

# THOMAS PAINE'S COMMON SENSE

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*Thomas Paine immigrated to America from England. In January, 1776, Paine published Common Sense, which instantly became a "best seller" in the colonies. The booklet helped convince many Americans to embrace the idea of independence. These are condensed excerpts.*

In the following pages I offer nothing more than simple facts, plain arguments, and common sense.

I challenge the warmest advocate for reconciliation to show a single advantage that this continent can reap by being connected with Great Britain.

But the injuries and disadvantages we sustain by that connection are without number. Any submission to, or dependence on, Great Britain tends directly to involve this continent in European wars and quarrels, and sets us at variance [at odds] with nations who would otherwise seek our friendship.

Everything that is right or natural pleads for a separation. Even the distance at which the Almighty has 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.

As to government matters, it is not in the power of Britain to do this continent justice. The business of it will soon be too weighty and intricate to be managed with any tolerable degree of convenience by a power so distant from us and so very ignorant of us. To be always running three or four thousand miles with a tale or petition, waiting four or five months for an answer, will in a few years be looked upon as folly and childishness.

Small islands not capable of protecting themselves are the proper objects for king-

doms to take under their care; but there is something very absurd in supposing a continent to be perpetually governed by an island.

O ye that love mankind! Ye that dare oppose, not only the tyranny, but the tyrant, stand forth!

Every spot of the old world is overrun with oppression. Freedom has been hunted around the globe. Asia and Africa have long expelled her. Europe regards her like a

stranger, and England has given her warning to depart. O! receive the fugitive, and prepare in time an asylum [a safe place] for mankind.



We ought to reflect, that there are three different ways by which independence may be established; and that one of those three will, one day or another, be the fate of America: by the legal voice of the people in Congress; by a military power; or by a mob.

Should independence be brought about by the first of those means, we have every opportunity before us, to form the noblest, purest constitution on the face of the earth.

We have it in our power to begin the world over again. The birthday of a new world is at hand.

**Group Discussion:** *What do you think is Paine's best argument for breaking the colonies away from Great Britain? What does he think is happening around the world to the idea of freedom? What possibilities does he see for America if it becomes an independent country?*