

DISCOVER AMERICA

Teacher Guide



Seeds of Revolution: Exploring Natural Rights and Liberty

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Key Themes

- Creating a Fair Government
- Natural Rights and Freedom
- The American Revolution
- The Role of Government
- Unity and Determination for Independence

Core Values

- Community
- Life
- Faith
- Liberty



Learning Objectives

Students will be able to

- Explain the concept of natural rights and provide examples of how these rights are essential to freedom.
- Analyze the importance of the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness in relation to personal and societal freedom.
- Evaluate the impact of natural rights on the ability of individuals to make their own choices and live freely.
- Discuss the role of freedom of speech in ensuring individuals can express their thoughts and opinions without fear of punishment.
- Examine the connection between the right to own property and personal freedom, and explain how this right was violated under British rule.
- Investigate how the British government's actions, such as the Stamp Act and the Coercive Acts, violated the colonists' natural rights and led to protests.
- Analyze how the colonists' understanding of their natural rights contributed to their desire for independence from Great Britain.

Learning Objectives

Students will be able to

- Explore how Thomas Paine's *Common Sense* impacted the colonists' decision to fight for their independence and form a new government.
- Discuss the importance of unity among the colonists during the Revolution, and explain how working together helped them challenge British rule.
- Explain how Paine's ideas about government and freedom influenced the formation of the United States and continue to shape our understanding of rights and justice today.



Key Terms

- 0 1 **accessible:** something that is easy to understand, reach, or use.
- 0 2 **apprentice:** someone who works under someone else to learn a trade or skill.
- 0 3 **common sense:** using good judgment and thinking about what makes the most sense in a situation.
- 0 4 **constitution:** a set of rules that everyone in the country has to follow.
- 0 5 **Declaration of Independence:** a document that explained why the colonies wanted to break away from Great Britain.
- 0 6 **freedom of religion:** the freedom to worship however someone chooses.
- 0 7 **freedom of speech:** the freedom to express your thoughts and ideas openly and speak your mind without fear of punishment.
- 0 8 **fundamental:** refers to something that is very important and necessary for something to work or exist.
- 0 9 **government:** a system of rules and leaders that help keep people safe and make sure everyone is treated fairly.
- 1 0 **metaphor:** a type of figure of speech where two things are compared without using "like" or "as."
- 1 1 **natural rights:** special freedoms that belong to you just because you are a human being.
- 1 2 **pamphlet:** a small booklet or paper that has information about something important.
- 1 3 **Parliament:** Britain's government.

Key Terms

- 1 4 **privateer:** a ship owned by a private individual or group that was authorized by the government to attack enemy ships, especially during wartime.
- 1 5 **Quartering Act:** a law that forced the colonists to house, feed, and provide supplies for British soldiers who were stationed in their towns.
- 1 6 **revolution:** when a group of people fights to change the way they are governed, or when their way of thinking changes to lead them to act differently.
- 1 7 **Revolutionary War:** the fight between the colonies and Great Britain for the colonists' independence. It lasted from 1775 to 1783 and ended with the colonies winning their freedom and becoming the United States of America.
- 1 8 **right to own property:** the ability to take care of and decide what happens to the property you own, whether it's a home, land, or belongings.
- 1 9 **Stamp Act:** a rule made by Great Britain that said the colonists had to pay extra money, called a tax, on things made from paper.
- 2 0 **unity:** working together and being strong as a group.

Introduction

TELL Students 🗣️

Alright, patriots, imagine what life would be like if you couldn't raise your hand to ask a question, share your opinions, or even choose what game to play at recess. How would that make you feel? Life would be very different, right? Now, let's think about why those things are so important and what they mean for us. These freedoms are known as **natural rights** — special freedoms that belong to you simply because you are a human being. Natural rights are important because they allow you to make decisions about your life, your family, and your community. These rights are so essential that no one can take them away from you. Think about things in nature, like the sun rising or the trees growing tall. Just like these natural occurrences, our natural rights are a part of who we are. Now, let's look more closely at what these natural rights mean:

- The right to life means you should be safe and live free from harm.
- The right to liberty means you can make your own choices — whether it's what games to play, what you want to be when you grow up, or how to spend your time.
- The right to pursue happiness means you have the freedom to do what makes you happy, whether it's learning new things, helping others, or doing what you love.
- The right to express your thoughts and ideas openly without fear of punishment means that you can share what you believe, speak up about your feelings, and be heard.
- The right to own property means you have the right to own things like your home, belongings, or anything you've worked hard for, and no one can take those things from you without a fair reason.

These natural rights protect freedom and ensure that everyone can live the life they choose. Without these rights, life would be very different, but with them, we can work hard to pursue our dreams.

ASK Students

Why are natural rights important? How do these rights help us live freely and fairly?

TELL Students

Natural rights, like the right to make choices and express our thoughts freely, are important because they help us live freely and fairly. The right to share your thoughts and ideas without fear of punishment is an essential part of this. It allows people to express their opinions openly and speak their minds. This right is important because it gives everyone the chance to share what matters to them and be heard.

Introduction

TELL Students (continued)

However, while we all have this natural right, it's also important to remember that we should always be respectful when we speak and listen to others. Our words should be kind and thoughtful, even when we don't agree. By being respectful, we help create an environment where everyone can share their ideas freely and feel valued. Remember, natural rights are gifts that help keep us free and allow everyone to live their lives the way they choose. They are a part of who we are and can never be taken away.

ASK Students

Why is it important to be respectful when we share our thoughts and ideas, even when we disagree?

TELL Students 🗝

Natural rights are essential freedoms that belong to every person and are crucial for our safety and freedom. They are fundamental because they are so important that they are needed for people to live as they choose. **Fundamental** refers to something that is very important and necessary for something to work or exist. Natural rights ensure that everyone is treated fairly and has the opportunity to make their own decisions. Natural rights protect our freedom by acting like shields. For instance, the right to life means we should be safe and free from harm. The right to liberty means we can make decisions about our lives, like choosing what to eat or what games to play. The right to pursue happiness allows us to chase after what makes us happy, whether it's learning something new, helping others, or doing something we love. Another natural right is the right to speak our minds. This right is important because it lets us share our ideas and opinions without fear of punishment. It ensures that everyone has the opportunity to be heard and that our voices matter. Without these rights, we would not have the freedom to live as we choose, and we could be treated unfairly. Imagine if someone took away your right to make choices for yourself or stopped you from sharing your thoughts — it would be unfair, right? That's why these rights are so important: they help protect who we are.

ASK Students

How do natural rights make our society stronger? Why is it important for people to have the ability to express their thoughts and make choices for themselves?

Introduction

TELL Students

Now, let's think about how important natural rights were to the colonists and how they played a role in the American Revolution. Imagine if you didn't have the right to make decisions for yourself, or if someone else made the rules for you without asking what you thought. That's what the colonists faced. They didn't have a say in the laws they had to follow, and this made them feel that their natural rights — the right to be safe, make their own choices, speak freely, and pursue happiness — were being ignored. One example of this was the **Stamp Act**, a law passed by the British government, or **Parliament**, that forced the colonists to pay taxes on everyday things like newspapers and legal documents. The colonists felt this was unfair because they had no voice in the decision, and it violated their right to make choices about their own lives. Another example is when Great Britain tried to impose a tax on tea. This sparked the Boston Tea Party, where angry colonists dumped taxed tea into the harbor to show they were not going to accept unfair treatment. Then came the Coercive Acts, or the "Intolerable Acts," which closed the port of Boston and took away more of the colonists' rights. The Stamp Act, the Boston Tea Party, and the Coercive Acts helped spark the American Revolution, which was a fight for independence from Great Britain. The **American Revolution** lasted from 1775 to 1783 and ended with the colonies gaining their freedom and creating the United States of America. These events show how much the colonists valued their natural rights and how they were willing to fight for them. The desire to protect these rights led them to demand a new government — one that would respect their freedom and allow them to live as they chose.

ASK Students

Why were the colonists upset about the Stamp Act and the Coercive Acts? How did these laws violate their natural rights? [Give students three minutes to discuss with a neighbor and then discuss as a class.]

TELL Students

After the Stamp Act and other unfair laws, the colonists realized their natural rights were being ignored. This unfair treatment led to a **revolution**, which occurs when a group of people challenges and fights to change the way they are governed, or when their beliefs and actions shift dramatically. Ultimately, this revolution resulted in the colonies becoming the United States of America. However, the American Revolution was more than just physical battles — it was also a revolution of thought.

Introduction

TELL Students (continued)

This revolution of thought helped the colonists understand their natural rights in a new way. One key influence was Thomas Paine's pamphlet *Common Sense*, in which he explained that the colonists had natural rights that no one, including the king, could take away. **[Reference Thomas Paine Image]** A **pamphlet** is a small booklet or paper used to share important ideas. Paine's clear writing helped the colonists understand that they didn't have to accept being treated unfairly. They had the right to stand up for their freedom and fight for it. Paine used his freedom of speech to inspire many colonists. Paine's message, combined with the courage of the colonists, led them to the decision to fight for their independence from Great Britain. The American Revolution was not just about defeating an enemy — it was about creating a new nation, where people could live freely, make their own choices, and protect their rights. Paine's ideas and the actions of the colonists helped lay the foundation for a country where people are free to pursue their dreams and safeguard the rights that are essential to their lives.

ASK Students

Why do you think Thomas Paine's *Common Sense* had such a big impact on the colonists?

TELL Students

Thomas Paine's *Common Sense* didn't just highlight the unfair treatment the colonists were facing from Britain — it introduced a groundbreaking idea that truly inspired the colonists to take action. Paine argued that everyone should have the power to make their own decisions and control their own lives. This shift in thinking was just as powerful as events like the Stamp Act because it made the colonists realize that standing up for their natural rights was not just an option — it was their responsibility! Paine helped them understand that they had the right to demand a government that would listen to them and protect their rights. This new mindset was one of the key factors that pushed the colonists to fight for independence. While the Stamp Act made the colonists realize their rights were being violated, Paine's *Common Sense* gave them the confidence to stand up and say enough is enough! Imagine how powerful it must have been to read Paine's words and realize that **YOU** have the power to change your future! Now, let's watch a Star Spangled Adventures cartoon to dive even deeper into how these ideas sparked the American Revolution!

Introduction

WATCH

Star Spangled Adventures Cartoon

Ep. 39: Common Sense/Thomas Paine/Natural Rights



Lesson

TELL Students

What is your favorite book? What do you love most about it? Maybe it's the thrilling plot that keeps you on the edge of your seat, the strong or lovable characters you can't help but root for, or perhaps the fascinating world the book creates that lets you escape into an entirely new place. Now, think back to when you first finished reading your favorite book. What did you do? Did you talk to your friends and family about it and recommend they read it too? Before we had smartphones, social media, and TV, this is how ideas spread. In the colonies, books, pamphlets, and newspapers were often passed around and discussed in homes, churches, and shops. The written word would spread quickly across the colonies, just like how ideas can spread online today. It might surprise you to think that literature in those days could have the same impact as a viral post or video today! Just like how books and stories can inspire you, powerful writings in history have the ability to inspire entire communities to take action and make important decisions about their future. Let's explore how the power of the written word helped shape the American Revolution!

ASK Students

How can the written word inspire people to take action or change their way of thinking? Can you think of a time when a book, article, or even a speech inspired you or someone you know?

TELL Students

In our Star Spangled Adventures episode, we learned that the British government passed the **Quartering Act**, a law that forced the colonists to house, feed, and provide supplies for British soldiers who were stationed in their towns. The colonists were upset because they did not want these soldiers in their homes, but they had no choice. They felt this was a direct violation of their natural rights. By forcing colonists to house soldiers, the British government was ignoring the colonists' right to safety and personal freedom. This violation of their rights sparked anger among the colonists, who began to question how they could protect these natural rights. They realized they couldn't remain silent when their freedoms were being taken away. **[Reference Thomas Paine Image]** This is when the ideas of Thomas Paine began to spread. Paine encouraged the colonists to stand up for their rights and use their freedom of speech to demand change. He showed them that they had the power, through their voices and actions, to fight for the freedoms they deserved. Paine's ideas helped the colonists realize that their natural rights were worth defending, and they must do whatever it took to protect their freedom.

Lesson

ASK Students

Why do you think it was so important for the colonists to stand up for their natural rights? How did the Quartering Act make them feel?

TELL Students 🗣️

The colonists felt frustrated, angry, and violated when British soldiers were forced onto their property without their consent. This **right to own property** is an essential natural right, meaning the colonists should have had control over how their land and resources were used. The right to own property includes the ability to take care of and decide what happens to the property you own, whether it's a home, land, or belongings. When soldiers were placed on the colonists' property, it felt like an invasion of their space, as they no longer had control over their own land. This situation made the colonists realize just how important it was to defend their right to own property and be able to use it as they saw fit. By standing up for this right, they were protecting their freedom and ensuring they could live without outside interference in the way they managed their land and possessions.

ASK Students

Why do you think the colonists felt so strongly about having soldiers forced onto their property? How does the right to own and take care of property connect to their desire for freedom?

TELL Students 📷🗣️

After the colonists realized how their natural rights were being ignored, they needed a way to understand how they could make a change. That's where Thomas Paine's pamphlet, *Common Sense*, came into play. **[Reference Common Sense Image]** In January 1776, Paine wrote a message that was clear and easy for everyone to understand, no matter their level of education or background. He used simple language and ideas that the colonists could relate to, like common sayings and religious references. If Paine had written *Common Sense* today, he might have used memes, hashtags, or even movie quotes to make his ideas more accessible! **Accessible** means something that is easy to understand, reach, or use. When we say that Paine's writing was accessible, it means that he wrote in a way that everyone could easily understand and relate to. Paine's writing showed the colonists that they had the right to speak out against what was wrong and to protect their natural rights — like the right to make their own choices and to pursue happiness.

Lesson

TELL Students(continued)

His words helped the colonists understand that they didn't have to wait for someone else to make decisions for them. They could take control of their own lives and work together to create a government that truly worked for them. Paine inspired many colonists to believe that they had the power to fight for their independence from Britain and to create a country where their rights would be protected. This shift in thinking, sparked by Paine's words, helped set the stage for the American Revolution.

ASK Students

Why do you think it was important for Paine to write in a way that was accessible to everyone, no matter their background or education? How did this help spread his ideas to a larger group of people?

TELL Students

Paine's decision to write in a way that was accessible to everyone was important because it allowed his message to reach a wide audience. By using simple language and ideas that people could easily understand, he made it possible for more colonists to engage with his thoughts and feel inspired to act. Paine wanted the colonists to know they weren't helpless, and that they had the power to stand up for their rights. When people can understand important ideas, they are more likely to feel empowered to take action. Reading Paine's words would have been incredibly inspiring and empowering for the colonists. It would have made them realize that they weren't stuck in a situation they couldn't change. They had the ability to make their own choices, fight for their rights, and even create a fair government. Paine's pamphlet gave the colonists the confidence to believe in their power to create a better future. Writing, like Paine's, has the power to move people, inspire them to take action, and make them believe that they can change the world around them.

ASK Students

How did reading Paine's pamphlet make the colonists feel about their ability to change their lives and their government? What does that tell us about the power of words to inspire action? Think about a book, speech, or article that inspired you. What were you inspired to do?

Lesson

TELL Students

Reading Paine's pamphlet, *Common Sense*, would have made the colonists feel empowered and confident in their ability to make changes in their lives and their government. Paine's words showed them that they weren't powerless and that they had the right to stand up for their freedoms and fight for a better future. This is a great example of how powerful words can be. Books, speeches, and articles have the ability to inspire us to take action and do good things, just like Paine inspired the colonists to seek independence and create a fair government. However, words can also influence people in negative ways, which is why it's so important to read truthful, trustworthy materials — things approved by parents, teachers, and people we trust. Just as we see the impact of positive words inspiring us to do great things, we also need to be careful to avoid things that might mislead or encourage us to make harmful choices. The right kind of reading can help shape our character, inspire action, and encourage us to make positive changes in our world!

ASK Students

Now, think about how Paine's early life shaped his ability to write such inspiring words. What experiences in his life might have influenced the way he communicated his ideas?

TELL Students 🦋

Please read the following passage with a neighbor to learn more. [Print and distribute fifth-grade student text.]

*Thomas Paine's early life had a big influence on the ideas he shared later in his pamphlet *Common Sense*. Paine was born in 1737 in Thetford, England, and his family struggled financially, which meant Paine had to leave school at the age of 13. He became an **apprentice**, meaning he worked under someone to learn a skill or trade. In Paine's case, he worked in his father's corset shop, where corsets — tight-fitting garments — were made and sold. As he got older, Paine faced many challenges in his career. At 20, he worked for a short time as a sailor on a privateer ship. A **privateer** was a privately owned ship that received government authorization, known as a letter of marque, to attack and capture enemy ships during wartime. After this, Paine tried starting a business, but it failed. He also worked as a tax collector but was fired twice. The second time he was fired, it was because he asked the government to pay him and his colleagues more money, but his request was denied.*

Lesson

TELL Students (continued)

These struggles and frustrations with the British government helped shape Paine's belief that change was needed. This belief inspired the ideas he shared in Common Sense, where he called for independence and a new, fair system of government.

ASK Students

How do you think Thomas Paine's early life struggles, such as his challenges with work and his frustrations with the British government, might have influenced his views on fairness and freedom? How might these experiences have helped him understand the importance of standing up for what is right?

TELL Students

After facing many struggles in England, Thomas Paine moved to the colonies in 1774, seeking new opportunities. In Philadelphia, he met Benjamin Franklin, a prominent figure in American history, who saw Paine's potential. **[Reference Benjamin Franklin Image]** Franklin, recognizing Paine's passion for change, wrote him a letter of recommendation that helped Paine get started in his new life in America. At the age of 37, Paine quickly found work as a journalist, where he began writing about the growing frustration the colonists felt toward the British government. Remember, the colonists were upset because they were being taxed by Britain but had no say in the decisions being made in Parliament. For almost ten years, they tried to reason with the British government, but their voices were ignored. This created a deep sense of injustice, and the colonists began to feel that their natural rights were being taken away. Paine, witnessing this anger firsthand, was motivated to take action. With encouragement from Franklin and Dr. Benjamin Rush (who would later sign the Declaration of Independence), Paine decided to write a pamphlet that would address the colonists' struggles and inspire them to take a stand against British rule. This pamphlet, *Common Sense*, would go on to change the course of American history, pushing the colonists toward the idea of independence and a government that respected their rights.

ASK Students

How do you think meeting Benjamin Franklin and seeing the frustration of the colonists influenced Paine's decision to write *Common Sense*? What do you think motivated him to take action and speak out for independence?

Lesson

TELL Students

Please read the following passage to learn more.

*Paine's pamphlet **Common Sense** powerfully used his right to freedom of speech to argue that the colonies should break away from Great Britain and become independent. At a time when many still hoped for a peaceful resolution, Paine's bold words encouraged the colonists to take a stand for their rights, even when it seemed like an impossible task. His pamphlet spread quickly, inspiring many to believe that they had the power to change their situation. Paine's use of freedom of speech was crucial to his impact — he understood that writing could motivate people, even when they felt powerless. Through his words, Paine gave a voice to the frustrations and dreams of the colonists, helping them unite in their desire for independence. His pamphlet not only expressed the hopes of a whole population but also demonstrated how freedom of speech — the ability to openly share ideas and opinions — can lead to real change. Paine's writing helped people come together, find common ground, and take action to create a better future for themselves and their country.*

ASK Students

How do you think Paine's pamphlet **Common Sense** helped unite the colonists?

TELL Students 🦋

Paine's writing inspired the colonists to think deeply about independence. He believed that anyone had the right to believe they should break away from Britain — no need for special education or political experience. All they needed was common sense — something everyone has access to! **Common sense** means using sound judgment and thinking about the most logical solution. It's when you make decisions based on what seems fair and right, without needing complicated words or technical knowledge. Paine wanted the colonists to realize they didn't have to be experts to understand why they should fight for their freedom. Instead, they just needed to trust their common sense to see that standing up for their rights was the right thing to do. Paine's powerful yet simple message helped many colonists realize that they had the right to demand independence and fight for freedom. Common sense made it clear that they could choose to live in a way that respected their natural rights, and that this was worth fighting for. This idea was revolutionary and encouraged the colonists to take action for their future.

Lesson

ASK Students

Why do you think Thomas Paine emphasized using "common sense" to help the colonists realize they should fight for their independence?

TELL Students

For the colonists, Paine made it clear that they didn't need special education to see that they deserved the right to govern themselves, make their own choices, and protect their freedoms. Paine wanted them to realize that standing up for their natural rights wasn't just a matter of politics — it was simply the right thing to do. Paine's message gave the colonists the confidence to believe that their voices mattered, and that they could take action to create a better future for themselves. It wasn't about waiting for someone else to make decisions for them — it was about them taking responsibility for their freedom and standing up to the unfair treatment they were experiencing. This powerful and straightforward message made Paine's pamphlet, *Common Sense*, influential and helped many colonists realize they had the right to demand independence and the government they deserved. Paine explained that the colonists needed to break away from Britain and have their own government, one by which they could protect their natural rights and make decisions for their country. A **government** is a system of rules and leaders that work together to help keep everyone safe, make fair decisions, and make sure everyone is treated equally. Paine believed that a government should be of the people and by the people — not ruled by a king who made decisions without listening to the people. Let's think about how we govern ourselves today. In the United States, we live in a democracy. A democracy means that we, the people, get to make decisions about how our country is run. We elect leaders who are supposed to work for us, protect our rights, and make sure our voices are heard. This is very different from the way kings ruled—one person making all the decisions without considering the people's needs or rights. Paine's ideas helped the colonists understand that they could create a government where they had a say, and no one could take their rights away.

ASK Students

What is a democracy? Why is it important to you?

TELL Students

Thomas Paine argued that monarchies (governments ruled by kings and queens) were a flawed system.

Lesson

TELL Students (continued)

He believed there was no natural or religious reason why kings should have more power over others simply because of their birth. Paine thought that all people are equal and no one should have authority over others just because they were born into a royal family. He felt this idea went against the natural rights of all people, and even contradicted God's teachings. Paine's ideas about equality and individual freedom had a tremendous impact on the colonists and helped shape the revolutionary ideals that inspired the **Declaration of Independence**, written in 1776. The Declaration of Independence explains why the colonies wanted to break free from Great Britain. It states that all people have the right to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness," meaning that everyone should have the right to live safely, make their own choices, and seek out what makes them happy. Paine's writing helped the colonists realize they didn't have to remain under the rule of a king who didn't respect their rights. Instead, they could create a fair government where their voices mattered. The Declaration of Independence also states that if a government is not treating people fairly, the people have the right to change it and create a new government that will protect their natural rights. This belief in the power of the people to create a fair government ultimately led to the formation of the United States of America. Paine's ideas were essential in the creation of the rights and freedoms we have today, and they continue to shape how we think about freedom, justice, and government.

ASK Students

Why do you think Thomas Paine believed that monarchies were a bad idea? How did his ideas help shape the Declaration of Independence and the government we have today?

TELL Students

After Paine argued that it was time for the colonies to separate from Britain, he also stressed the importance of unity. He believed the strength of the colonists didn't come from simply being a large number of people, but from their ability to work together as one strong group. **Unity** means coming together as a team and working towards a common goal. Unity was especially important for the colonists after events like the Great Awakening, which united people by focusing on shared beliefs, and the Stamp Act, which sparked protests that brought them together. When the colonists worked together, their unity and determination to fight for their rights gave them the strength to challenge British rule.

Lesson

ASK Students

Why was unity important for the colonists in their fight for independence? How did working together help them challenge British rule and create a government that represented their rights?

TELL Students 🦋

After discussing the importance of unity, Paine argued that the colonies needed a strong government where "the law is king." This phrase is an example of a **metaphor**, where two things are compared without using "like" or "as." In this case, Paine is saying that the law should be the most powerful force in government, much like a king would be. However, unlike a king, Paine emphasized that the law must apply equally to everyone, including those in power. Paine believed this was essential because, during his time, many governments had rulers who created laws without consulting the people, leaving them with no voice in decisions that affected their lives. This was deeply unfair to Paine, and he felt that the colonists deserved better. He believed the colonies had a unique opportunity to build a new type of government. Instead of allowing one king to make all the decisions, the colonies could create laws first, ensuring that they would be fair to everyone, including the leaders. Paine's vision was of a government "for the people, by the people," where leaders would be chosen by the people and be held accountable to the laws, just like everyone else. This would ensure that the government would protect the rights of individuals, and no one—not even the leaders—would be above the law.

ASK Students

Why do you think Paine believed it was important for the law, not a king, to be the most powerful force in government? How does this idea help protect the rights of the people?

TELL Students 🦋

Now that we've discussed why Paine believed the law should be the most important part of government, let's take a closer look at the kind of law he had in mind. Paine strongly supported the idea of a written constitution. A **constitution** is a document that sets out the rules everyone in the country must follow to ensure that the government treats everyone fairly and equally. Paine believed that this constitution would act as a guarantee to protect the rights of every individual. These rights included the freedom to practice one's religion, the ability to work in any job, and the right to own property. Paine argued that all people, regardless of who they are, should be treated equally under the law — not just a select few.

Lesson

TELL Students (continued)

He believed that it was the government's duty to protect freedom of religion, allowing everyone to worship as they see fit. Paine's vision closely aligns with the principles laid out in the United States Constitution today. The United States Constitution was created to protect people's rights and ensure that everyone is treated equally. Like Paine's ideas, the United States Constitution guarantees the right to practice religion freely, express opinions, and live with personal freedoms. Paine's ideas continue to influence the way our government works, ensuring that the rights of all people are protected. Let's take a closer look at how this vision shaped our country!

ASK Students

Why were Thomas Paine's ideas in *Common Sense* so important? How did they help shape the government we have today?

TELL Students

Paine also strongly believed that people should have a voice in their government through what he called "large and equal representation." This idea means that everyone should have a fair chance to be heard when decisions are being made. In contrast, the colonists under British rule had no say in the laws that governed them. For example, with the Stamp Act, the colonists were being taxed by Britain but had no representation in the British government. Paine thought this was deeply unfair and argued that, just as the colonists deserved to be able to speak up about the laws affecting them, everyone should have the right to express their opinions and have their voices heard through government representation. This idea of fair representation connects directly to another right we've discussed: the right to freedom of speech. **Freedom of speech** means that everyone has the right to express their thoughts and opinions without fear of punishment. Paine believed that for a government to be just, people must be able to speak up about laws and also have a say in shaping those laws. Today, our government still reflects this belief in freedom of speech, allowing citizens to share their ideas, vote for leaders, and engage in discussions about the changes they want to see in society. Paine's vision of fair representation continues to influence our government today, where elected leaders are responsible for listening to the needs of the people and ensuring their rights are protected. This connection between having a voice in government and the right to express ourselves shows how Paine's ideas laid the foundation for a government that values the input of its citizens.

Lesson

ASK Students

Why do you think Paine believed it was important for everyone to have a say in their government? How does the right to express our opinions connect to the idea of fair representation in government?

TELL Students 📷

Thomas Paine believed it was essential for everyone to have a voice in their government because he thought that people should be in control of the laws that directly impacted their lives. He argued that it was unjust for one person, like a king, to make all the decisions without considering the opinions of the people. Paine felt that everyone should have the right to be heard and represented fairly in government. His belief in equal representation significantly influenced the way our government works today, where citizens have the right to vote and voice their opinions about the laws that affect them. Paine's ideas in *Common Sense* spread rapidly across the colonies and became extremely influential. Prominent leaders, such as George Washington and Thomas Jefferson, were inspired by Paine's strong message. **[Reference John Adams Image]** In fact, John Adams wrote to his wife Abigail in April 1776, stating that *Common Sense* had come at just the right moment to help clear doubts and guide their decision to fight for independence. Paine's writing was a unifying force, rallying the colonists around the idea of independence, which played a crucial role in starting the American Revolution. His influence reached far beyond his pamphlet, and his message continues to shape the way we view government and freedom today. Let's watch an exciting Learn More with Liberty to learn more!

WATCH ▶

Learn More with Liberty: [Common Sense and the Founders: A Letter that Sparked Change](#)



ASK Students

How did *Common Sense* influence John Adams and other leaders during the American Revolution?

Lesson

TELL Students

Thomas Paine's *Common Sense* played a crucial role in inspiring the colonists to believe in their ability to fight for freedom and build a better future. Before Paine's pamphlet, many colonists felt powerless to change their situation. His words gave them confidence in their natural rights. These fundamental freedoms, which we often take for granted today, are at the heart of what makes our country unique. Paine's powerful ideas, combined with the bravery of the colonists, helped pave the way for the creation of a country where we have the freedom to express our opinions, choose our leaders, and live according to our values. Take a moment to reflect on the freedoms you have today, like being able to talk about your thoughts and ideas with your friends, family, and teachers, and having a say in the decisions that affect your life. These rights are incredibly important and are not available to everyone around the world. We should appreciate these freedoms and use our voices wisely, just as Paine encouraged the colonists to do when they fought for the freedom we enjoy today.



Objective

Fifth-grade students will learn the structure and importance of writing a letter of recommendation and apply this knowledge to write a recommendation for Thomas Paine – similar to Benjamin Franklin's famous recommendation letter.

Part 1: Introduction to Letter of Recommendation

What is a Letter of Recommendation?

- A letter of recommendation is a letter written to support someone, typically for a job, position, or recognition. It tells others why the person is qualified and what makes them a great candidate.
- In this case, we'll be writing a letter of recommendation for Thomas Paine, who played a big role in inspiring the American Revolution with his pamphlet *Common Sense*.

Parts of a Letter of Recommendation:

1. **Heading:** This includes the date, recipient (whom the letter is addressed to), and the writer's information (who is writing the letter).
2. **Introduction:** This section introduces who the person is recommending (in this case, Thomas Paine) and briefly explains why they are recommending him.
3. **Body:** This is where you explain the qualities or achievements of the person you're recommending. For Paine, you'll highlight his writing, his influence on the colonists, and his importance to the cause of independence.

Conclusion: The final paragraph wraps up why Paine is a good choice for whatever he's being recommended for. End with a strong endorsement.

Part 2: Writing Your Letter of Recommendation for Thomas Paine

1. **Choose Your Recipient:**
 - Imagine you're writing the letter to someone important, like George Washington, Thomas Jefferson — or Benjamin Franklin himself! Your job is to convince the recipient why Thomas Paine should be recognized for his contribution to the American Revolution.
2. **Create the Heading:**
 - Include the date and who the letter is addressed to. For example, "Dear Mr. Franklin," or "To George Washington."



Paine's Praise: Penning a Powerful Recommendation

3. Write the Introduction:

- Introduce Thomas Paine and explain why you're writing the letter. You could say something like, "I am writing to strongly recommend Thomas Paine for his outstanding work in motivating the American colonies to stand up for their natural rights and fight for independence."

4. Body of the Letter:

- Discuss Paine's key qualities and contributions. You could write about:
 - Paine's bravery in speaking up for independence through his pamphlet *Common Sense*.
 - How his words inspired colonists to think about their natural rights and take action.
 - His ability to make complex ideas understandable for everyone, no matter their education.
 - His influence in shaping the colonists' decision to break away from Great Britain.

5. Conclusion:

- Finish by strongly recommending Paine for his contributions to the American Revolution and the establishment of the United States. You could write something like, "Thomas Paine's courage, clarity, and dedication to the cause make him an invaluable leader in our fight for freedom. I have no doubt that he will continue to inspire future generations."

Part 3: Questions to Guide Your Writing

- Why do you think Benjamin Franklin wrote a letter of recommendation for Thomas Paine? What made Paine stand out?
- What qualities or skills do you think are most important when recommending someone for a significant role in history?
- Why was it so important for Paine to speak out in such a bold way?
- How did Paine's ability to make his ideas understandable to everyone influence the colonists?
- What do you think Paine hoped to achieve by writing *Common Sense*?
- How would you describe Paine's influence on the Revolutionary War and the formation of the United States?

Part 4: Reflection & Sharing

- After writing your letters, we'll have a discussion about how writing a letter of recommendation helped Benjamin Franklin recognize Paine's importance.





Paine's Praise: Penning a Powerful Recommendation

- Reflection Questions:
 - How does writing a letter of recommendation for Paine help you understand his impact on the American Revolution?
 - What do you think is the most important reason Paine should be remembered in history?

Extension Activity (Optional)

- Students can create "mock" letters of recommendation for other historical figures or even modern leaders who have inspired change, using the same structure.

Paine's Praise Rubric

NAME: _____ DATE: _____

Criteria	Excellent (4)	Good (3)	Satisfactory (2)	Needs Improvement (1)
Content and Relevance	The letter thoroughly discusses Thomas Paine's contributions to the American Revolution, clearly explaining why he should be recommended. The ideas are highly relevant and well-explained.	The letter discusses Paine's contributions, explaining why he should be recommended, though with less detail or clarity than the top level.	The letter provides some explanation of Paine's contributions but lacks sufficient detail or relevance to the topic.	The letter does not clearly explain why Paine should be recommended, or provides irrelevant or inaccurate information.
Structure and Organization	The letter is well-organized with a clear introduction, body, and conclusion. Each section flows logically and is easy to follow.	The letter is generally well-organized, but transitions between sections could be smoother. Some parts may lack clarity.	The organization is somewhat unclear, and the flow between sections is awkward or disjointed.	The letter lacks organization, and it is difficult to follow the structure of the letter.
Use of Evidence and Details	Provides strong, well-developed evidence and examples to support the recommendation. The letter is persuasive, highlighting Paine's key qualities in depth.	Provides sufficient evidence and examples to support the recommendation, though some details may be less developed or persuasive.	Provides limited evidence or examples, and the recommendations are not fully convincing or supported.	Lacks supporting evidence or examples to back up the recommendation, making the letter unconvincing.
Clarity and Writing Quality	The writing is clear, concise, and error-free. The tone is formal and appropriate for a letter of recommendation.	The writing is clear with minimal errors. The tone is mostly formal, but there may be minor lapses.	Some parts of the letter are unclear, and there may be several errors in grammar, punctuation, or tone.	The letter is difficult to understand, with frequent grammar, punctuation, and tone issues.
Creativity and Engagement	The letter is engaging and creative, offering thoughtful insights into Paine's character and why he should be recommended. The letter holds the reader's attention.	The letter is engaging, though it may not offer as many creative insights or may lack some originality.	The letter is somewhat engaging, but it lacks creativity or does not fully captivate the reader.	The letter lacks creativity, and it is not engaging for the reader.
Adherence to Assignment	The letter follows all guidelines for the assignment and is appropriate in length and format.	The letter mostly follows the assignment guidelines but may slightly exceed or fall short of the expected length or format.	The letter only partially follows the assignment guidelines or is significantly off in length or format.	The letter does not follow the assignment guidelines or is incomplete.

Paine's Praise Rubric

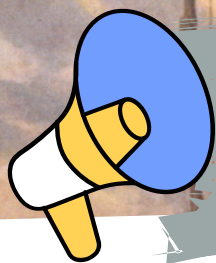
NAME: _____ DATE: _____

Total Score: _____/24

Scoring Guide:

- **24-20 points:** Excellent
- **19-16 points:** Good
- **15-11 points:** Needs Improvement
- **10 or below:** Inadequate

Teacher Recommendations:



Rally for Natural Rights with Reasoning



Objective

Fifth-grade students will understand the concept of natural rights as discussed by Thomas Paine in *Common Sense* and will create a campaign to argue for the importance of one specific natural right.

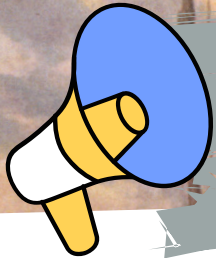
Materials Needed

- Chart paper or poster boards
- Markers, colored pencils, and stickers
- Computers/tablets (optional for research)
- Paper and pens for writing
- A rubric for evaluating presentations (provided below)

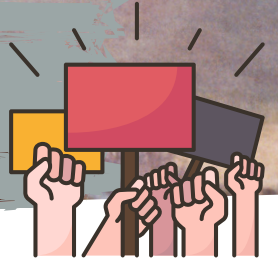
Activity Steps

1. **Introduction to Natural Rights:** Begin by reviewing Paine's ideas in *Common Sense*, focusing on natural rights. Discuss how these rights are foundational to freedom and democracy.
2. **Assign Natural Rights:** Assign each student one of the natural rights or let students pick one. Alternatively, you can let students choose another right they feel is important, such as the right to education, etc.
3. **Research and Reflection:** Have the students research the right they've been assigned or chosen, using books or reliable internet sources. They should consider:
 - What this right means
 - Why it is important for individuals and society
 - What happens when this right is not respected
 - How this right impacts their lives and their community
4. **Create a Campaign:** Students will create a campaign to argue why their right is crucial. The campaign should include:
 - A **slogan** (catchy phrase)
 - A **poster** or **advertisement** that visually represents the right and its importance
 - **Key points** on why it is important, written in a persuasive style
 - A **short speech** (2-3 minutes) that they will deliver to the class, explaining their right and convincing others of its importance
 - Optional: Students can create a "bill" or "petition" that promotes this right.





Rally for Natural Rights with Reasoning



5. **Presentation:** Students will present their campaigns to the class. Each student will have 2-3 minutes to present their poster, slogan, and persuasive speech. Encourage creativity in how they present their ideas — students could even act out a scene or use props to make their campaign stand out.
6. **Reflection and Discussion:** After all presentations, have a class discussion about the different natural rights presented. Ask students:
 - Which rights were the most persuasive and why?
 - How did learning about these rights help them understand Paine's message in *Common Sense*?
 - What are some real-world examples where these rights are being upheld or challenged today?
7. **Wrap-Up:** As a final activity, have the students vote on the most creative or persuasive campaign. Encourage them to share how they might stand up for their own natural rights in real life.

Rally for Natural Rights with Reasoning Rubric

NAME: _____ DATE: _____

Criteria	Excellent (4)	Good (3)	Satisfactory (2)	Needs Improvement (1)
Understanding Natural Rights	Demonstrates a thorough understanding of the chosen natural right and its importance.	Demonstrates a clear understanding of the chosen natural right with minor gaps.	Shows basic understanding of the natural right but lacks depth or clarity.	Demonstrates limited or incorrect understanding of the natural right.
Persuasive Argument	Provides strong, clear, and compelling arguments explaining why the natural right is important.	Provides clear arguments with some supporting details, but may lack full persuasiveness.	Arguments are weak or unclear, with limited support for why the right is important.	The argument is poorly developed or unclear, lacking supporting details.
Creativity of Campaign Materials	Campaign materials (poster, slogan, etc.) are highly creative, visually appealing, and relevant to the natural right.	Campaign materials are creative and relevant but could be more polished or visually engaging.	Campaign materials are basic and lack creativity, with some relevance to the right.	Campaign materials are minimal or not relevant to the chosen right.
Organization and Clarity of Speech	Speech is well-organized, clear, and flows logically; ideas are presented in a compelling manner.	Speech is organized and clear, but could benefit from smoother transitions or more clarity.	Speech is somewhat disorganized, with unclear or poorly connected ideas.	Speech lacks organization and clarity; ideas are hard to follow.
Engagement and Presentation Skills	Presentation is confident, engaging, and persuasive; speaker maintains good eye contact and speaks with enthusiasm.	Presentation is engaging with some confidence; speaker makes occasional eye contact and speaks clearly.	Presentation lacks engagement or confidence; minimal eye contact or monotone delivery.	Presentation is difficult to follow due to lack of engagement, poor delivery, or minimal effort.
Effort and Creativity in Overall Campaign	Goes above and beyond in effort and creativity, showing strong initiative and originality.	Shows good effort and creativity, with room for more originality.	Shows basic effort, but the campaign lacks creativity or detailed effort.	Lacks effort and creativity in the campaign.

Total Score: _____/24

Rally for Natural Rights with Reasoning Rubric

NAME: _____ DATE: _____

Grading Scale:

- **22–24 points:** Excellent work
- **18–21 points:** Good work
- **14–17 points:** Satisfactory work
- **0–13 points:** Needs improvement

Teacher Insights and Areas of Excellence:

Student Text

Thomas Paine's early life had a big influence on the ideas he shared later in his pamphlet *Common Sense*. Paine was born in 1737 in Thetford, England, and his family struggled financially, which meant Paine had to leave school at the age of 13. He became an **apprentice**, meaning he worked under someone to learn a skill or trade. In Paine's case, he worked in his father's corset shop, where corsets — tight-fitting garments — were made and sold. As he got older, Paine faced many challenges in his career. At 20, he worked for a short time as a sailor on a privateer ship. A **privateer** is a ship owned by private people that is given permission by the government to attack enemy ships. After this, Paine tried starting a business, but it failed. He also worked as a tax collector but was fired twice. The second time he was fired, it was because he asked the government to pay him and his colleagues more money, but his request was denied. These struggles and frustrations with the British government helped shape Paine's belief that change was needed. This belief inspired the ideas he shared in *Common Sense*, where he called for independence and a new, fair system of government.

Paine's pamphlet *Common Sense* powerfully used his right to freedom of speech to argue that the colonies should break away from Great Britain and become independent. At a time when many still hoped for a peaceful resolution, Paine's bold words encouraged the colonists to take a stand for their rights, even when it seemed like an impossible task. His pamphlet spread quickly, inspiring many to believe that they had the power to change their situation. Paine's use of freedom of speech was crucial to his impact — he understood that writing could motivate people, even when they felt powerless. Through his words, Paine gave a voice to the colonists' frustrations and dreams, helping them unite in their desire for independence. His pamphlet not only expressed the hopes of a whole population but also demonstrated how freedom of speech — the ability to openly share ideas and opinions — can lead to real change. Paine's writing helped people come together, find common ground, and take action to create a better future for themselves and their country.

Resources

- <https://www.mountvernon.org/library/digitalhistory/digital-encyclopedia/article/thomas-paine>
- <https://constitutioncenter.org/the-constitution/historic-document-library/detail/thomas-paine-common-sense-1776>
- <https://www.history.com/news/thomas-paine-common-sense-revolution>
- <https://oll.libertyfund.org/pages/1776-paine-common-sense-pamphlet>
- <https://oll.libertyfund.org/pages/1776-paine-common-sense-pamphlet>
- <https://www.history.com/news/thomas-paine-common-sense-revolution>

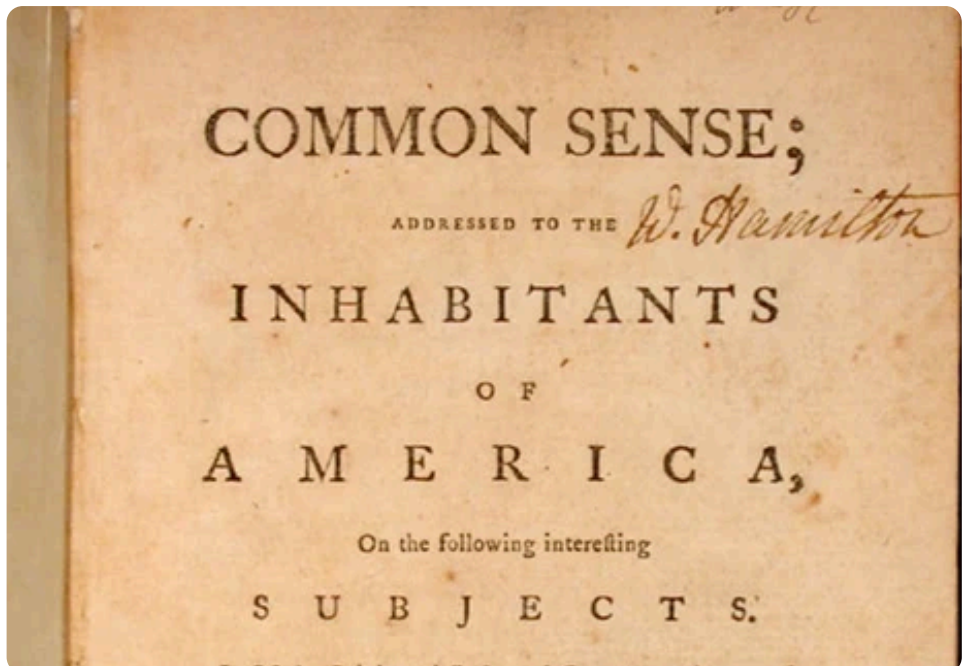
Images

Thomas Paine



Credit: Wikipedia

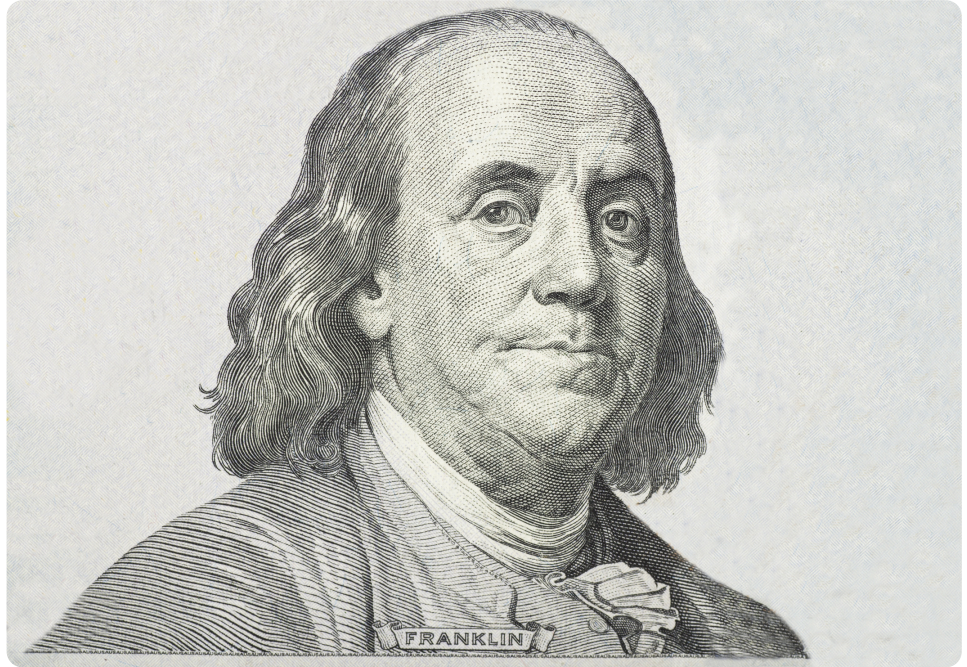
Common Sense



Credit: Wikipedia

Images

**Benjamin
Franklin**



Credit: Canva Pro

John Adams



Credit: Canva Pro

Notes

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