

# Essay on thomas paines common sense: support for the us revolutionary war

[War](#), [Revolutionary War](#)



The early half of the 1770s in the New England American colonies was a tense time because of the conflict intensifying between the English colonists and Great Britain. For awhile the colonists had put up with their connection to England because they were able to live far away from the King and enjoy some new freedoms. England was not willing to give up control of the colonies and their business futures. And finally King George and the English parliament went too far. The time was ripe for revolution in America. Thomas Paine moved from England to the colonies at the urging of Benjamin Franklin. Paine became the philosophical 'cheerleader' for the American Revolution. He made sure the mood for the American Revolution stayed high. Paine's writings were important for sustaining the power and devotion for carrying on with the American Revolution even during the darkest times. The intention of the King and the Parliament became transparent; neither had any interest in negotiating or making compromises with the colonists. Thomas Paine, a liberal Englishman, travelled to the new colonies to expressly because of the revolutionary effort. Paine wrote essays about freedom and independence that are now American classics. The essays were distributed as pamphlets. Some people thought the essays were "inflammatory" but they still speak to anyone today who cares about democracy, freedom and independence.

At one short point in time there seemed to be a chance for reconciliation between England and the new colonies. In 1775 Edmund Burke, an Irishman, made a speech in Parliament titled "On Conciliation with the Colonies" The speech has been described as "brilliant" but at the time most of Parliament hated the sentiments Burke proclaimed. Burke pointed out to the English

Parliament that England's differences with the Americans were not theoretical differences to be endlessly discussed. He explained that the problems were real and needed to be addressed practically. Even though Burke's argument made common sense the Parliament did not agree and his proposal lost " by 78 to 270."

The British army marched on Lexington and Concord in Massachusetts inflaming the tense situation and then the battle of Bunker Hill took place. The underlying reason for the conflict was because the King and the English Parliament were trying to monopolize the sale of tea. They planned to use the East India Company in the colonies as they had in India. American tea merchants were enraged because they would they lose their livelihoods but that was not the only reason. The merchants were apprehensive and concerned that a pattern of monopolization would begin in the colonies that could not be stopped.

Thomas Paine rushed to New England to show his solidarity with the anti-monopoly colonists. He was 37 years old and had been encouraged by Ben Franklin to move to the colonies to seek a new life there. Paine was a passionate voice of liberty and justice. He used his writing to make sure the colonists kept the passion needed to start and maintain a revolution. Herder (1997) explained that Paine threw himself into " the cause at hand as the stirring spiritual voice of the American rebellion from English domination."

Paine did address his readers in much the same way a minister would address his congregation perhaps entreating them not to sin. But Paine was entreating the Americans to break clean from England and start a new country.

Here is an example of the way he wrote. He used all capital letters for words he wanted to emphasize. "As a long and violent abuse of power, is generally the Means of calling the right of it in question and as the King of England hath undertaken in his OWN RIGHT, to support the Parliament in what he calls THEIRS, and as the good people of this country are grievously oppressed by the combination." In the preceding passage 'own right' and 'theirs' referring to the King and Parliament may have been meant to help people understand just how outrageous the King was acting, presuming that the colonies were 'theirs' (the King's and Parliament's) and that they had the right to dictate their demands to the colonists expecting the colonists to automatically comply. Paine uses very strong language as in this passage "to reject the usurpations of either" where he implores the colonists to refuse to allow the King and the English Parliament to steal the rights of the colonists (ie. usurp).

Paine must have sounded like an evangelist for independence. He used exaggerated rhetoric like "Let the names of Whig and Tory be extinct," In other words the Whigs and the Tories were like the Devil and needed to be driven from the colonies. Another example of sermon-like rhetoric is when he calls upon the colonists to "love mankind" and "Freedom" is the "fugitive" that the colonists should "receive" and protect (or uphold). Paine does include spiritual concepts like loving mankind in the essay. Freedom is treated a little bit like some ministers talk about Jesus Christ, as a fugitive from the Romans. Jesus Christ also needed the support of the people and so did Freedom in 1776.

Although Parliament sided with the king, Paine pointed his anger and

criticisms directly at the king. He referred to the King of England approximately 28 times in the text of Common Sense. The speech “ But where, say some, is the king of America? I’ll tell you, Friend, he reigns above and doth not make havoc of mankind like the royal brute of Great Britain.” Paine reminded the colonists that the King of Heaven (God) was the only King of America. The excerpt was also an important comparison to the government of England which offered nothing even resembling freedom. On the other hand the colonists had a chance to form a more democratic government if they would persevere and fight for their rights. The very last lines of his essay were originally written all in capital letters; Paine was encouraging the colonists to only allow (in the colonies) a certain type of person. That person should be “ A GOOD CITIZEN, AN OPEN AND RESOLUTE FRIEND, AND, A VIRTUOUS SUPPORTER OF THE RIGHTS OF MANKIND AND OF THE FREE AND INDEPENDANT STATES OF AMERICA.” Here as earlier Paine makes the point that the colonists are on the morally correct side of the fight against the Whigs, the Tories and the King of England.

In conclusion the essay Common Sense by Thomas Paine did not use facts to make an argument for revolution. Common Sense was not a reasoned argument about why fighting for their liberties and freedoms was important. The title of Paine’s pamphlet Common Sense is ironic because the author uses emotional arguments to encourage the colonists to make a revolution. Could it be that Paine chose the name from Burke’s speech in the English parliament? Perhaps Paine named his essay after Edmund Burke’s reasoned and common sense arguments for respecting and negotiating with the colonists. Unfortunately that strategy did not work for Burke in the

Parliament so Paine spoke to the emotions of the colonists to consider right versus wrong and then choose the morally right side. On the other hand the essay does meet the intent of the author so the text is successful from that point of view. Paine's excited, passionate language kept the colonists aroused against the King and kept the colonists focused on the goal of independence.

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