

THOMAS PAINE (1737-1809)

The son of a Quaker mother and Anglican father, Thomas Paine was born in 1737 in Thetford, Norfolk, England. Poor most of his life, he left home at age 19 and went to sea. He returned to England and held various jobs including that of excise officer, whose duty it was to collect taxes from smugglers he tracked down. Paine was dismissed in 1772 for publishing a document "calling for an increase in wages as a means of reducing corruption in government service."

Paine later, in London, befriended Benjamin Franklin while Franklin was serving as an American Colonial representative in Great Britain. Paine immigrated to Philadelphia in 1774 with letters of introduction from Franklin. Hired as editor of Pennsylvania Magazine, Paine also published anonymous writings, including one article condemning slavery. His most famous work was *Common Sense*, published on January 10, 1776. His work asserted that the colonies had received no advantage from Great Britain. He believed that Great Britain was exploiting the colonies and that "every consideration of common sense called for the colonies to become independent and establish a republican government of their own." The pamphlet was published anonymously and sold more than 500,000 copies. His next series of pamphlets entitled *The American Crisis* was published between 1776 and 1783. Paine's words inspired those who battled in the revolution. In 1777 the Second Continental Congress appointed him Secretary of the Committee of Foreign Affairs. In 1779, Paine lost the post during a political dispute.

In 1787 he returned to England and published *The Rights of Man* in two parts, one in 1791 and another in 1792. This criticism of monarchical rule led to his being indicted for treason, and he left for France in December 1792. In France he was elected as a deputy to the National Convention. He later returned to the United States with Thomas Jefferson in 1802. Thomas Paine died, in 1809, in New York City.



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Common Sense by Thomas Paine sold 120,000 copies in 1776 and advanced the cause of independence.

