

Thomas paine citizen of the world history essay

[History](#)



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Thomas Paine was born in England and granted honorary citizenship in both America and France for his contributions to the countries' development. All three of these countries at one time or another wanted nothing to do with him, wanted him imprisoned or even wanted him dead. This was because a countries affiliation with him was based more on when it was convenient or politically accommodating. Thomas Paine was not really a citizen of any of these countries, but truly he was, as he put it, " A citizen of the world", driven by his urge to inspire all humanity to be based on reason, freedom and equality regardless of the borders or political systems that surrounded him (Solinger 609). Thomas Paine spent his first 37 years in England, the country he was born in, with relatively little significance. At the age of 36 he was working as an excise officer for the English government. While serving in this position he wrote a proposal to parliament for an increase in compensation for himself and his fellow workers. This was the first notable instance of him taking a stand to demand what he believed was fair. His request led him to being discharged from his position and he soon found himself penniless. Shortly after this he had the good fortune of meeting and making a very strong impression on Benjamin Franklin who convinced him that America would be a better fit for him and his beliefs. So, with a letter of introduction from Franklin, Paine took the trip across the Atlantic to start a new life in Philadelphia and this is where his story truly begins (Nash). Once Paine arrived in America he took a job serving as an editor for the Pennsylvania Magazine which had a fundamental basis of encouraging the colonists to resist British policies and dominance over them. In this time, many of Paine's beliefs were being solidified and brought to public debate. He argued against slavery, dominance of one country over another, ignoring <https://assignbuster.com/thomas-paine-citizen-of-the-world-history-essay/>

the poor and discrimination of any given faith or financial background. He believed society should be governed by the people who make it up and supported by logic, reason, and equality (Jendrysik 142-143). This is where Paine started to truly find his revolutionary voice and the popularity of the magazine led Paine to write his first of many historical pamphlets called *Common Sense* (Nash). In *Common Sense*, Paine began to really find his audience and displayed an uncanny ability to inspire his readers to share his view. He was naturally driven to unmask and expel those in positions of power who attained them without what he considered legitimate merit (Solinger 602). He portrayed the British authorities as men who contradicted their own laws of behaviors and argued that obedience to such men was unnatural and a disservice to future generations (Solinger 602). *Common Sense* became widely read by the colonists and helped to inspire the Americans to enter into a war with their mother country. After inspiring Americans to rise up and revolt against the British, the war looked as if it was going to end very quickly with the British simply dominating the American troops and American military failures at almost every turn. With American troops on the verge of defeat, yet to claim even one victory and emotionally drained, Thomas Paine wrote *The Crisis*, the first of many pamphlets under that title. It opened up with the line " These are the times that try men's souls." This pamphlet served to further justify the reasons and importance of the revolution and inspired the troops to fight on and many other colonists to enlist. It is said that General George Washington had it read to all of his men just before crossing the Delaware and claiming the first, and maybe the most important, victory for the Americans. It was at this point that the momentum of the war began to shift (Gallagher 87). While maybe the inspiration to the

<https://assignbuster.com/thomas-paine-citizen-of-the-world-history-essay/>

troops may have been enough, Paine was not just a pamphleteer writing for others to fight a war he felt was necessary, he himself enlisted to fight for the cause. Paine went on to write several more Crisis papers, continuing to feed the moral of the troops and donated the profits of the pamphlet sales to fund the effort. When the revolution was finally won by America, Paine was seen as a hero and many states recognized him with pensions and gifts (Nash). Aside from inspiring the troops, Paine also participated in the debates around the construction of a new government. He believed that every man should be given a right to vote because exclusions were precarious and while some individuals may not have the ability to vote, the ability to revolt cannot be taken away so easily. He believed the elected officials of the new government should be restricted to serve short terms to combat the possibility of corruption. He believed in a system of checks and balances and that representative government was the only way the people of the represented nation retained any freedom or natural rights (Kittle 17). After the war in America was won Paine returned to England where he turned his focus off from politics and instead to science. In this time he worked on inventions such as a crane, smokeless candles, an engine operated by gun powder and maybe what he is most noted for, a single span iron bridge which was recognized and approved by the French Academy (Clark 141). He was relatively quiet in this time in terms of his writings but his belief remained firm. Then, with the rise of the French Revolution, Paine was once again inspired to write after Edmund Burke wrote a paper trying to encourage the French citizens to end it and maintain the monarchy. In response to Burke, Paine wrote another of his most famous works, Rights of Man, further asserting that no man was preordained to rule over another and <https://assignbuster.com/thomas-paine-citizen-of-the-world-history-essay/>

that monarchies are the result of corrupted men in history (Nash). To sum up the ideas of Rights of Man, Mark Jendrysik, author of Tom Paine: Utopian? puts it, " Social Order cannot be maintained unless the conditions of poverty and oppression under which most people live are ended." Paine wrote Rights of Man while still living in England and the ideas it provided inspired many in England to put these revolutionary concepts into petitions to Parliament. This resulted not in the petitions being considered but instead the English government released a royal declaration accusing these people of sedition and giving royal consent to anyone who wanted to attack people of these beliefs (Andrews 7). It also led to Paine himself being charged with seditious libel and he fled to France where the very same work earned him honorary citizenship (Nash). In August 1792 the monarchy of France was suspended and the Legislative Assembly was replaced with a National Convention. Paine was elected to be a part of this convention, aligning himself with the Girondin political group. In the following months he was one of 9 people to help draft France's new constitution and argued that the former king, Louis XVI, be given a fair trial. Paine believed the king was guilty of tyranny but he also believed that he deserved the right to defend his innocence. He also argued that, upon conviction, the king should not be put to death, but instead be banished to America to live out his years in the young country he did help to set free. He was able to convince just under half the majority of the convention and his position was defeated. Louis the XVI was later beheaded (Andrews 8). The defeat of this motion not only cost the former king his life, but it marked a shift in power of the fiercely divided and corrupted convention and the Girondins were soon expelled from it and many were even imprisoned and beheaded. Paine would have been among

<https://assignbuster.com/thomas-paine-citizen-of-the-world-history-essay/>

those who were immediately imprisoned had it not been for a warning he received on his way to the legislation that day. Having dodged the initial series of imprisonments in the era known as the "Reign of Terror" Paine returned to his home on the French countryside where he spent the next several months drinking and writing the first part of his next extremely controversial work *The Age of Reason* (Nash) (Andrews 9). Paine claimed he was inspired to write *The Age of Reason* as a result of the French Revolution getting off track from its "Just and humane principles" (McWilliams 460). In this collection of works Paine claimed that all organized religion, most specifically Christianity, was "human inventions to enslave man and monopolize power and profit." He essentially claimed Christianity was an invention born in hell. He asserted that he was not an atheist as he had been deemed, but a deist. He referred to Deism as "a pure and simple faith which makes religion a private matter between the individual and his creator and which involves no organization, no church buildings, and no expense." He believed in God, just not organized religion or that one man was more suited to interpret the will of the Creator more than another. He believed the proof of the creator was in the laws of science, that science did not disprove his existence, but did just the opposite. With the publication of this work, Paine had sufficiently enraged most of the Americans who once championed him as a hero (Kittle 18 - 20)(Nash). Shortly after writing the first part of *The Age of Reason* Paine was arrested in France and imprisoned in Luxemburg prison where he spent 11 months awaiting his fate at the guillotine. In this time he grew bitter that America, most particularly George Washington, did not demand his immediate release. He wrote several bitter letters to America's first president, one of them saying "And as to you, sir, treacherous in private <https://assignbuster.com/thomas-paine-citizen-of-the-world-history-essay/>

friendship (for so you have been to me and in the day of danger) and a hypocrite in public life, the world will be puzzled to decide whether you are an APOSTATE or an IMPOSTOR - whether you have abandoned good principles, or whether you ever had any." He later published these letters and, teaming them up with his anti-organized religion beliefs, he had effectively ended any popularity he had with Americans (Andrews 10). Eventually the power shifted again in France and James Monroe, the American Ambassador there, was able to secure his release. Less than 8 months later, in July 1795, Paine was once again involved in French politics serving as an advisor to the new group in power, The Directory (Andrews, 9 - 10). In this time he also wrote his second part of The Age of Reason where he responded to the backlash he had received for the first part. He searched the bible for evidence of its reliability regarding its historical content and moral standing and claimed it did not have any. He inferred that the stories contained in it were absurd, indecent and cruel and that priests had turned religion into a trade. He further sustained his claim by citing the contradiction of the church selling prayers and pardons to free souls from man's invention of purgatory (Kittle 118-119). Paine's next major literary work was Agrarian Justice where he curbed back his direct bashing of religion and instead made his arguments for conditions that would improve society as a whole. He laid out his own blueprint for a fair and just society with reasonable arguments that made it seem not so much as the idea of a dreamer, but as a reasonable plan for the wellbeing of mankind (Jendrysik 142). He argued for the end of slavery, the outlawing of dueling and a cease to the death penalty calling it all inhumane (Clark 141). In Agrarian Justice he also argued that poverty was unnatural and within the reach of mankind to

<https://assignbuster.com/thomas-paine-citizen-of-the-world-history-essay/>

solve. He said that private property passed from one generation to the next cheated a majority of people born of this earth of their natural inheritance (Jendrysik 151). He went on to say that in the beginning of time (the creation by God) there existed a pool of resources not intended to be controlled by any select group of individuals, referring to the world as the common property of its inhabitants and that poverty was born in individuals controlling the land and limiting the natural resources to the public in general (Lamb 492-493). Because Paine also believed that there was no way to return to a state of nature, where property ownership did not exist, he made the case that in compensation for the masses natural born disposition every individual who reached the age of twenty one should receive Fifteen pounds. In Agrarian Justice he also made the case that an old age pension should exist, where every individual age 50 and older should receive ten pounds a year to survive off of. This could be said to be the initial argument for Social Security, well over 100 years before it existed (Jendrysik 152). In 1802 Paine returned to America where he was given less than a positive reception. He was now more despised in America due to his verbal attacks on George Washington and his anti-Christian views. As a frustrated man, abandoned and despised by nearly everyone he aspired to help and encourage, Paine died in 1809. His funeral was a dismal scene of just a few close friends and two African Americans who recognized and appreciated one of the few founding fathers who fought to abolish slavery in the new great nation. Having been raised as a Quaker, Paine's dying wish was to be buried on Quaker grounds. This request was refused (Nash). Thomas Paine spent a lifetime building a case and presenting a plan for a better world. As he put it, he was a citizen of that world. His affiliations truly lied with what he

<https://assignbuster.com/thomas-paine-citizen-of-the-world-history-essay/>

felt was best for mankind and society as a whole. He was not an American, an Englishman, a Frenchman, a Christian or an Atheist. He was Thomas Paine, a man whose beliefs transcended any particular category or border. He argued for the rights of all men and set out to dissect and destroy any system that implied that any one man is better than any other. He built arguments for the abolition of slavery, better universal education, an old age pension and taxes on property to fight against poverty (Clark 141). Paine envisioned a world democracy where any human born of this earth was provided the rights and opportunities to contribute to our collective existence (Kittle 21). He firmly believed that men always had the capacity to impact and influence the environment they were in. Social progress and equality is an inevitable development in the timeline of mankind, the only variable is the speed of which equality is achieved and tyranny is dispelled (Jendrysik 141). While Thomas Paine may have died an unpopular man, two hundred years later he is celebrated and his ideas are still present in political debates all around the world (Nash).

Outline

Paine, spent his first 37 years in England until being fired from his job as an excise officer for petitioning for more fair compensation for him and his fellow officers.

Ben Franklin met Thomas Paine in London and invited him to come to America.

-At age 37 Paine moved to Philadelphia and began editing for the Pennsylvania Magazine.-He was one of the few founding fathers who spoke out vehemently against slavery.

Following the popularity of the magazine, Paine wrote Common Sense a pamphlet that served to inspire the young nation to rebel against the British and not just demand reform, but instead, independence. He saw this as an opportunity to reinvent society/government in general.

-To revive the dwindling spirits of the American troops during the Revolution Paine wrote a series of papers under the title The Crisis. These papers are credited with reinvigorating the Americans cries for independence and encouraging them to fight on.

Once America won its independence, Paine returned to England to work on scientific projects, most particularly a single span iron bridge.

When the French Revolution was in full swing, Paine once again got involved seeing it as an opportunity to help reconstruct the political systems in Europe, starting with France.

-For these ideas he wrote, Rights of Man, a pamphlet about the natural rights of humans in general.-This led to inspire many British citizens to petition parliament for change.-Parliament responded by charging Paine with Seditious Libel.-This also led to the new convention in France to vote and grant him honorary French citizenship.-Paine fled to France just before being arrested in England-In France Paine was elected as a representative to serve in the convention and argued to spare the life of the former king (Louis XVI).- Eventually, the political group Paine was part of was overthrown and he was arrested. This was during the Reign of Terror.-Before his arrest, Paine wrote the first of his two part piece, The Age Of Reason, where he declared himself a deist and strongly criticized all organized religion saying it was a

<https://assignbuster.com/thomas-paine-citizen-of-the-world-history-essay/>

means for the wicked to manipulate the masses.-Paine spent about a year in prison awaiting a guillotine sentence where he grew frustrated and disappointed in America, most particularly George Washington for not demanding his freedom.-Paine was eventually released when the powers running the French Government were once again overthrown.

After Paine was Release from the French Prison, he wrote the second part of The Age of Reason where he criticized the Bible saying it was fictitious and encouraged barbarianism and there was no way it could be interpreted as the words of God.

-Between this and some angry letters he had written to George Washington from the French prison, which he later published, he had now made himself an enemy of most American citizens.

Paine eventually returned to America at the invitation of Thomas Jefferson to live out the rest of his life.

-His last major work was Agrarian Justice. In it, he argued for the rights of the common man, including an old-age pension, a minimum wage and a variety of other rights that are now taken for granted today.