

Common Sense

Thomas Paine (1737-1819) was a radical American pamphleteer. In 1776 he began to publish a series of pamphlets signed "*Common Sense*". Within a couple of months of the first publication, 120,000 copies had been sold. People all over the 13 colonies read *Common Sense*. People who could not read had it read to them. It was probably the first "bestseller" our country ever had! In his writings, Paine attacked the right of the king and Parliament to rule the colonies. He put in writing what many had only been thinking: America should be independent from Great Britain! It became a rallying point for the unsure. In his words:

"The sun never shined on a cause of greater worth. 'Tis not the affair of a city, a county, a province, or a kingdom; but of a continent--of at least one-eighth part of the habitable globe. . . America would have flourished as much, and probably much more, had no European power taken any notice of her. The commerce by which she hath enriched herself are the necessities of life, and will always have a market while eating is the custom in Europe . . . We have boasted the protection of Great Britain without considering that her motive was interest, not attachment; and that she did not protect us from our enemies on our account, but from her enemies on her own account . . . Everything that is right or reasonable pleads for separation . . . Even the distance at which the Almighty hath placed England and America is a strong and natural proof that the authority of the one over the other, was never the design of heaven."

Question:

What was the main idea that Thomas Paine expressed in "*Common Sense*?"

Step 1: Read the excerpt from Thomas Paine’s Common Sense

Step 2: Interpret what is being said and write the meaning in your own words.

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