that day was made known, I rejected the hardened, sullen-tempered Pharaoh of England forever; and disdain the wretch, that with the pretended title of FATHER OF HIS PEOPLE can unfeelingly hear of their slaughter, and composedly sleep with their blood upon his soul.

Paragraph #108 - I have never met with a man, either in England or America, who hath not confessed his opinion that a separation between the countries would take place one time or other; and there is no instance in which we have shown less judgment than in endeavoring to describe what we call the ripeness or fitness of the Continent for independence.

Paragraph #134 - TO CONCLUDE, however strange it may appear to some, or however unwilling they may be to think so, matters not, but many strong and striking reasons may be given to show that nothing can settle our affairs so **expeditiously** as an open and determined declaration for independence.

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*Common Sense* was a little pamphlet with big ideas! This 47 page pamphlet was written by Thomas Paine to encourage colonists to think about becoming independent from Great Britain. Published anonymously on January 10, 1776, Paine's pamphlet became an immediate success throughout the colonies due to its easy read and common sense arguments. *Common Sense* fueled the fire for independence. Colonists were persuaded by the arguments in such a way, that they soon drafted an official Declaration of Independence a few months later on July 4, 1776. Read through the included paragraphs of Thomas Paine's *Common Sense*, to answer the following questions.

### FIND IT!

Find the numbered paragraph from *Common Sense* that best matches each summary below.

- |   | Paragraph #          |
|---|----------------------|
| 1 I wanted peace as much as anyone, but after the shots at Lexington on April 19, 1775, I recognized that the King was not a caring father of his people but an evil pharaoh who didn't mind the shedding of blood.                   | <input type="text"/> |
| 2 Our mother country Great Britain is not really a nice mother at all. She has abused her children. We are over here because we have fled from Her and yet She is still trying to control us.   | <input type="text"/> |
| 3 Throughout all of history there has never been a more important issue for an entire continent to be unified about.  | <input type="text"/> |
| 4 Give me one good reason why we should stay connected to Great Britain. I can't think of one at all. I can think of many bad reasons. One bad reason is that Great Britain pulls us into all their European struggles and wars.      | <input type="text"/> |
| 5 Some believe we have only had success because of our ties with Great Britain and that we need Her for future success. Not True! Great Britain has kept us as infants and has not allowed us to grow up to be successful on our own. | <input type="text"/> |
| 6 There are so many reasons why we need to separate. Though some may think this is crazy, the most effective and realistic way to do this is an official declaration right now. We cannot delay.                                      | <input type="text"/> |

### SUMMARIZE IT!

Similar to the short summaries above, rewrite the following paragraphs in your own words to make them more easily understandable.

- 7 Paragraph #63-64
- 8 Paragraph #82
- 9 Paragraph #83

**DEFINE IT!**

Define the following terms to help you better understand the meaning of Thomas Paine's message of *Common Sense*.

**10****FALLACIOUS** (Paragraph #61)

Definition

Synonyms

Rewrite or  
Explain Paine**11****RECONCILIATION** (Paragraph #71-72 & 86)

Definition

Synonyms

Rewrite or  
Explain Paine**12****EXPEDITIOUSLY** (Paragraph #134)

Definition

Synonyms

Rewrite or  
Explain Paine**ANSWER IT!**

Answer the following questions while looking through the paragraphs of *Common Sense*.

**13**

Read the introductory paragraph #55. Number the following summaries in order as they appear.

- \_\_\_\_\_ A. Get rid of your personal favoritisms, or one-sided opinions, and seek the truth.
- \_\_\_\_\_ B. Broaden your thoughts and think big. Consider your future.
- \_\_\_\_\_ C. I want to show you [colonists] some common sense arguments and simple facts.

**14**

If you were a loyalist, what is one argument or fear you might raise against Thomas Paine, disagreeing with his common sense?

**15**

If you were a patriot colonist reading this pamphlet in 1776, which argument/paragraph do you think is the most convincing or makes the most (common) sense? Explain your reasoning.