

Common Sense, Rights of Man, and Other Essential Writings Study Guide

Common Sense, Rights of Man, and Other Essential Writings by Thomas Paine

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Contents

[Common Sense, Rights of Man, and Other Essential Writings Study Guide.....1](#)

[Contents.....2](#)

[Plot Summary.....3](#)

[Introduction and Appendix.....5](#)

[The Crisis.....8](#)

[Rights of Man, Part I.....11](#)

[Rights of Man, Part II.....16](#)

[Age of Reason.....20](#)

[Agrarian Justice.....23](#)

[Important People.....24](#)

[Objects/Places.....28](#)

[Themes.....31](#)

[Style.....33](#)

[Quotes.....35](#)

[Topics for Discussion.....37](#)



Plot Summary

Thomas Paine is one of the loudest voices of the American Revolution. The pamphlet *Common Sense*, written by Paine, was a controversial work supporting the American colonies' separation from England, advocating the formation of a new government. The work was published anonymously, however, and Paine never received a cent from its publication or subsequent reprints. Although anonymous, it became clear to many that Paine was the author due to the nature of the content as well as Paine's own history as a pamphleteer and outspoken radical.

Common Sense is an elaborate outline of the reasons America should be separate from England. Paine views the monarchy as absurd, claiming that heredity does not prove wisdom. Also, it is impractical to attempt to rule another country that is across an ocean. News would take months to reach the other side and it would be impossible to vote on or invoke new laws that affect both places. Finally, the author shows how America would best be served in the area of commerce if it were able to operate on its own and not be hindered by being tied to England.

In *The Rights of Man*, Parts I and II, Paine addresses the American, English, and French Constitutions. The work is mainly focused on the support of the French Revolution, using the victorious American Revolution as a reference of purpose and success. Paine was in favor of the Parisians' right to form a new government that would serve the people instead of the monarchy. It was not that the Parisians hated King Louis XVI, rather, the revolution was spurred by centuries of oppression and poverty. It is obvious that Paine was deeply affected by the time spent in Paris and that there was a great fondness between Paine and the Marquis de La Fayette.

Paine details several acts of the French Revolution, from the storming of the Bastille to the formation of a declaration devoted to the rights of man. In addition to Paine's long-winded explanations of the errors of the English Constitution versus the American and French Constitutions, the author spends a great deal of time rebutting, and at times attacking, his former ally Edmund Burke.

Paine and Burke formed a strong friendship during the American Revolution and were thought to have the same views on government and democracy. When Burke stepped over to the side of the French monarchy, Paine was astonished and perhaps wounded on a personal level. Burke, whom Paine had admired, had now become an outspoken political opponent and critic of Paine's work. The feud between the two men seemed impossible to resolve and continued until the end.

In *Age of Reason*, Paine addressed religion. Although it is said to be a taboo subject among most civilized cultures, Paine puts forth his belief that religion is often used to distract people from their governments, that the mystery of religion is often used to control its people. Also, Paine seems to take delight in critiquing the fable of Creationism, pointing out absurdities and astonishment that people would be willing and



eager to believe such a fantastic tale. The result is a work that is both amusing and enlightening to the reader.

Agrarian Justice is a short work advocating the payment of property ownership. Paine believes that in a natural state, all people are born owning a piece of the earth or at least the use of said land. In a civilized state, this is not possible due to the limits on the amount of land versus the number of people in the population. The author's concern is that civilization, while advantageous in many ways, may impoverish and weaken society.

Overall, the Essential Writings of Thomas Paine has been collected into a volume which clearly expresses Paine's views on a number of subjects and gives the reader a true glimpse into the man's belief system. Although some of the work, particularly the Rights of Man, is incredibly long, drawn out and repetitive, there is no mistaking where Thomas Paine stands.



Introduction and Appendix

Common Sense begins with Thomas Paine stating the reasons for anonymity. It is the cause, the author believes, not the man that deserves the attention. While the thoughts contained within may not be popular, Paine believes that in time the views he set forth will be accepted and perhaps favored.

Paine asserts the difference between society and government is positivism versus negativism. Society promotes unity, while government promotes segregation. While society is seen by the author as a blessing, government is undoubtedly a necessary evil.

In an ideal world, all members of a society would gather together to make decisions regarding the regulations that are necessary for living harmoniously. However, as society grows, the need for regulations will also grow. With more decisions to be made and more people involved, it will become impossible for every person to attend every meeting where the decisions will be made. Therefore, there should be an elected representative to speak for the body as a whole. It must be made clear, however, that the elected should never be separated from the electors through belief or action. The members should have the same goals as the body.

In Paine's view, absolute governments go against human nature, although there are good aspects about them. The English monarchy was good when it was established but has not changed since those dark times. It is no longer applicable in many ways. In the author's view, the English constitution is comprised of two ancient tyrannies—the monarchy and the House of Commons—two entities that are so intertwined that it is nearly impossible to tell who holds the responsibility for a particular action. The monarchy itself no longer works because the King is so far removed from the public that being required to make decisions without pertinent information is absurd. However, Englishmen defend their king out of national pride rather than the use of reason.

The idea of becoming a king through heredity is absurd to Paine. The author refers to a time before there were kings and how the lack of monarchy resulted in the lack of war. In fact, Paine states that the development of monarchy must be the work of the devil.

Paine uses several examples from scripture to show how and why kings came into prominence. The author feels that the world would be better off if rulers took the same view as Gideon, who refused the role of sovereign when it was offered. Gideon claimed that he did not deny the role of leader but denied the power of the people to ordain him as such, for there is only one king in heaven.

Paine continues to say that even if a man were proclaimed to rule, it is unnatural and unjust for the king's prodigy to assume the role once the king has perished. The author finds it absurd that a society would elect a man to govern, also giving his children and his children's children the right to rule over every common man's child for as long as the government reigns.



The author surmises how society might be organized if kings came before all other forms of government. If a king was a chosen lot, then his successor would be the same as well, eliminating government through heredity. Another evil, in Paine's mind, is that a monarch may be appointed at any age. If the king dies when his heir is but a baby, the baby is still expected to assume the throne. Obviously, a baby cannot rule, so the monarchy leaves itself open to rule by virtually anyone, with any number of self-serving ideas and policies.

The situation in American is approached. The author states that there have been volumes written about the situation between America and England. Regardless of all the efforts of men in various stations, there has not been a satisfactory agreement between the king and the fledgling country. Forced by King George's hand, the Americans had no choice but to take up arms.

Paine refutes the argument that America has flourished only because of the connection to Britain. The author says that it is not possible to know how well the new country would have flourished on its own merit; that the first twenty years of its existence will not predict the next twenty. Likewise, the country cannot be seen as existing only through the beneficence of England for one's own parent does not destroy its young. While it may be true that the colonies are filled with many citizens of England, there are people from all over Europe who have fled to the new world, further decreasing the King's stronghold. If the English would hold true to this thought, then its government would indeed be French, since the founder of English rule, William the Conqueror, was a citizen of France.

By separating itself from England, America will be able to import and export goods in the same way, causing no economical distress. On the other hand, if the countries reunite and reconcile, America will surely become a target for any kingdom at odds with Britain. In addition, how could America be ruled from such a distance? There would constantly be a courier traveling back and forth with news which would take four or five months to reach the other country, and if the English government had to wait as long for an answer to a problem or question, the realization would come about that the whole situation was ridiculous.

In support of his arguments regarding the British rule, Paine makes several points. The first point is that regardless of the King's proclamations, America will always be seen as a lesser country and an entity that must be subdued. If the King cannot rule through violence in the short run, he will use cunning and subtlety to gain favor in the long run.

Secondly, people will not want to immigrate to a country whose government hangs by a thread. Without a strong government, there is no assurance against civil war or poverty.

Paine continues to describe the position of President and the existence of the Continental Congress. Each colony should be divided into districts, each represented equally in the eyes of the law. Unlike countries ruled by a monarchy, America should not be so bold as to name a king, since the results are exactly what the colonies are fighting against. Instead, the law will be king.



In listing the abilities of America, Paine states that the country will succeed; not because of great numbers, but because of unity. Even if there were greater numbers, it only means that there would be more to defend and lose; the state of the country is in perfect proportion to its goals and will serve it well. Additionally, Paine reiterates that as a new country, America owes no debts. Figures are included for building a ship and Paine asserts that America can afford to support itself.

In addition to the strength of a government that can support itself, America has a great deal of unoccupied territory with which it can use to grow and strengthen the government. If the country belonged to England, it is a given that King George would bestow great amounts of valuable land to "worthless dependents", rendering it unusable.

In conclusion, Paine lists more reasons why declaring independence is the only way for America to thrive. Those reasons include: 1. Conflicts require mediators. Without an appropriate government, America would not have sufficient support and conflicts may never be solved. 2. To assume that France or Spain would assist America in "repairing the breach" with Britain is foolish. These countries would not presume to help a country that would only seek to reunite with another power. 3. While America claims to remain a part of Britain, other countries surely see the new world as being filled with rebels who may threaten their own peace. 4. Informing other countries of America's plight in dealing with Britain and its request to be released from British rule could only assist the new country in its trade negotiations.

Paine also tells of the King's speech against American independence.



The Crisis

The Crisis starts with one of Paine's most famous quotes: "These are the times that try men's souls . . ." The author claims that the "sunshine patriot" will not rise to the call of his country and that tyranny is much like hell in that it is not an opponent easily defeated. However, those things that require the most strength reap the highest rewards. Paine does lament that the Revolution had not begun eight months earlier when the soldiers may have had greater benefit by using the harshness of the winter to defeat the British.

Although Paine professes to be non-superstitious, the author believes that God would not give up the lives of the military to such a ruler as King George III when the Americans had fought so diligently to avoid war. Paine uses Joan of Arc as an example.

The trials and tribulations of the troops as they prepared to cross the Delaware, as well as other missions, are relayed by Paine. Those who did not march with Washington, as Paine did, could not truly know of the sacrifices and hardships the soldiers endured. Paine also compliments Washington on his character and mind.

Paine warns that man should not confuse a cold soul with religion; nor should one replace the word Christian with "bigot". Each man's beliefs should be presented as such and not in the guise of one's religion. For those who oppose him also have a religion and also bear arms. Those who are Quakers claim religious persecution. Paine states that the men who make those claims are not persecuted because they are Quakers—they are persecuted because they pretend to be Quakers. The Quaker is a quiet and inoffensive subject that resides harmoniously "with any and every government which is set over him".

Paine admonishes those who would publish works using faith as a political soapbox because, as the author states: 1. The man undermines and causes reproach against all religions. 2. It infers that men who are religious but not political are concerned and agree with the published political matter. 3. The writings will only succeed in undoing the harmonious relationships one has worked so long to create and improve.

In regard to British rule, the author asserts that Britain is too jealous to rule America justly, too ignorant to be able to govern it well, and too distant to be able to govern at all. Paine remains shocked that there are many people who cannot or will not see this logic.

The author recounts efforts of the American army's battles against the British, including Howe, who was successfully cut off from supplies, eventually forcing surrender. Because the men fought for an ideal, not a piece of property, there was no way to defeat them in the long run. Even after a particularly trying battle or the march thereto, hopelessness was often replaced with vigor. Although the army was suffering from fatigue, each man was ready to serve to protect the ideal known as independence.



In a letter to General William Howe, Paine says that to argue with a man who has no use for authority or reason is much like giving medicine to the dead or trying to convert an atheist through the use of scripture. Since General Howe's demise, there had been great controversy as to how the General, newly knighted, should be immortalized. A statue at Westminster Abbey seems fitting but routine and tired. As to the disposal of the General's remains, Paine has a great number of suggestions. Paine also takes Howe to task for his patronization and encouragement of the counterfeiting of American currency.

Howe's ability to lead the British army is also called into question by Paine, who states that the General never had a plan and that his victories were accidental. Various accounts of Howe's campaigns follow, each clearly ridiculed by Paine, who refers to himself as Howe's "friend, enemy, and countryman".

In a letter to the "Inhabitants of America", Paine recounts the first three years of the Revolution. It saddens the author that all references to good and solid government are linked to Greece and Rome—that there have been no more recent examples on which to lean and refer. The Grecians and Romans did have something in which the Americans could relate to in that they were in search of the spirit of liberty, not only the principle. If America holds true to this ideal, then the Revolution being fought was graced by God.

Paine recalls the error made by the British when they stormed Philadelphia. The city wasn't the center of the country as the British had believed. It had ceased being used as a seaport and there were no manufacturing facilities there. While it is an important city, it is not the center; therefore, the British did not win the war through this feat.

Paine also ridicules many other acts of war involving Howe and Burgoyne. In the end, the author recommends that action must not be taken in halves, quoting the proverb, "A penny wise and a pound foolish".

In the final letter to the people of England, Paine addresses a series of eight questions regarding power and honor, as well as the use of the crown as it applies to the common man. Paine reprimands the English people for their piteous treatment of America and its inhabitants, remarking that the country has made many enemies throughout Europe.

The closing portion of *The Crisis* takes place after the Revolution has been won. Peace and tranquility has returned to the land and the newly formed government must forge ahead with the goal of teaching the world that peace is possible. Although the war was long and hard won, it brought great character to the new nation.

Paine describes the separation of the states as a necessity since the maintenance of the country as one sovereign unit is impractical and would be too expensive to undertake. While the states of Holland are a miserable example of this constitution, the United States has a better plan to keep the unit strong as a whole—a strength which is necessary for survival and growth.

Paine attributes his great literary career to the revolution and to his solemn dedication to the independence of his adopted country. However, the war has ended happily, and since the author has chronicled it faithfully and thoroughly, he must take his leave.



Rights of Man, Part I

The Rights of Man was a treatise written by Paine and presented to George Washington. The treatise was a rebuttal to Edmund Burke's 1791 attack on the French Revolution, a war which Paine supported.

Paine points out that while England is openly supportive of the French Revolution, it is clear that the government is not supportive yet chooses to keep its opinions close to the chest. The author feels that once the people of England discover its government's untruths, it will be disheartened but will continue its quest for liberty worldwide.

However, if England does mend its past grievances with France, it must find another foe in order to support the high level of taxes it deems necessary. To be at complete peace would make England's subjects question the ongoing need for such taxation. However, England has chosen Russia as its new foe and is able, due to the size and strength of the country, to seek even more taxes.

Paine claims that the only way for liberty to be enforced worldwide, the governments of France, England and America must come together, present a united front, and thereby lead by example.

Since Edmund Burke's involvement in the American Revolution, Paine considered him to be a friend and ally. However, after Burke denounced the French Revolution, Paine was forced to change his opinion. Burke intended to publish a critical work in England regarding the Revolution, and Paine was disappointed and angry. Because the pamphlet would be published in English, a language the French didn't study or understand completely, Paine worried that the translation would suffer and not convey the entire meaning Burke wished to put across. Therefore, Paine, who was still living in Paris, promised the French that he would respond to Burke on their behalf.

Paine continues to be astonished by the actions of Burke. When prejudices are well on their way to being eradicated, Burke seeks to sow more seeds to encourage the continuance of animosity between the nations. Rumors abound that Burke did so in order to maintain a pension that would be diminished or removed without the war. Paine believes that Burke chose to better his own financial standing than to do the right and proper thing in helping to establish peace.

Throughout the course of the Revolution, Burke took every opportunity to malign the French, using his pen and speeches as well as every disturbing, vulgar, and erroneous epithet in the English language.

Burke went above and beyond, in Paine's mind, when he began to attack Dr. Price, maligning and misinterpreting a sermon given by Price. In the sermon, which celebrated the anniversary of the English Revolution of 1688, Price promoted the idea that the country as a whole has the right to choose its own governors, treat their misconduct, and to form their own government. Burke twisted the words to say that Price believes



each man has these rights which Burke states is clearly not true. Not only are the statements false in England, but false everywhere in the world. A man should stand up not to fight to maintain his rights but for the right not to have rights at all. Then Burke referred to several speeches and laws of Parliament stating that English subjects have committed themselves to serve forever. Paine states that there has never been and should never be a Parliament that is able to control its people and their posterity forever. Each generation should have its own ideals, values, and choices in government.

English law states that no one may take money from a man without his consent, yet Burke states that a man's freedom may be taken until the end of time simply because a law was invented in the seventeenth century. The author finds this reasoning utterly absurd.

Burke may have believed that he was doing a great service to his country by bringing these laws and clauses to the forefront of the English consciousness. Paine agrees, but for a totally different reason. Paine believes that the English people will begin to see how archaic the laws are and how desperately they need to be changed. The laws have not been repealed, states Paine, because it is impossible to repeal them. They have not been repealed simply because they have not been repealed. By taking no action, the English people give silent acceptance.

Burke's attention to France is the next subject to be examined. Burke's book was written in such a way that it seems as if the author is writing an instruction manual to the country. In Paine's opinion, Burke's work is "darkness attempting to illuminate light".

Contrary to his opinions on English law, Burke accuses France of running its country by moldy and archaic laws. Paine points out that the allegation is untrue, punctuated by the speech given by the Marquis de La Fayette three days before the taking of the Bastille. In that speech, La Fayette clearly presented that France must live in the now, not by looking to the successes and failures of the past. Paine continues to sing La Fayette's praises due to the Marquis' devotion and assistance in America, while it is clear that he could have remained in his homeland, which is like "a lap of sensual pleasure".

Burke continued to spout incorrect theories and lies about the French, accusing them of attacking a mild monarch, Louis XVI, with the same ferocity as they might a tyrant. To Paine, Burke has once again misrepresented a people who were not against the king, but rather against the principals of a government that had greatly wronged its people for centuries. In fact, the French people greatly admired King Louis XVI, especially in the beginning. It was later that the lack of action on the part of the monarch encouraged the Revolution. Burke's mistake is to misunderstand the difference between a people revolting for change due to a hatred of the present government, versus revolting because of the hatred of the king, who is a mere man. Paine also asserts that Burke has no concrete understanding of government and its inner workings and continually proves this point through misguided information and criticisms.

The author states that Burke's work, totaling 356 pages, is difficult to respond to in that it often has no concrete point to address. Paine compares Burke to Don Quixote, a man



who is not to be taken seriously and is saddened that there is no one left to tilt at the windmills. In the book, Burke mentions the Bastille only once, lamenting that it was destroyed. Also, Burke seemed to have no pity for the wretched, the poor who inhabited France at the time. Paine claims that Burke is much more interested in the principles of government rather than the reality. There is no attention paid to the pitiful, and Paine compares it to being saddened for the loss of beautiful plumage without regard to the dying bird.

Burke's tendency to address the issues surrounding the Bastille but not the actions themselves irritates Paine. Paine takes the opportunity to explain how the Bastille could have been the site of a prize capture and the symbolic end to despotism, or the prison of those who attempted the destruction. Shortly before the taking of the Bastille, Parisians learned of a plot by Count D'Artois, Louis XVI's youngest brother, to destroy the National Assembly and effectively squash any hopes of forming a free government. To achieve this feat, twenty-five to thirty thousand soldiers surrounded Paris, effectively severing any form of communication between the city and Versailles where the National Assembly had gathered. Because the president of the National Assembly was old, the vice-president, the Marquis de La Fayette, was put into power. La Fayette hastily drafted a declaration of rights in the hope that even if the Assembly was destroyed there may be a lasting form of rule that carried through to the new government.

A new ministry was formed and many were astonished that the promise of liberty could inspire such action and heroism. Paine does not detail the actual taking of the Bastille since its history is well documented.

The author addresses that the forms of torture, such as mounting an enemy's head on a spike, is an age-old action and not one formed by the Parisians. In fact, some of the former tortures were much worse, such as the case of Damien, who was torn to pieces by horses. The same can be said of other countries. Paine claims, however, that one should be able to look upon the executioners not with reproach but with consideration.

The next subject to be addressed is Burke's view of the actions at Versailles. Paine comments on Burke's flair for the dramatic and believes that the author felt the same in order to write such poetic words that distort many facts while completely omitting others.

Paine details the actions of the Garde du Corps, its open defiance of the Parisians, and how the citizens called them on it. La Fayette headed an expedition to Versailles with twenty thousand men of the Paris militia. La Fayette served as mediator between the militia and the Garde, and eventually peace was obtained and King Louis XVI signed the Declaration of the Rights of Man as well as the fourth of August decrees outlining the foundation for a new government.

Peace reigned only for a short while. That night, a Parisian yelled vile things to one of the Garde. Instead of ignoring the remark, as would have been wise, the soldier shot the Parisian and the conflict was started once again. The king eventually managed to compromise with the people and all was right again.



This is where Burke once again errs in his historical knowledge. Factual accounts state that the trip from Versailles back to Paris was uneventful. Burke states that according to Lally Tollendal, a deserter from the National Assembly, citizens called for all the bishops to be hung from lantern posts. Since this is the first time in "Burke's drama" that the bishops were even mentioned, Paine is puzzled by this inclusion in the story. There are no factual statements to support this event had ever occurred, and Paine assumes that of the thousands of people in attendance, only Tollendal heard the cries.

Paine returns to the fact that Burke continues to focus on the rights of man, or lack thereof, as they appeared in antiquity. However, it is unclear why Burke stopped at certain points and did not pursue the topic to the very beginning at the time when man was originated. Paine states that regardless of religious or scientific beliefs, everyone agrees that there was a time when man originated. At that time, all men were equal.

Man does not enter society to become worse off than he was when he was alone. After entering society, man should expect to retain a list of "natural rights", which include rights of the intellectual mind, the right to practice religion, the right to procure happiness and comfort, and the right to stand up for a cause. In addition, man should expect civil rights to be born of natural rights, which address man's rights as they pertain to society.

Civil rights need to be applied to government. Paine lists what he believes to be the three origins of governments: The government of Priestcraft is based on superstition; the government of Conquerors is based on power; and the third form of government, called Reason, is based on the common interests and good of society as a whole. In order to understand formation government, it is imperative to trace the system back to its origin. Paine does this, often comparing the English and French constitutions.

Additionally, Paine addresses the errors in reigning through Aristocracy. According to Paine, if all men are created equal, then Aristocracy is a fallacy. If natural parents seek to pass on heredity, then all those born of Aristocracy—traced through the bloodline of one parent—should be seen as bastards and orphans. It is unnatural and unwise for a society to allow its government to be ruled by Aristocracy. All citizens will be born as property of other men, and eventually the civilization will degenerate as the practice of intermarriage to retain royalty accelerates and continues.

Furthermore, the Constitutions of England and France differ in the position of their respective kings. In England, Burke states, the king is the highest and all divine and power flows from him. In France, it is the law that takes precedence over the king; the king is merely the ruler who carries out the law. According to Paine, the principle on which the French constitution is founded is a good one to which no bad can arise. England is the opposite. Burke declined to make solid comparisons between the two constitutions, claiming a lack of time. Paine sees it as an excuse considering that the book took eight months to write.

Paine reflects on the influences of various philosophers who spoke out regarding the French Revolution. The author also states that Benjamin Franklin's influence, particularly on his friend and ally, Count Vergennes, should not be diminished. Franklin



was living in France during this time and befriended Vergennes. Franklin already had a reputation of being a philosopher and diplomat; not only an American diplomat, but rather a diplomat to all of mankind. It is believed that Franklin was partly, if not entirely, responsible for the French allowing the American Constitution to be translated and disseminated to its people.

The author details the ongoing regulation and formation of the French government, the establishment of the office of Prime Minister, and the ongoing arguments between the Marquis de La Fayette and Count D'Artois.

In an additional chapter titled "Miscellaneous Chapter", Paine collects random thoughts that would have been confusing if contained in the whole. In a broad stroke, Paine claims that Burke's entire work is nothing but miscellany. The arguments Burke presents are not factual or orderly. In fact, Paine believes that Burke is incapable of presenting an argument from start to finish; that the stories and so-called facts within continually tumble over each other and are rife with contradictions. Burke also states that government is created by the wisdom of man, to which Paine argues that heredity does not guarantee wisdom and that the government may well be formed through the wisdom of an idiot. Paine continues to argue that there can be no successful government run by a monarchy or despot of any kind.

Currency and the idea of national debt is another point on which Paine and Burke disagree. Paine's first attack is that Burke believes that a nation's wealth lies in its possession of currency, ignoring credit. In fact, when Burke estimated the wealth of the French, according to Paine, his estimate was in error of more than three million pounds sterling. Commerce and trade are issues Paine also addresses.



Rights of Man, Part II

Combining Principals and Practice, 1792; as written to the Marquis de La Fayette.

Paine conveys admiration to the Marquis for cooperation and wisdom during the American Revolution. The only point on which Paine disagrees with the Marquis is the time frame in which political reform could occur. The Marquis' time frame was much more liberal than Paine's, and one could only surmise that while Paine was being bold, the Marquis was being diplomatic, perhaps due to his extensive military and political experience.

The Rights of Man, Part the Second, was planned as a deferred continuance to Part the First for two reasons. First, Paine worried that continuing the document in one piece would make it too bulky or force him to condense his plan too much. The second reason is that Paine wanted to give Burke the opportunity to refute Paine's opinions. While Burke published two works after the release of The Rights of Man, neither contained a rebuttal to Paine's words. Burke did quote approximately ten pages of The Rights of Man in his book titled, "Appeal from the new to the old Whigs", but stated that he would not, in any degree, rebut Paine's work. Paine claims to know Burke well enough to know that his opponent would refute the work if he could. Burke's silence intimates that he is unable to make an intelligent opposing argument.

In "Appeal", written by Burke, the author states that if there are arguments that can refute The Rights of Man, certainly they will be written by those who think with a like mind. Paine states that while there have been ten pamphlets printed in response, none has merit or is likely to be remembered. If there was a pamphlet published that could rival even one fourth of The Rights of Man, Paine would take it upon himself to reply to the author of the work.

In regard to a bad law, Paine feels that it is better to obey the bad law while working to have it changed or repealed rather than violate the law outright. If one simply violates the law, the argument and its supporters are weakened. The same can be said of any government or constitution.

According to Paine, Aristocracy and Monarchy will not last another seven years beyond the writing of his pamphlet. If the government is displeased with a work and it attempts to prohibit its citizens from reading the work, it is not the author that is hurt, but rather the people. People will not stand for a law that prohibits them from reading any material. Likewise, to prohibit one from exercising freedom is to cast one into poverty; to accept the imposition of the government only allows excessive taxation.

The American Revolution, if fought only to separate itself from England, would not have raised much interest. It was the formation of a new government that caught the attention of the world. By ignoring despotism for the favor of a democracy, America gave pause to other governments around the world and gave silent permission to allow men to rethink their way of life as it related to politics. Paine asserts that the countries who had not



agreed with America's principles at the outset may soon find that there is merit in the formation of this new type of government. Even the Hessians, who were hired to defeat the American military, may someday appreciate the accomplishments made by their former enemy.

Due to the nature of man, a sense of order would exist even if there was no government. In order to exist harmoniously, man must self-impose laws designed to cooperate with fellow man, whether it's on a personal or professional level. Paine proves this by referring to the lack of government in America during the first two years of the American Revolution. The country was so immersed in protecting itself that it functioned solely on the merits of man, and maintained a peace that rivaled even the most orderly country in Europe. Paine asserts that this may have also been possible due to the constant focus on creating a new government to replace the British rule that had been abolished. These facts further dispel the myth that without government, society would degenerate and ultimately fail.

Those who would wish to control the government often choose to present it to the public as an organization full of mysteries which only they can understand. The author states that Burke would possibly state that in order to govern, people must be controlled by some means, to be patronized as a child. Some would have to be governed by force; others by fraud; all by contrivance. The intelligent should be necessary to lord over the ignorant; the refined would dominate the vulgar.

If one is to look to the origin of government, it would be wise to refer to England since it has been the best recorded. From the beginning, conquerors treated their defeated enemies as property. Through the formation of government, the principle remained intact, though refined into war and extortion of revenue. If government had been founded on a more noble cause, the world would be a more peaceful place. An individual man has no desire for dominion; a farmer is not likely to put aside his plow and peaceful life only to war with a farmer from another land. War is the vehicle of the government, which resolves little yet causes poverty and destruction.

Paine points out the difference between the two factions of the Whig party of England. The foundation of the old Whigs was built upon the concept of heredity, while the new Whigs practiced the concept of representation. The author reiterates that a government ruled by heredity can be nothing less than a tyranny. This is mainly true since the concept of heredity implies that the land and the people can be inherited; again, reducing the people to property. Paine compares kings to animals, since the monarchy requires no special skills, intelligence or wisdom. If one king is a tyrant, another an idiot, and the third insane, how can its people possibly attach confidence and faith to the government?

In a civil government, people may choose the wise and appropriate people to make its laws. Burke was never able to grasp the difference between democracy and representation, believing that the two are synonymous. They are not. In the days of ancients there existed democracies wherein all of the subjects of the land gathered together and as one unit devised laws. There were no individual representatives. As the



population grew, this congregation grew unwieldy and impractical. Representation allows one person to speak for a particular group of people, letting their opinions be known to the government. This is a far more practical approach to a large population.

Paine goes on to examine the various forms of government practiced in the countries of Europe and the rest of the world.

Representation is in parallel to the natural law, and therefore a practical way to govern. In America, the President of the United States maintains more power than any individual in Congress. It is due to this weighty responsibility that the president is required to be thirty-five years of age so that he may exercise his intellect and wisdom. In many other nations, one may become a monarch at the age of eighteen. Paine claims that a person of eighteen cannot exercise wisdom, for he is too young to have achieved it in his short lifetime. Likewise, a person must be twenty-one years of age before he can own a piece of property or a herd of swine, yet it is acceptable for an eighteen-year-old to rule a nation. Paine points out the absurdity in this contradictory rule.

In a system of representation, all acts of government must be made public. This is not so in a monarchy. Representatives are openly held accountable and required to defend their policies. A monarch may impose any law he chooses without any explanation whatsoever. Paine claims that one reason the monarchy is still in place is that taxes and other forms of extortion can be written into law and the monarchy cannot be questioned.

The formation of the American Constitution is explained by Paine. While there are, at the time of the writing, thirteen separate states, each with its own government, the federal government takes precedence since it provides the general rule by which all the states are governed. There are also sub-governments, such as counties and cities within the states which are subject to state law as well as federal law.

When George Washington was elected as the first President of the United States, he was not affiliated with any part of the government. After the Revolution, Washington retired from the military and had returned to the world of the private citizen. Paine believes that a better choice for president was not possible and that "the character and services of this gentleman are sufficient to put all those men called Kings to shame". As was practiced while holding the office of Commander in Chief, Washington received no financial reward for his duties as president.

There is confusion as to the origin of the Constitution. Some believe that the American Constitution is the controlling power of the people, while the opposite is true. In examining forms of Constitutions, Paine refers to the origin of the English Constitution; a document which the author claims cannot be called a Constitution in any form.

Burke made reference to The Rights of Man in a speech delivered in Canada, calling the work an "absurd doctrine". In the second part of The Rights of Man, Paine poses a question to Burke. If government is not formed on the rights of man, and yet it is formed on the rights of something, what is the "something"? If the only inhabitants on the earth



are man and beast, and the government is not formed on the rights of man, is it formed on the rights of the beast?

In Paine's view, one person should not obtain extraordinary power or extraordinary wealth as payment for the use of said power. The person who works for the government should be paid only what he is worth and no more. Many of the world's greatest achievements were accomplished by people who never received any compensation for their acts. If a person receives a sum that far exceeds the worth of his duty, then that person becomes the center instead of the government. This can only create an opening for corruption and encourage the cause to be ignored. This is yet another reason why the nation must be the priority and one person should not become the figurehead.

Countries that make their Constitutions absolute with no room for revision are making a grave error. It would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to create a document that will apply to all situations for years to come and predict the future of the country to the degree that there are laws in place for situations that do not yet exist. With this concept in mind, both America and France have predetermined times set for review and revision of their Constitutions, should it be deemed necessary.

Regardless of the initial intent of a constitution, its general principle should be to create and maintain the happiness of its citizens. Again, Paine refers to countries whose constitutions have failed in this aspect and cause their citizens to experience misery and poverty.

The constitutions of governments can also foster or hinder commerce. Paine is a great supporter of commerce, and believes that if commerce were to occur freely between all nations, civilized or not, there would be less need for government in this area.

Paine's final topic is religion, one which has been purposely avoided throughout the work. In the author's mind, many religions have been kept intact for the purpose of distracting people from their various governments. In the old days, many nations claimed to have a national god, a proclamation which Paine believes carried over from a pagan system of worshipping different deities. If two men profess to think alike regarding a particular doctrine, Paine asserts that those men think not at all. The British Constitution, in the author's mind, was formed by such men.

It was February when Paine completed the second part, and spring was on the horizon. In using the season as a metaphor, Paine states that each nation shall bloom in its own time, unless it is rotten.



Age of Reason

In *Age of Reason*, Paine allows himself to express his long held beliefs and opinions on religion. The author was well known for advocating freedom of religion, stating that any man who denies another this choice creates for himself a prison, for he will never be permitted to change his own mind.

Paine holds a belief in God, hoping for a joyful afterlife. The author also believes in the equality of man, that each person should strive to make the world a happy and harmonious place.

Paine does not subscribe to any particular church but that of his own mind. In the formation of other churches, such as the Roman church, the Turkish church, or the Jewish church, Paine believes that there was a sacrifice of freedom, that all churches hold its members captive in a type of mental slavery. In believing wholly in one's own church, believing that this one religion is the only right religion, creates animosity between other religions. If only one religion is right, then all others must be wrong.

The author challenges all religious references to the term "revelation". The Jews state that revelation occurred when God spoke to Moses; the Christians relate it to divine prophesy. Paine argues that revelation cannot be achieved secondhand. One cannot take the experience of another and claim it as his own revelation. Nor is one forced to believe the revelations of another. In the end, these revelations are merely hearsay.

The origin of Christianity is another topic on which Paine has strong views. It is apparent that Christianity took a great deal of its ideas and philosophies from heathen mythologies, from the creation of the trinity to the replacement of Diana of Ephesus with the Virgin Mary to the deification of heroes that the Christians adopted into the practice of the canonization of saints.

The Christian Mythologists, also known as the Christian Church, have erected a fable which no one can dispute with any form of proof. The Immaculate Conception was not a public ordeal and therefore there was no way that anyone could contradict the story of Mary and Joseph. While Jesus never wrote a single word of the New Testament, it is believed that He did exist and preached benevolence and morality. Paine points out the fact that others have preached those same things, from the ancient Confucius to the more modern Quakers. The resurrection, on the other hand, was a public and documented event, albeit by nine people. The resurrection and ascension are said to have been witnessed by these people, and in keeping with their faith, the entire Christian world was expected to believe it. Paine refers to and agrees with Thomas on the point that one may not choose to believe what one has not seen with his own eyes.

The mythological war of the Giants against Jupiter may have been the basis of the Christian's tale of the clash between the Almighty and Satan. However, instead of being banished to a mountain, Satan was banished to a pit. Paine states that the Christians had to allow Satan to escape so that a sequel could be created.



According to scripture, Satan returned from the pit to appear in the Garden of Eden as a snake. Paine remarks that it's odd that Eve is not alarmed by a talking snake and goes on to have a tête-à-tête with the serpent. After the serpent convinces Eve to bite the apple, the Almighty does not banish him once again to the pit, but allows him to remain on earth. The arrival of Jesus, son of God, completes the fable as He takes on the sins created since the day Eve ate the apple. Paine asserts that the story is not only absurd but derogatory to the Almighty, whose powers are put into question through this lack of action at the time of the apple incident.

In addition to the return of Satan, the Christian Mythologists have cast upon him more power than he had before the fall from grace. Scripture tells of an angel who had overstepped his bounds, trying to exert power that he did not have, in order to defeat the Almighty. This act caused Satan to fall from grace. After Satan returned from banishment to the Garden of Eden, the Mythologists gave him power of omnipresence as well as a cunning that would allow him to steal the souls of man in any way he chose.

Paine does not disdain those who believe the Christian fable, for many have lived great lives due to its existence. It is also ingrained in the Christian psyche because the people were educated with the story as if it was historically accurate. In addition, Paine believes that the more fantastic a story, the more likely it will be held as an object of admiration.

The topics of the Old and New Testaments seem to be a major focus of Paine's disagreement with the Christian church. Although both books are said to be the word of God, it has never been made clear who wrote them. Also, there is no proof that the books included in the Bible are as they were originally. It is suspected that the books have been altered, abridged, or "dressed up". When man set out to collect all the works of the prophets and those who claimed to have knowledge of the word of God, there was no master list as to what works existed, or for that matter, the level of their accuracy and authenticity. When many volumes had been collected, there was a vote to decide which books were, in fact, the word of God, and which were not. Then, from those volumes, a handful were chosen based on perceived merit and popularity.

Therefore, since these actions occurred, one cannot say that the Bible is in fact the truthful and complete word of God. Paine believes that there is a word of God and that it exists in His creations. The recognition of this word is universal and cannot be altered or misunderstood through the use of language. Even the sermons of Jesus could not have been properly and completely translated without error or misunderstanding the sense or context of His words. Instead of trying to contemplate and understand the word of God through those written accounts, one should rely only upon the existence of Creation.

Paine addressed three principals on which mankind rely in reference to belief. They are: Mystery, Miracle, and Prophecy. Paine believes that the first two are incompatible with religion and that the third should always be viewed with suspicion. Paine believes that everything man beholds is in some way a mystery. A miracle could also be seen as a type of mystery. A miracle is simply something that occurs outside man's own laws and depth of understanding. A miracle may also oppose man's idea of law as well as the



laws of nature. Paine uses the example of Jonah and the whale as a sort of miracle, saying that the miracle would have been even more fantastic if it was Jonah who had swallowed the whale and not the other way around.

If mystery and miracle are things that have occurred in the past, then prophecy is a tool of the future. The author believes that it was not enough for man to know the past but to know what would come in the future. Prophets may be of their own making, however. There may not be ample proof that one is a prophet or that one's prophecies were not established after the fact or completely contrived from the beginning. How can one tell the difference between a prophet and a liar?

Paine closes *Age of Reason* with a summary. First, it is unlikely that God would choose to communicate to mankind his wishes and laws through the medium of print, something that wasn't a part of culture in that particular era. God would also know that the difficulties of language would hinder the telling of the word, and therefore, using simple language would not be an effective method. Paine reiterates that Creation is the only sign of God's existence that man should require. Lastly, the only guide man should need is that of God's creation—to treat earth, animal, and fellow man with the same benevolence that God used when creating the earth and everything one beholds.

The author restates the view that all nations have a god of some sort and should be allowed to worship how and when they see fit. If there were ever a worldwide religion, which seems impossible, there would be no new insights or revelations, only the removal of the redundancies which plague every religion.



Agrarian Justice

Paine defines a civilized society as one that has extreme opposites—the affluent versus the wretched poor. Some cultures are considered to be uncivilized yet have a better way to live. Paine uses the North American Indians as an example. The extremes are not present in the Indian culture; in fact, life in the culture may seem to some as a "continual holiday", particularly to the poor in Europe.

It is possible to evolve from a natural state to a civilized state; however, the opposite is not true. Once a country becomes civilized, there must be a system to preserve the natural state and the benefits it bestows on its people. Although civilized states have advantages that natural states do not, they must remember to be concerned with the evils of civilization and develop remedies to cure them.

In a natural state, all people are born equal. It should be the primary goal of a civilized society to guarantee that each person born is not worse off than if he had been born before civilization. The civilization in Europe does not make this guarantee, and so many of its people are much worse off than if they had been born in the natural state of the wilderness.

Paine believes that upon birth, every man should be issued property. However, that is not possible with the small amount of land in proportion to the number of people on the earth. Therefore, each man who holds property owes ground-rent to the rest of society so that he may maintain the property he wishes to cultivate. This has not always been so, the concept of landed property. In ancient times, people did not cultivate the land and tended to be nomadic, so that there was a constant supply of food and water.

While the author claims that cultivation was one of the best things ever invented by man, the dispossession of landed property may be the most evil. For the concept of holding property immediately disinherits half of the population of the earth. In order to repay those who have been cheated of their natural inheritance, Paine proposes an annual payment to be made to everyone twenty-one years old and above. This sum shall be paid to every individual whether or not he is a land owner, for the property holders should not be persecuted for their land. The plan would effectively repay those who have been denied their share of property, ensuring that each person would be compensated, in some way, for his natural inheritance.



Important People

Thomas Paine

Thomas Paine (1737-1809) migrated from Britain to America at age thirty-seven, right on the brink of the American Revolution. Paine already had the reputation of being an English radical and intellectual. Paine utilized his skills as a pamphleteer to speak out in favor of the Revolution. Paine's famous pamphlet, "Common Sense", was published in 1776, in support of the colonies' break from King George III and Great Britain. Contrary to popular belief, Paine published the pamphlet anonymously and never earned a cent from the publication or subsequent reprints. A follow-up piece, "The American Crisis", was also published in support of the American Revolution.

In 1791, Paine released "Rights of Man", which had a tremendous influence on the French Revolution. Although Paine did not speak French, he won the election to the French National Assembly. While in France, Paine continued to infuriate the opposition to the French Revolution, particularly the notorious Robespierre. Paine was eventually arrested and sent to prison for a year. During this time, Paine penned the "Age of Reason", which spoke favorably of Deism while questioning the age-old doctrines of the Christian church. In 1795, Paine published "Agrarian Justice", a work which addressed redistribution of wealth through a series of taxes. This latter work was undoubtedly influenced by Paine's former position in the Vestry, a church organization which distributed money to the poor.

Although Paine came under fire for most of his works, the author was undaunted by his circumstances and continued to wage political warfare, rising up in opposition to Napoleon.

In 1802, Paine returned to America at the request of old friend and newly elected President Thomas Jefferson. Paine died on June 8, 1809 in Greenwich Village, New York City.

Although a monument stands in New Rochelle, New York as a testament to Paine's life, the activist's body is not interred there. An admirer of Paine's exhumed the body to return it to England, Paine's homeland. More than twenty years later, Paine's remains were found among the admirer's possession, his quest unfulfilled. The exact whereabouts of Thomas Paine is heretofore unknown.

Edmund Burke

Edmund Burke (1729-1797) was a longstanding member of the British House of Commons and the Whig Party. Burke was also well known as an orator, author, and political theorist. Burke's most noteworthy contributions to politics revolved around his support of the American Revolution as well as his strong opposition to the French Revolution.



Irish born, Burke adopted his father's faith as an Anglican, although critics often accused the man of having Catholic sympathies.

In 1756 Burke published his first work: "A Vindication of Natural Society: A View of the Miseries and Evils Arising to Mankind". The work was considered to be one of the first pieces written on anarchism, a fact that Burke vehemently denied when he discovered that his position could severely damage or ruin his political career. Burke also completed another work titled, "A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful". In 1758, the year after "Philosophy" was released, Burke co-founded "The Annual Register", a political review.

Burke was outspoken on his views regarding the colonies and their attempt at separation from the British throne. Burke saw complete sovereignty as an appropriate government for the new world and recommended that the colonies should be ruled in whatever way would be most advantageous to the country's growth. With this line of thought, Burke became aligned with Thomas Paine. Burke's ongoing torrent of writings and speeches is credited to have promoted the end of the American Revolution.

In direct opposition to Paine, Burke stood on the side of the French Royals in the French Revolution. Burke's work "Reflections on the Revolution in France" was controversial and garnered the author much criticism. Former allies, such as "New Whig" Charles James Fox and Thomas Jefferson, turned away from Burke, calling him an enemy of democracy. Paine's Rights of Man was written as a direct response to Burke's political ideals.

Burke remained vocal and politically active until the death of his son, Richard, in 1794. Not long after, Burke resigned from Parliament. Edmund Burke died on July 9, 1797 in Buckinghamshire, England.

King George III

King George III (1738-1820) ascended to the British throne in 1760. The controversial king is best known for his role in the American Revolution, as the sovereign who would not grant the American colonies their wish to be separated from the United Kingdom.

Thomas Jefferson

Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826) was a founding father of the United States and served as its third president. Among Jefferson's most notable acts was the creation of the Declaration of Independence, of which he was the main contributor. As a man of Enlightenment, Jefferson was aligned both personally and politically with Thomas Paine.



John Adams

John Adams (1735-1826) was a founding father of the United States and served as its second president. Adams's conviction to politics was a building block on which the Massachusetts government was formed, its constitution served as a basis for Jefferson's Declaration of Independence. Adams, an ambassador to France, was opposed to Paine's ideals.

James Chalmers

James Chalmers (1782-1853) was a printer and publisher, who is best known for involvement in postal reform.

Sam Adams

Sam Adams (1722-1803) was a founding father and major source of support for the American Revolution. Professionally, Adams, who was cousin to John Adams, was a writer, political activist, and statesman.

Louis XVI

Louis XVI (1754-1793) ascended to the throne as the King of France in 1791. Originally adored by his constituents, Louis XVI became despised for extravagance and tyranny. The King's acts led to the French Revolution and effectively, the end of the French Monarchy.

Maximilien Robespierre

Maximilien Robespierre (1758-1794) was a principal in the French Revolution. A lawyer by trade, Robespierre had great political aspirations and was known by his followers as "The Incorruptible".

George Washington

George Washington (1732-1799) was a founding father of the United States and a highly celebrated general in the American Revolution. Due to Washington's unshakable devotion to the colonies, he was elected to be the first president of the United States in 1789.

Benjamin Franklin

Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790) is one of the most recognizable characters in US history. Dr. Franklin was a noted printer, author, inventor, politician, postmaster, and French minister to Paris, where he lived for a time. Franklin was also one of the original signers of the Declaration of Independence.



Objects/Places

America

America was in Paine's favor when it made the move to separate from Britain and King George III. Paine used his influence, intellect, and talent to advocate and promote the cause around the world, hoping to gain support for his adopted country.

Although America was an infant compared to its parent, England, many believed that the fledgling country could and would succeed on its own. In fact, if America remained as a part of England, chances are that its commerce would suffer and its people would not receive the sort of liberty for which they chose to fight.

Through a combination of unity, intelligence, and sheer determination, America defeated the British and became its own entity. The style of the newly formed government caused a much bigger uproar than the Revolution itself, and countries around the world began to redress their own forms of government in comparison to America's democracy. The publication of the American Constitution further allowed other countries to review and attempt to adopt their own set of doctrines based upon the same principles.

American patriots, such as Paine and Benjamin Franklin, took their beliefs to France, where they maintained allies. It is believed that the French used the American Revolution as encouragement to establish their own regime.

England

England was Paine's homeland for thirty-seven years. After Paine emigrated to America, his writings regarding the oppression of the English government seemed to unfold. Paine was very vocal with his opinions on the English government, a monarchy. In Paine's eyes, a monarchy is an absurd form of government. Heredity does not guarantee a good ruler with the wisdom and intellect needed to govern a country. The history of kings proves Paine's point, in that some may have been inept or insane, leaving the throne open to infiltration by those brave enough to take the stand.

While there were many in England who supported Paine's views on the American Revolution, these same people took the opposite side when the author used the same philosophies to encourage the French to adopt a new government that would support its people. The most notable English opponent to Paine was his former ally, Edmund Burke. Burke defended the English Constitution, which Paine continually ridiculed. As the French Revolution moved forward, the relationship between Paine and Burke was reduced to little more than name calling and a listing of the other's inadequacies.

The English people eventually came to recognize that its government held a different opinion behind closed doors than it did in its public proclamations supporting the Revolution.



France

France was Paine's home for a number of years; its government a pet cause for the author. Paine supported the Parisians in their quest for liberty and fought to support them, not only as a political master but as one of its adopted sons.

Massachusetts

Home to John Adams, Massachusetts is considered to be one of the cornerstones of American government, its own laws serving as basis to the American Constitution. Boston, Massachusetts is also the site at which many battles were waged.

Philadelphia

Philadelphia was the initial center of the American government and a primary target of the British during the Revolution.

Paris

Paris was the home to the Bastille and the center of the formation of the French Revolution.

London

London is the capital of England and home to the British Monarchy, an establishment highly criticized by Paine.

Greenwich Village

Greenwich Village, a neighborhood in New York City, was the site of Paine's home from the time he returned from France until the time of his death.

Versailles

Versailles was the location of the Royal Palace and the gathering place of the National Assembly during the beginning of the French Revolution.

American Revolution

The American Revolution, of which Paine was an integral part, was the battle for independence between American and Britain.



French Revolution

The French Revolution took place in the late eighteenth century, beginning in Paris. The Parisians, tired of centuries of despotism, stormed and destroyed the Bastille as an act of discontent with the government.

Government

Government is the basis of nearly all of Paine's writings; the formation of law that should rule the land as well as the errors made by some countries that profess to know how a country should operate.

Delaware River

The Delaware River was the site of Washington's crossing and the act that allowed the Americans to defeat the British at the Battles of Trenton and Princeton.

Themes

Government

In the majority of Thomas Paine's work, government is the key focus. Paine is fond of visiting, defining, and redefining the governments of other countries and pointing out their flaws and absurdities. The author believes that many people live with their governments simply because it was the way of the ancients and the country as a whole did not object. It was as if silence equaled acceptance.

One of the main targets of Paine's work is the English government. Paine has very strong views on the antiquity and foolishness of maintaining a monarchy, an institution that is inappropriate and oppressive to its people. Paine also argues that the English Constitution is not a constitution at all, since its aim is to control the people rather than allow the people to control the nation.

Paine's political beliefs were strong and long lasting. Unlike many other politicians, Paine did what was necessary to prove a point and stood behind his words like no other.

While Paine's influence on the American government is clear, it is not as clear how extensive the author's influence affected the French Revolution. Since Paine served as translator and representative regarding the criticisms and writings of Edmund Burke, and maintained a lasting friendship with the Marquis de La Fayette, it seems reasonable to think that Paine had a great deal of influence on garnering support for the French.

Independence

Independence, according to Paine, should be a God-given right. If all men are born equal and susceptible to the law under God, how is it wise to allow one person to rule over all the rest? By allowing such a form of government, one defies the natural law under which man was created and thereby defies God. Likewise, allowing one man or one family, as it is in a monarchy, to rule over all the land makes the ruler the center of everything, again replacing God. Who is to say that endowing this significant amount of power is wise? Would it not encourage corruption and greed?

Independence and a governmental form of democracy is the closest thing to natural law. It is the natural law that will allow the creation and maintenance of harmony; despotism will only encourage class separation and misery.

Paine's entire life was devoted to the fight for independence. When one battle was won, there was always another left to be fought.

Religion

Paine does not profess to be a religious man. The author recognizes that there is a God and that many different cultures believe the same thing, albeit in different ways.

Religion may be seen as the basis for many cultures, yet it is used by others as a tool of control. Paine believes that some governments use religion as a means of distracting its people, thereby usurping power to rule with their own goals in mind. One will not question the mysteries of religion because it is seen as blasphemy.

The fable of Creationism, as Paine refers to it, is filled with fantastic tales. There is no proof that any of the tales are true, as some believe. Others view the Bible as a book of parables, which should be used as a guide for living. Paine details the origin of the Bible, as far as it is known to modern man, and attempts to prove that it was man who decided which materials were appropriate for public consumption. In the author's eyes, one does not need a book to learn of God's word. One only needs to look around and see what God has created.



Style

Style

Perspective

Thomas Paine writes with the expertise of a well practiced political mind. As one of the founding fathers of the United States, Paine understands firsthand what is needed in order to form a new and democratic government. It is unlikely that anyone that has not participated in such a formation could truly understand the effort and commitment necessary to accomplish one's goals.

Paine came to America as a widely read pamphleteer, intellectual, and political radical. Paine proved, through the power of the pen, that one voice can indeed make a difference when it comes to educating the public in the limitless possibilities of government.

It may seem at times that Paine is distracted by his obsession with the monarchy, and in later times, in his ongoing debate with Edmund Burke. Still, it can be said that Paine's thoughts, ideals, and actions have created a man who was, and is, highly admired.

It is impossible to say what differences there would be in the American and French governments if Thomas Paine had no existed. It may also be impossible for one man to be the sole cause behind reform, as reform is an action of many against an established entity. However, even Paine's opponents could not detract from his reasoning and efforts in promoting a government that is just for all.

Tone

The tone of Paine's works remains the same throughout. There is no doubt that Paine was an educated man, and at times perhaps that education hindered the author's ability to drive a point home. It is easy for Paine to get caught up in an argument, particularly when he believes that his thoughts are correct. Readers will see this in Paine's repeated references and attacks, although justified, on Edmund Burke and the English monarchy.

Paine does not condescend to the reader, but rather seeks to educate. While the role of the government may seem unimportant to the average man, Paine argues that the average man is the one who should be controlling the government. The remedy to tyranny is so apparent to Paine that the author may appear to be patronizing or browbeating those who oppose him or are simply uninformed.

Although the material covered in these works is of a serious nature, Paine delights in interspersing humor in his work. This can be seen especially in *Age of Reason*, where Paine points out the absurdities believed and celebrated by people in regard to their



religion. Had the people not been educated to believe the fantastic tales in the Bible, it is hard to fathom that anyone could believe them.

At long last, Paine does close his long winded and detailed criticism of government. If the reader can wade through the explanations and continual references to the English government, the works are a precious work of art.

Structure

The structure of the individual works contained in the volume of Thomas Paine's essential writings can be considered to be laborious. Paine is remarkably verbose at times, perhaps in keeping with the era as well as the indulgence of time taken to complete the work.

The Introduction and Appendix to Common Sense in itself is sixty-eight pages long. This does not include the introduction and foreword written by another for the purpose of framing the work and outlining Paine's influences and career. That foreword and introduction together are thirty pages long.

Common Sense is broken into four subsections, each gliding effortlessly into the next. The subject remains on track, albeit lengthy, and Paine presents an articulate argument.

The Crisis is sixty pages in length, a much more refined and condensed work.

The Rights of Man is an extremely long and drawn out affair. Part I, in its entirety, is 128 pages in length. There are many brilliant points in this work, but again, Paine takes the liberty of repeating his views, albeit in a different light each time.

The Rights of Man, Part II, was written as a sequel. Paine states that the purpose for this was to allow anyone, particularly Edmund Burke, the opportunity to refute the ideas and claims that serve as the basis of the work. The Rights of Man, Part II, is ninety-three pages in length and in keeping with its predecessor, overly verbose.

Age of Reason is comprised of nineteen pages. In this work Paine seems more focused and tends to keep his points neat and orderly without unnecessary reiteration of his beliefs.

Agrarian Justice is the shortest work, containing only seven pages. The format is more like former works instead of Age of Reason and one could see how the thoughts therein could be streamlined. Still, Paine makes great strides in presenting his views on natural law and how it should apply to government as well as society.



Quotes

"I know it is difficult to get over local or longstanding prejudices, yet if we will suffer ourselves to examine the component parts of the English constitution, we shall find them to be the base remains of two ancient tyrannies, compounded with some new republican materials." p. 8

"There is something exceedingly ridiculous in the composition of monarchy; it first excludes a man from the means of information, yet empowers him to act in cases where the highest judgment is required." p. 9

"Where there are no distinctions there can be no superiority, perfect equality affords no temptation." p. 35

"No country on the globe is so happily situated, or so internally capable of raising a fleet as America." p. 43

"We fight neither for revenge nor conquest; neither from pride or passion; we are not insulting the world with our fleets and armies, nor ravaging the globe for plunder." p. 63

"These are the times that try men's souls: The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis shrink from the service of his country; but that he stands it NOW, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman." p. 71

"The necessity of always fitting our internal police to the circumstances of the times we live in, is something so strikingly obvious that no sufficient objection can be made against it." p. 81

"Those who expect to reap the blessings of freedom must, like men, undergo the fatigues of supporting it." p. 83

"The government of England is no friend to the revolution of France." p. 130

"Lay then the axe to the root, and teach Governments humanity." p. 157

"Whatever is my right as a man is also the right of another; and it becomes my duty to guarantee as well as to possess." p. 220

"Reason and Ignorance, the opposite of each other, influence the great bulk of mankind." p. 248

"What is Government more than the management of the affairs of a Nation?" p. 252

"From what we now see, nothing of reform in the political world ought to be held improbable." p. 256

"When the American Revolution was established I felt a disposition to sit serenely down and enjoy the calm." p. 258

"What scenes of horror, what perfection in iniquity, present themselves in contemplating the character and reviewing the history of such Governments!" p. 277



Topics for Discussion

How might support for the American Revolution have suffered without the existence of Common Sense?

Would Common Sense have had the same impact if its authorship was known at the time of publication? Explain.

How might England be ruled if the people had taken Paine's advice and abolished the monarchy? Would their poverty be reduced? If so, by how much?

Would a political agreement between Paine and Burke have changed how the world viewed the French Revolution? Explain.

Paine asserts that much of basis of Christianity was derived from pagan traditions and beliefs. Do you believe this to be true? Explain.

Do you agree that there is a significant difference between Agrarian Justice and Agrarian Law? Explain.

How would America's trade with other countries be affected today if America was still affiliated with England?

Would the American militia have been able to conquer the British if it lacked the fervor surrounding the quest for the ideal government? Would the British have won if they possessed the same sense of unity as the Americans?