

Name essays examples

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‘ Instructor’s Name’

‘ Subject’

Critique on two articles regarding the American Revolution

How radical was the American Revolution?

‘ How Radical was the American Revolution,’ an article written by Dr. Paul Rahe, is an exploration of the revolutionary nature of founding of the American republic. The article is an extensive scrutiny into the political thought process behind the American Revolution. The author brings to our contemplation the radical nature of revolution itself and the ideas of the various political thinkers of that era. The article is intended for the scholarly community, both historians and academicians. Rahe, in an authoritative voice, lists out the events surrounding the founding of America, and traces the evolution of the principles based on which the revolution was fought. Impressively researched and explicitly written, this article is a highly informative discourse on the nature of the founding of this great nation. In this article, the author discusses the significance and the radical nature of the revolution. The founding fathers believed that the American Revolution was rendered revolutionary because it was fought on the principles of human freedom and self-governance. Rahe discusses in detail how the principles of the colonists and the parliamentarians were influenced by early European and American political ideologies. In particular, the ideas of John Locke, a seventeenth century English scholar, had an immense effect on the colonists.

Rache, opines that the proponents of the revolution tried to prove Locke’s words right, by establishing a government elected by people. He states that,

like the people in Europe, the educated Americans too were familiar with Locke's philosophies. In the two decades spanning between 1760 and 1776, Locke's words were extensively used for propaganda by the colonists.

Locke's ideologies gave the colonists the theoretical framework to oppose a government, which taxed them without seeking their consent.

In the beginning, there were proposals, notably from James Otis, that the colonists be offered representation in the parliament. However, the idea did not gain support from both the opposing camps, and it was decided by the colonists that they can trust no one except their duly elected representatives. Another alternative suggested by people such as Jefferson, Adams, Irondale and Wilson, was that the colonial legislative should make the decisions regarding the colony, with the King as the common executive and the Parliament be rendered powerless in colonial matters. This proposal too was rejected and thus, paved the way for the revolution. The Declaration independence was drafted, and the rest is history.

In this way, Rahe chronicles the ideological evolution of various alternatives proposed for granting self-governance to the American colony. In the end, he asserts that the revolution is radical and is a huge milestone in the history of mankind as it asserted the right of people to choose their representatives and thus, have a say in the governance of their country. Though, the author has not delved deep into the reasons why the American revolution is a significant turning point in human history, he has given some important insights into the events that led to the revolution. The article is more of a chronology of events rather than a strong argument about the merit of American independence as a revolutionary phenomenon. However, one has

to agree with the author about the values represented by the revolution. Many political experts opine that the American Revolution was a crucial incident in the human history. On a superficial level, this statement looks a bit exaggerated. Like other important revolutions, such as the French revolution, Russian Revolution or Glorious Revolution, institutional foundations were not overthrown, nor the governance passed from aristocracy to new social groups. Yet, the American Revolution had a serious impact on the global politics, because as a result of the revolution the monarchical rule was replaced by an elected government and the United States was born.

The Radicalism of the American Revolution

In his article ‘The Radicalism of the American Revolution,’ Gordon S. Wood argues that, though the American Revolution was different from other great revolutions of our time, it is equally, if not more, radical than any of them, in terms of its political and social consequences. The author’s title gives a clear picture of the content of the article. The article is addressed to progressive historians and social scientists who are trying to interpret the social implications of the revolution. American Revolution, according to Wood, not just altered the fabric of the American society but also significantly changed the course of history.

He categorically argues that in that era, all social evils, which we today connect with class stratifications, racism and to other such problems, were born out of connections to government. So, social problems cannot be viewed separate from the government. Hence, the language used by the then leaders, such as purifying a corrupt constitution, eliminating courtiers,

and fighting off crown power, are not just intended at initiating political changes but had a deeper social meaning.

Wood argues that the revolution did not just give birth to a new nation called the United States, but gave birth to a new society altogether. Earlier, only the border areas near to the Atlantic coast were economically affluent, and the outposts were underdeveloped. However, once the revolution took place, within fifty years, America became one of the most liberal and modern nations, with educated and entrepreneurial-minded citizens. And this transformation took place without major changes like industrial revolution or railroads.

In conclusion, Wood argues that the revolution, by abolishing aristocracy and bringing about respectability to and dominance of ordinary people, paved way for all the future social movements like the slavery abolition and women rights movements. His arguments are presented with clear and strong points.

He does a fair job of convincing the radical nature of the revolution by well planned and relevant arguments. The structure of the article is its greatest strength. In the beginning, he captures reader's attention by describing how on first glance the revolution and its leaders do not fit the common notion of revolution or radicalism. Then he stacks up well-articulated points, and negates all the counter arguments against his claim. One cannot agree more when he says that the revolution had momentous consequences, and transformed the colonists, from being subjects of a monarch to citizens who were participants of the political process.

Works Cited

Rahe, Paul. How Radical was the American Revolution? 1999. Web.

Wood, Gordon S. The Radicalism of the American Revolution. New York:

Vintage Books, 1993. Print.