

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 identify examples of these rights in their life today.
- Define and understand the importance of natural rights such as life, liberty, the pursuit of happiness, and freedom of speech.
- Discuss the role of freedom of speech in allowing people to share their thoughts and opinions.
- Analyze how the Stamp Act and the Coercive Acts affected the colonists' natural rights and led to their desire for independence.
- Describe the events that led to the American Revolution and how Paine's writing helped the colonists understand the importance of standing up for their rights.
- Explain the significance of Thomas Paine's pamphlet *Common Sense* and how it inspired colonists to demand their independence.
- Reflect on how Paine's ideas about freedom, government, and natural rights shaped the creation of the United States and continue to influence our country today.

Key Terms

- 0 1 **apprentice:** someone who works under someone else to learn a trade or skill.
- 0 2 **common sense:** using good judgment and thinking about what makes the most sense in a situation.
- 0 3 **constitution:** a set of rules that everyone in the country has to follow.
- 0 4 **Declaration of Independence:** a document that explained why the colonies wanted to break away from Great Britain.
- 0 5 **freedom:** being able to make your own choices and having the power to do what's best for yourself, your family, and your community.
- 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

- 14 **privateer:** a ship owned by a private individual or group that was authorized by the government to attack enemy ships, especially during wartime.
- 15 **Quartering Act:** a law that forced the colonists to house, feed, and provide supplies for British soldiers who were stationed in their towns.
- 16 **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.
- 17 **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.
- 18 **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.
- 19 **unity:** working together and being strong as a group.

Introduction

TELL Students ↗

Alright, little patriots, in our classroom, you have the right to raise your hand and ask a question, share your opinions (in a respectful way, of course), choose any game to play at recess, and work hard to earn good grades. These are examples of natural rights. But what exactly are natural rights? **Natural rights** are special freedoms that belong to you simply because you are a human being. Remember, **freedom** means being able to make your own choices and having the power to do what's best for yourself, your family, and your community. These rights are so important 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 those natural things, our natural rights are a part of who we are. Now, let's take a closer look at some of these rights! You have the right to life, meaning you should be safe and live free from harm. You have the right to liberty, which means you can make your own choices — like what games to play or what to be when you grow up. You also have the right to pursue happiness, meaning you can follow what brings you joy — like learning something new, helping others, or doing what you love. And finally, you have the right to express your thoughts and ideas openly without fear of punishment. These natural rights help protect your freedom and ensure that everyone can live the life they choose.

ASK Students

Why do you think it's important for everyone to be able to share their thoughts and ideas? How does this help protect our ability to make choices and live the way we want?

TELL Students

The right to share your thoughts and ideas without fear of punishment is a very important natural right. This right allows you to express your opinions openly and speak your mind. It's important because it gives people the chance to share what matters to them and to be heard. However, while we all have this 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. Natural rights like this are gifts that help keep us free and allow everyone to live their lives as they choose. They are a part of who we are and can never be taken away.

Introduction

ASK Students

Why do you think it's important to be respectful when we share our thoughts and to listen to others even when we disagree?

TELL Students

Natural rights are fundamental freedoms that belong to everyone and are essential for keeping us safe and free. **Fundamental** means something that is very important and necessary for something to work or exist. These fundamental rights help make sure that everyone is treated fairly and has the chance to live their life as they choose. But how do natural rights protect freedom? Think of them like shields that protect our ability to make choices and speak up for what we believe. For example, the right to life means we should be safe, and no one should harm us. The right to liberty means we can make our own choices, like picking what games to play or what food to eat. The right to pursue happiness means we can follow what makes us happy, whether it's learning something new or helping others. And, as we mentioned earlier, another important right that protects our freedom is the right to speak our minds. This means we can share our thoughts and ideas openly, without fear of punishment. Natural rights are important because they protect our freedom and make sure we are treated fairly. They protect who we are and how we live.

ASK Students

Why are natural rights important? How do these rights help protect our freedom?

TELL Students

Now, let's talk about the role natural rights played in the colonies. Remember, the colonists didn't have the right to make decisions about the laws they had to follow. One example is the **Stamp Act**. The British government, or **Parliament**, created this law to make the colonists pay taxes on things like newspapers and legal documents. But the colonists didn't have any say in this decision, and they felt that their natural rights — the right to be safe, to make their own choices, to speak freely, and to pursue happiness — were being ignored. This upset the colonists, and they began to speak up for their freedom. The Stamp Act was just one example of how the British government treated the colonists unfairly. Later, the colonists protested during the Boston Tea Party, where they dumped taxed tea into the harbor because they felt they shouldn't be taxed without having a say.

Introduction

TELL Students (continued)

Then came the Coercive Acts (also called the "Intolerable Acts"), which closed the port of Boston and took away some of the colonists' rights. All of these actions — the Stamp Act, the Boston Tea Party, and the Coercive Acts — led to the American Revolution. The **American Revolution** was a fight between the colonies and Great Britain that lasted from 1775 to 1783. It ended with the colonies winning their freedom and forming the United States of America. These events show how important it was for the colonists to protect their natural rights, like the right to speak up and make choices, and why they could no longer accept being treated unfairly.

ASK Students

Why do you think the colonists were upset about the Stamp Act and the Coercive Acts? How do you think these laws affected 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. They felt that their rights to be safe, to make their own choices, and to pursue happiness were being violated. This unfair treatment led them to what is called a revolution. A **revolution** happens when a group of people fight to change the way they are governed, or when their way of thinking changes, leading them to act differently. Remember, the American Revolution was a fight between the colonies and Great Britain. Eventually, this revolution resulted in the colonies becoming the United States of America. However, there was more happening at this time than just fighting — it was also a revolution of thought. This revolution of thought helped change how the colonists viewed themselves and their rights. And that's where Thomas Paine's ideas came in.

[Reference Thomas Paine Image] He wrote a famous pamphlet called *Common Sense*, where he explained that the colonists had natural rights that couldn't be taken away by anyone — not even a king. A **pamphlet** is a small booklet or paper that shares important information. Paine's pamphlet 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 right to speak openly and freely to express his views, inspiring many colonists to believe they deserved to be free and to make their own choices.

Introduction

TELL Students (continued)

This belief, sparked by Paine's words, led the colonists to decide to fight for their independence from Great Britain. The American Revolution wasn't just a fight for land — it was a fight for the chance to create a new country, where people could live freely and have the opportunity to make their own choices. Paine's ideas and the courage of the colonists helped shape a country where people are free to pursue their dreams and protect their rights.

ASK Students

Why do you think Thomas Paine's *Common Sense* helped the colonists decide to fight for their freedom? How did it change the way they thought about their rights and independence?

TELL Students

Paine didn't just focus on the unfair treatment the colonists faced from Britain; he introduced a powerful new idea that really resonated with the people. He believed that everyone should have the power to make decisions for themselves and control their own lives. This change in thinking was just as important as events like the Stamp Act, because it helped the colonists realize that standing up for their natural rights wasn't just an option — it was something they had to do. They had the right, and even the responsibility, to protect their natural rights. This shift in thinking, combined with incidents such as the Stamp Act, led to the desire for independence and played a big role in starting the American Revolution. While the Stamp Act made the colonists realize their rights were being taken away, Paine's *Common Sense* helped them understand that they had the power — through their voices and actions — to defend their rights and create a fair government (we will talk more about government later). The Revolution wasn't just about fighting a war; it was about changing the way people thought about freedom and government. It was about building a society where people could make their own choices and live under a government that truly represented them. Now, let's watch a Star Spangled Adventures cartoon to learn more about this important time in history!

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 about it? Maybe it's the exciting plot that keeps you hooked, the brave or lovable characters that you admire, or perhaps the magical setting that makes you feel like you're exploring a whole new world. Now, think back to when you first finished reading your favorite book. What did you do? Did you talk about it with your friends and family and tell them to read it too? Before we had smartphones, social media, and TV, this is how ideas would spread. In the colonies, people would share papers, pamphlets, and books and talk about them in their homes, churches, restaurants, and shops. It might be hard to imagine, but back then — hundreds of years before the internet — written ideas could spread so quickly that they became "viral" in a way, just like how we see things go viral today.

ASK Students

Why do you think it was so important for people in the colonies to share ideas and writings with each other? How did this help spread new ideas and spark change?

TELL Students

In our Star Spangled Adventures episode, we learned that British soldiers were occupying colonists' property because of the Quartering Act. The **Quartering Act** was a law that required the colonists to provide housing, food, and supplies for British soldiers stationed in their towns, even though the colonists did not want them there. This felt like a direct violation of the colonists' natural rights, and it understandably upset them. Remember, natural rights are basic freedoms that all people have simply because they are human. These rights include the right to be safe, the right to make your own choices, and the right to pursue happiness. When British soldiers were forced into the colonists' homes, the colonists felt that their rights to safety and personal freedom were being ignored. This sense of injustice — having their rights taken away — led them to think deeply about how they could protect their natural rights and preserve their freedom. It was during this time that Thomas Paine's ideas began to take root, encouraging the colonists to not only stand up for their rights but also to use their freedom of speech to demand change.

ASK Students

What do you think it means to stand up for your rights? Why do you think it was so important for the colonists to do so during this time? Please discuss with your neighbor. [Give students three minutes to discuss with their neighbor and then discuss as a class.]

Lesson

TELL Students

The colonists realized their natural rights were being ignored. Now, they needed a way to understand how they could change things. This is where Thomas Paine's pamphlet, *Common Sense*, comes in. **[Reference Common Sense Image]** In January 1776, Paine wrote a message that was easy for everyone to understand, no matter their education or background. He used simple language and ideas that the colonists already knew, such as sayings they heard in everyday life or references to religion. If Paine had written *Common Sense* today, he might have used things like memes, hashtags, or even movie quotes to help get his message across! Paine's clear and powerful writing showed the colonists that they had the right to speak out against what was wrong, to defend their freedom, and to protect their natural rights. Paine helped the colonists see 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 worked for them. Paine's message made the colonists believe they could stand up for their rights and fight for independence from Britain.

ASK Students

What do you think it would have been like for the colonists to read Paine's words and realize they could make a change for themselves?

TELL Students

Reading Paine's words would have been inspiring and empowering for the colonists. It would have helped them realize that they were not helpless and that they had the power to stand up for their rights. Paine's writing gave them the confidence to believe that they could change their future, make their own choices, and build a fair government. Writing, like Paine's pamphlet, has the power to inspire people to take action and believe in the possibility of change.

ASK Students

Can you think of a book that inspired you? What were you inspired to do?

TELL Students

Thomas Paine's early life had a big influence on the ideas he later shared in his pamphlet *Common Sense*.

Lesson

TELL Students (continued)

Paine was born in 1737 in Thetford, England, and his family struggled financially, so Paine had to leave school at the age of 13. He became an **apprentice**, which means 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 a private individual 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.

ASK Students

How do you think Thomas Paine's early life struggles, like his frustrations with the British government, might have shaped his ideas about fairness and freedom?

TELL Students

After his struggles in England, Thomas Paine moved to the colonies in 1774, where he was introduced to Benjamin Franklin. **[Reference Benjamin Franklin Image]** Franklin, recognizing Paine's potential, wrote him a letter of recommendation, helping him get started in Philadelphia. At the age of 37, Paine quickly found work as a journalist. When he arrived, the colonists were becoming more frustrated with the British government, which was taxing them without giving them a voice in Parliament. This situation made the colonists feel that their rights were being unfairly taken away, and for nearly ten years, they had tried to reason with the British government, but their concerns were ignored. Paine, seeing firsthand the anger and frustration of the people, was encouraged by Franklin and Dr. Benjamin Rush — who would later sign the Declaration of Independence along with many others — to write a pamphlet that addressed the colonists' struggles.

Lesson

ASK Students

Why did Benjamin Franklin write a letter of recommendation for Thomas Paine? What role does freedom of speech play in Paine's legacy?

TELL Students

Please read the following passage to learn more. [Print and distribute fourth-grade student text.] *Paine's work, Common Sense, used his freedom of speech to boldly argue that the colonies should seek independence. While many still hoped for a peaceful solution, Paine's call to action was clear and powerful. His pamphlet spread quickly, urging the colonists to stand up for their rights, even if it seemed impossible at the time. Through his writing, Paine gave the people the confidence to believe they could change their situation. Paine's use of freedom of speech was central to his impact. He understood that writing could inspire people, even when they felt powerless. His pamphlet provided a voice for the colonists and helped shape their collective desire for independence, using words to express the frustrations and hopes of a whole population. In this way, Paine showed how freedom of speech — being able to openly share ideas and opinions — can lead to real change, helping people find common ground and take action for a better future.*

ASK Students

What did *Common Sense* inspire the colonists to do?

TELL Students

So, how did Thomas Paine help the colonists understand why they needed to fight for their rights? Paine's writing encouraged all the colonists to think about independence. He believed that anyone could make a decision about whether they should break away from Britain — no special education or political experience needed. All they needed was common sense — something everyone has! **Common sense** means using good judgment and thinking about what makes the most sense in a situation. It's when you make decisions based on what seems fair and right, without needing complicated words or special knowledge. Paine wanted the colonists to know they didn't have to be experts to understand why they should fight for their freedom. They just needed to use their common sense to realize that standing up for their rights was the right thing to do! This simple but powerful message helped many colonists realize they had the right to demand independence and fight for their freedom. Common sense made it clear to them that they could choose to live in a way that respected natural rights.

Lesson

ASK Students

How did Thomas Paine help the colonists understand why they needed to fight for their rights?

TELL Students

That's right! Paine's writing encouraged the colonists to think about independence in a new way. In his pamphlet *Common Sense*, Paine explained why the colonists needed to break away from Great Britain. He argued that people should have their own government and not be ruled by kings. But what is a government? A **government** is a system of rules and leaders that help keep people safe, make decisions for the country, and make sure everyone is treated fairly. It protects our rights and helps maintain fairness in society. Now, let's think about how we govern ourselves today. In the United States, we have a democracy, which means that the people, like you and me, get to make decisions about how the country is run. In a democracy, we vote to choose our leaders, and these leaders are supposed to work for the people to protect our rights. This idea is very different from how things were when kings ruled, and it's why Paine's ideas were so important. He believed that people should not be ruled by a king, but by leaders chosen by the people, making sure everyone has a voice in the government.

ASK Students

How is a democracy different from being governed by a king (monarchy)?

TELL Students

Thomas Paine explained that monarchies (governments led by kings and queens) were a bad idea. He argued that there is no natural or religious reason why kings should rule over everyone else. Paine believed that all people are equal and that no one should have more power just because of their birth. He thought this idea went against the natural rights of people and even the teachings of God. Paine's ideas about equality and the right to freedom helped inspire the Declaration of Independence, a very important document written in 1776. The **Declaration of Independence** explains why the colonies wanted to break away from Great Britain. It states that all people have the natural rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. This means that everyone has the right to live safely, make their own choices, and find what makes them happy. No one should be ruled by a king who does not respect these rights.

Lesson

TELL Students (continued)

The Declaration of Independence also says that if a government is not treating people fairly, the people have the right to create a new government that will protect their rights. Paine's writing helped the colonists realize they didn't have to live under a king's rule anymore. Instead, they could form a government that was fair and that listened to the people. This belief eventually led to the creation of the United States of America, where the people's rights and freedoms are protected. Paine's ideas directly influenced the creation of the rights we have today, and they continue to shape the way we think about freedom and government.

ASK Students

Why do you think Paine argued that all people are equal and that no one should rule over others just because of their birth? How did his ideas help shape the Declaration of Independence?

TELL Students

As Paine argued that it was time for the colonies to separate from Britain, he also explained why unity was so important. He believed that the strength of the colonists didn't come from just having a large number of people, but from working together as one strong group. **Unity** means coming together as a team. For the colonists, this was especially important after events like the Great Awakening, which helped unite people around common beliefs, and the Stamp Act, which brought the colonists together to protest unfair treatment. When they worked together, their unity and shared determination to fight for their rights gave them the power to challenge British rule. Paine's message helped the colonists see that when they united and stood together, they could create the kind of government they wanted — one that respected their rights and freedom.

ASK Students

Why do you think unity was so important for the colonists? How did working together help them challenge British rule?

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**, a type of figure of speech where two things are compared without using "like" or "as."

Lesson

TELL Students (continued)

In this case, Paine is saying that the law should be the most powerful force in the government, just like a king would be in a monarchy. However, Paine makes it clear that unlike a king, the law should apply equally to everyone, including the rulers. The law would also be established by special leaders that the people chose to represent their wishes as rules were made. Paine thought this idea was important because, at the time, many countries had rulers who made laws without asking the people or giving them a voice. This felt unfair to Paine, and he believed the colonists deserved better. He thought the colonies had a unique opportunity to create a new kind of government. Instead of having a king make all the decisions, the colonies could create laws first that would treat everyone fairly, even the leaders. Paine's idea was that the government should be for the people and by the people, not just for a king. This way, the government would work to protect people's rights, and no one — not even the leaders — would be above the law.

ASK Students

Why do you think Paine believed that the law should be the most important thing in government? Why was it important that the law applied to everyone equally?

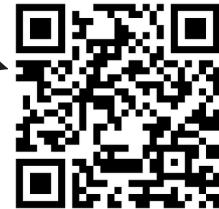
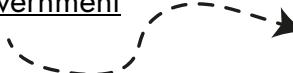
TELL Students

Now that we've talked about why Paine believed the law should be the most important thing in government, let's explore the kind of law Paine had in mind. Paine wanted the colonies to have a written constitution. A **constitution** is a set of rules that everyone in the country must follow, which helps make sure that the government treats everyone fairly and equally. These rights include the freedom to practice your religion, work in any job, and own property. Paine wrote that it was the government's job to protect freedom of religion, meaning everyone should be free to worship however they choose. Paine also believed that people should have the freedom to express their opinions, which is known as **freedom of speech**. This means they could share their thoughts and ideas without fear of punishment. Paine's ideas are very similar to the principles in the United States Constitution today. The United States Constitution was created to protect people's rights and ensure that everyone is treated fairly. Just as Paine wanted, the United States Constitution guarantees that we can choose our religion, express our opinions, and live freely. Paine's vision influenced the way our country works today, ensuring that everyone's rights are protected. Let's watch an exciting Learn More with Liberty to learn more!

Lesson

WATCH

Learn More with Liberty: [Thomas Paine's Common Sense](#) and the U.S. Constitution: [Shaping Our Government](#)



ASK Students

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

TELL Students

Paine also believed that people should have a voice in their government through "large and equal representation." This means that everyone should be fairly represented when decisions are being made. In contrast, the colonists had no say in the laws that affected them. Remember from our lesson on the Stamp Act that the colonists were upset because they were being taxed by Britain without having a voice in Parliament. Paine thought this was unfair and argued that just as the colonists deserved to have a say in the laws they had to follow, everyone should be able to express their opinions and be heard. Paine's idea of fair representation connects to another important right we discussed earlier — freedom of speech. Paine believed that for a government to be fair, people must be able to speak up about the laws, just as they should be able to help decide what those laws should be. In our government today, freedom of speech allows us to share our ideas, whether we're voting for leaders or discussing what we think should change in society. Paine's belief in fair representation is still important in our government today, where we elect leaders who listen to our needs and protect our rights.

ASK Students

Why do you think it's important for people to be able to share their opinions, especially when it comes to the laws that affect them?

Lesson

TELL Students

Thomas Paine believed it was important for everyone to have a say in the government because he thought that people should have the power to make decisions about the laws that affect their lives. Paine argued that it wasn't fair for one person, like a king, to make all the decisions without listening to the people. He believed that everyone should be able to have their voice heard and be represented fairly in government. Paine's belief in equal representation was a key idea that influenced the way our government works today, where citizens have the right to vote and speak on laws that affect them. Paine's ideas in *Common Sense* spread quickly throughout the colonies and became very popular. Important leaders, like George Washington and Thomas Jefferson, read it and were inspired by its powerful message. **[Reference John Adams Image]** John Adams even wrote to his wife Abigail in April 1776, saying, "*Common Sense*, like a ray of revelation, has come in seasonably to clear our doubts, and to fix our choice." This meant that Paine's pamphlet helped the colonists understand why they needed to fight for their independence. Paine's words resonated deeply with the colonists, inspiring them to take action and stand together for the cause of freedom. His influence extended far beyond his pamphlet, and his message continues to shape how we think about government and freedom today.

ASK Students

Why do you think it's important for everyone to have a voice in the government? How are Paine's ideas about representation and freedom of speech still important in our country today?

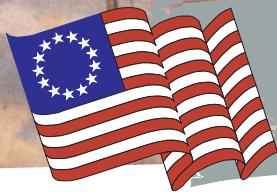
TELL Students

Paine's *Common Sense* was a turning point for the colonists because it helped them understand that they could fight for their freedom and create a better future. Without it, they might not have come together to form the United States of America. Paine's words were powerful because they inspired the colonists to think about their natural rights. These freedoms, which we often take for granted today, are the core values that make our country unique. Because of Paine's ideas and many brave colonists, we live in a country where we have the freedom to express ourselves, choose leaders who represent us, and live the life we believe is best for us. Think about how you are able to share your thoughts with your friends, family, and even your teachers. You can talk about what you believe and have a say in the decisions that affect your life. This is a powerful freedom that many people in history, and even today in other parts of the world, do not have.

Lesson

TELL Students (continued)

It's important to appreciate these freedoms and use your voice wisely — just like Paine encouraged the colonists to do when they fought for the country we live in today.



Colonial Rights Debate



Objective

Fourth-grade students will analyze how the Stamp Act and the Coercive Acts affected the colonists' natural rights and led to their desire for independence by engaging in a debate and creating a visual "Cause and Effect" chart.

Materials Needed

- Whiteboard/Poster board or large paper for group chart
- Markers, sticky notes, or index cards
- "Colonial Rights Debate" cards (for students to pick a side)

Introduction

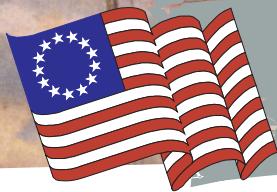
Begin by giving a brief overview of the Stamp Act (a law that taxed paper goods like newspapers, playing cards, and legal documents) and the Coercive Acts (also called the "Intolerable Acts," a set of laws that punished the colonies for the Boston Tea Party and included closing Boston Harbor and limiting self-governance). Emphasize that these laws were seen as violations of the colonists' natural rights, including their right to liberty (the freedom to make their own decisions).

Activity Setup

- Divide the class into two groups: the Pro-Colonists (those who argue that the acts unfairly violated their rights) and the Pro-British (those who argue that the acts were necessary for maintaining control).
- Provide each student with a Colonial Rights Debate Card, which explains whether they are representing the colonists' or the British perspective (e.g., "As a colonist, I believe the Stamp Act violates my right because I am being taxed without representation").

Research and Preparation

- Students will revise today's lesson and then choose key points to support their argument. For example:
 - Pro-Colonists might discuss how taxation without representation violated their right to liberty.
 - Pro-British might argue that these acts were important for maintaining control over the colonies.



Colonial Rights Debate



Debate

- Each group will have a chance to present its argument for 2-3 minutes.
- Encourage students to use specific examples from the acts, focusing on how they were related to natural rights.
- After both sides have presented, open up the floor for questions and allow students to ask each other about the effects of the acts and how they led to the desire for independence.

Visual "Cause and Effect" Chart

- After the debate, have students create a Cause and Effect chart on the board or poster paper.
 - Cause: Stamp Act/Coercive Acts
 - Effect: Violations of natural rights (taxation without representation, loss of self-governance, anger, desire for change)
 - Result: Colonists' desire for independence (leading to the American Revolution)
- Have students add sticky notes with their points from the debate, linking the acts to the resulting desire for independence.

Reflection and Class Discussion

- Ask the class, "How did the Stamp Act and Coercive Acts change the way the colonists viewed their government? Why did these laws make the colonists feel like they needed to separate from Britain?"
- Let students reflect on how these events were connected to their rights today.

Closing Activity

Have each student write a short paragraph or draw a picture that answers the question, "How would you feel if your natural rights were being taken away, and what would you do about it?"

Wrap-up

Conclude by reminding students that the colonists' desire to defend their natural rights eventually led to their fight for independence and the creation of the United States of America.

Colonial Rights Debate Rubric

NAME: _____ DATE: _____

Criteria	Excellent (4)	Good (3)	Satisfactory (2)	Needs Improvement (1)
Understanding of the Acts	Demonstrates a thorough understanding of both the Stamp Act and the Coercive Acts, including specific details of how they affected the colonists' natural rights.	Demonstrates a good understanding of the acts, but may miss some key details or connections to natural rights.	Demonstrates a basic understanding of the acts, but lacks detail or has minor inaccuracies.	Demonstrates a limited or incorrect understanding of the acts.
Argument Quality	Presents clear, logical, and well-supported arguments with multiple specific examples from the acts showing how they violated natural rights.	Presents a mostly clear argument with some supporting examples from the acts, but could use more detail or explanation.	Presents a simple argument with few supporting examples or weak connections to natural rights.	Arguments lack clarity or are unsupported by examples.
Debate Participation	Actively engages in the debate, listens to others' arguments, and responds thoughtfully with additional points or questions.	Participates in the debate, listens to others, but may offer limited responses or questions.	Participates minimally, with limited engagement with others' points or responses.	Does not actively participate or listen to others during the debate.
Cause and Effect Chart	Effectively contributes to the creation of the Cause and Effect chart, making clear connections between the acts and the desire for independence.	Contributes to the Cause and Effect chart, with some connections made between the acts and the desire for independence.	Contributes to the chart, but the connections are unclear or incomplete.	Does not contribute meaningfully to the Cause and Effect chart.
Respectfulness and Listening	Consistently demonstrates respect for others' ideas, listens attentively, and responds politely.	Mostly respectful and listens to others, with occasional interruptions or lack of attention.	Somewhat respectful but may interrupt or not fully engage with others.	Shows disrespect or does not listen to others during the activity.

Colonial Rights Debate Rubric

NAME: _____ DATE: _____

Reflection/ Closing Activity	Provides a detailed, thoughtful reflection that fully answers the question and demonstrates understanding of the natural rights issue.	Provides a good reflection that answers the question, but could include more details or deeper thinking.	Provides a basic reflection, but it may lack some important details or depth.	Provides a minimal or incomplete reflection with little connection to the question.
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Total Score: _____ /24

Total Points: /24

- 21-24 points: Excellent understanding and participation. The student demonstrated a clear grasp of the material and actively contributed to the debate and chart creation.
- 16-20 points: Good understanding and participation. The student demonstrated a solid understanding but could use more engagement or details.
- 10-15 points: Satisfactory understanding and participation. The student needs more detail or engagement to fully grasp the concepts.
- 5-9 points: Needs improvement. The student requires additional support or participation to improve their understanding and contributions.

Teacher Recommendations:

Multiple Choice Quiz

NAME: _____ DATE: _____

1. What are natural rights?

- a) Rights that are given by the government
- b) Rights that belong to everyone just because they are human
- c) Rights that you get when you turn 18
- d) Rights that are earned through hard work

2. Which of the following is an example of a natural right?

- a) The right to play video games all day
- b) The right to life
- c) The right to a private car
- d) The right to be famous

3. Why is it important to be respectful when sharing our thoughts and ideas?

- a) It makes everyone happy
- b) It helps us argue better
- c) It allows everyone to share their opinions safely and feel heard
- d) It makes our voices louder

4. What does the right to liberty mean?

- a) The right to be famous
- b) The right to make your own choices
- c) The right to own property
- d) The right to speak without fear of punishment

5. What is one of the ways that natural rights help protect freedom?

- a) They allow you to disobey your parents
- b) They give us the ability to speak our minds without punishment
- c) They make everyone rich
- d) They allow people to take property from others

Multiple Choice Quiz

6. Why did the colonists become upset with the Stamp Act?

- a) It allowed them to vote
- b) It taxed them without giving them a say in the law
- c) It allowed them to make their own laws
- d) It made them pay taxes on food

7. What does "freedom of speech" allow people to do?

- a) Yell their ideas at others
- b) Share their thoughts and ideas without fear of punishment
- c) Move to another country
- d) Speak to the president

8. What did the Boston Tea Party symbolize for the colonists?

- a) Their desire for freedom from unfair taxes
- b) Their desire for new products
- c) Their love of tea
- d) Their happiness with British laws

9. What was the purpose of Thomas Paine's pamphlet, *Common Sense*?

- a) To convince colonists to accept British laws
- b) To argue that the colonies should break away from Britain
- c) To explain how to make tea
- d) To talk about how great Britain was

10. What did Paine believe people needed in order to understand why they should fight for freedom?

- a) Special education and training
- b) Common sense
- c) A king to tell them what to do
- d) The ability to read Latin

Multiple Choice Quiz

11. Why was Paine's idea of "the law is king" so important?

- a) It meant the king made all the laws
- b) It meant everyone, including leaders, should follow the law equally
- c) It meant laws didn't matter
- d) It meant the king could break laws when he wanted

12. What is a constitution?

- a) A list of rules everyone must follow
- b) A type of government official
- c) A speech given by a king
- d) A building where the government works

13. How did Paine influence the colonists' desire for independence?

- a) He told them to stay loyal to Britain
- b) He inspired them to stand up for their natural rights and independence
- c) He asked them to follow British laws
- d) He convinced them to move to another country

14. What is unity?

- a) Working together as a group
- b) A law that makes everyone equal
- c) A right to choose your friends
- d) A law that gives freedom to only some people

15. What did Paine believe about the role of government?

- a) That only kings should make the rules
- b) That government should be for the people, made by the people, and respect everyone's rights
- c) That government should be in charge of everyone's decisions
- d) That government is not needed at all

Answer Key: Multiple Choice Quiz

1. What are natural rights?
 - b) Rights that belong to everyone just because they are human
2. Which of the following is an example of a natural right?
 - b) The right to life
3. Why is it important to be respectful when sharing our thoughts and ideas?
 - c) It allows everyone to share their opinions safely and feel heard
4. What does the right to liberty mean?
 - b) The right to make your own choices
5. What is one of the ways that natural rights help protect freedom?
 - b) They give us the ability to speak our minds without punishment
6. Why did the colonists become upset with the Stamp Act?
 - b) It taxed them without giving them a say in the law
7. What does "freedom of speech" allow people to do?
 - b) Share their thoughts and ideas without fear of punishment
8. What did the Boston Tea Party symbolize for the colonists?
 - a) Their desire for freedom from unfair taxes
9. What was the purpose of Thomas Paine's pamphlet, *Common Sense*?
 - b) To argue that the colonies should break away from Britain
10. What did Paine believe people needed in order to understand why they should fight for freedom?
 - b) Common sense
11. Why was Paine's idea of "the law is king" so important?
 - b) It meant everyone, including leaders, should follow the law equally
12. What is a constitution?
 - a) A list of rules everyone must follow
13. How did Paine influence the colonists' desire for independence?
 - b) He inspired them to stand up for their natural rights and independence
14. What is unity?
 - a) Working together as a group
15. What did Paine believe about the role of government?
 - b) That government should be for the people, made by the people, and respect everyone's rights

Student Text

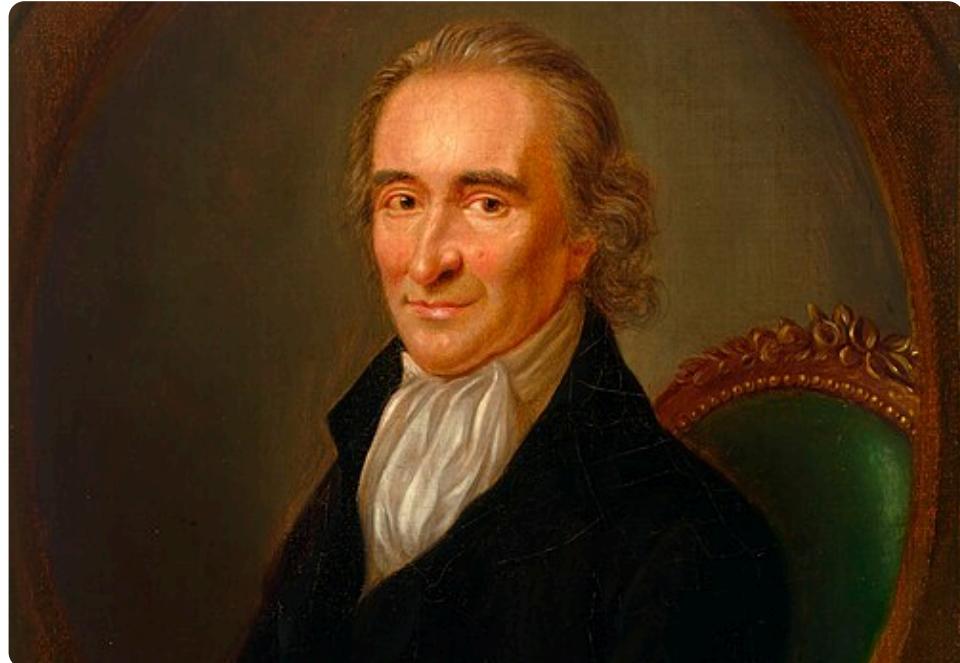
Paine's work, *Common Sense*, used his freedom of speech to boldly argue that the colonies should seek independence from Great Britain. While many still hoped for a peaceful solution to the conflict, Paine's call to action was clear and powerful. His pamphlet spread quickly, urging the colonists to stand up for their rights, even if it seemed impossible at the time. Through his writing, Paine gave the people the confidence to believe they could change their situation. Paine's use of freedom of speech was central to his impact. He understood that writing could inspire people, even when they felt powerless. His pamphlet provided a voice for the colonists and helped shape their collective desire for independence, using words to express the frustrations and hopes of a whole population. In this way, Paine showed how freedom of speech — being able to openly share ideas and opinions — can lead to real change, helping people find common ground and take action for a better future.

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>

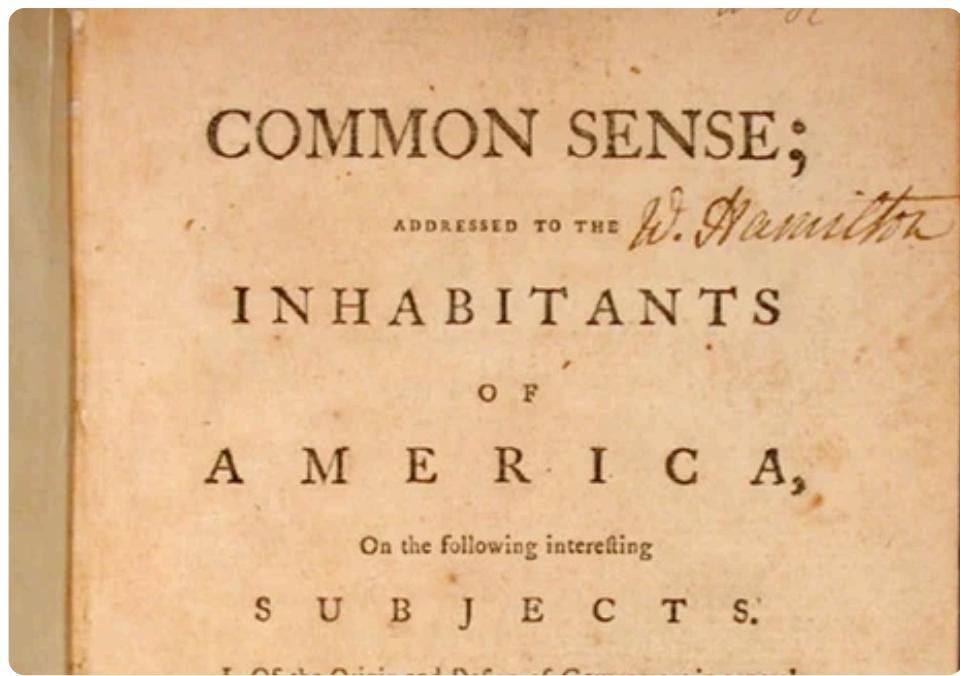
Images

Thomas Paine



Credit: Wikipedia

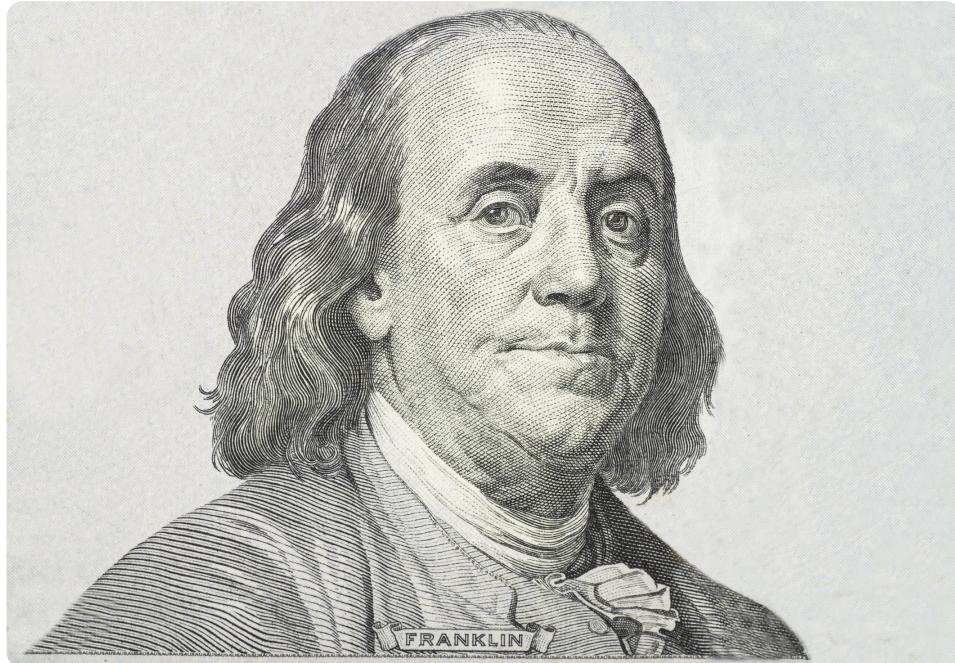
Common Sense



Credit: Wikipedia

Images

**Benjamin
Franklin**



Credit: Canva Pro

John Adams



Credit: Canva Pro

Notes