A Case for Independence

Read how a pamphlet changed minds in the colonies.

5.C.3.3.C "Explain how Thomas Paine's Common Sense shifted American sentiment toward independence."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline what some colonists first hoped the king would do, circle two of Paine's arguments, and box a sentence that shows how support for independence changed.

When Common Sense Spread

1. In early 1776, many colonists were angry with Britain but still hoped to settle their disputes with King George III. Some wanted the king to protect their rights, not to end British rule. Then Thomas Paine published a short pamphlet called *Common Sense*. Its plain language reached people beyond political leaders. Readers could discuss its ideas in homes, shops, and meeting places.

2. Paine challenged the idea that a king should rule simply because he was born into a royal family. He argued that people could choose their own government. He also asked why a distant island should govern a large land across the ocean. These arguments made independence seem reasonable, not just a bold wish. Waiting for the king to fix the conflict began to seem less useful to some readers.

3. *Common Sense* spread quickly through the colonies, and people read it aloud as well as on their own. Paine called for a complete break with Britain instead of another request for help from the king. The pamphlet did not change every mind, but it gave more colonists words and reasons to support independence. By July 1776, colonial leaders declared independence, a decision Paine had helped make easier to imagine.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did Paine's argument about kings challenge the hope that King George III would protect colonists' rights?

2. Why might Paine's question about a distant island have made independence seem reasonable to readers?

3. How did Paine's writing and the way people shared it help his ideas change minds?

4. What change did Paine ask colonists to make instead of seeking help from the king, and how did the pamphlet affect support for that change?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a four-sentence note to a colonist in early 1776 who still hopes the king will settle the conflict. Use two different ideas from the passage to explain why Paine might change that person's mind, and end with the new position the person might take.

ANSWER KEY

A Case for Independence

GRADE 5 · 5.C.3.3.C

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline what some colonists first hoped the king would do, circle two of Paine's arguments, and box a sentence that shows how support for independence changed. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did Paine's argument about kings challenge the hope that King George III would protect colonists' rights?	**Paine argued that people could choose their own government instead of depending on a king who ruled because of his birth.**
2	Why might Paine's question about a distant island have made independence seem reasonable to readers?	**It led readers to question why Britain, far across the ocean, should govern the colonies.**
3	How did Paine's writing and the way people shared it help his ideas change minds?	**His plain language reached people beyond political leaders, and readers shared his ideas in conversation and by reading aloud.**
4	What change did Paine ask colonists to make instead of seeking help from the king, and how did the pamphlet affect support for that change?	**He asked for a complete break with Britain. The pamphlet gave more colonists reasons to support independence, though it did not change every mind.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

You hope King George III will protect your rights. Paine argues that people can choose their own government instead of accepting a ruler because of his birth. He also asks why a distant island should govern land across the ocean. These ideas might lead you to favor independence rather than ask the king for help again.

Accept explanations that connect Paine's arguments to a shift from seeking the king's help toward supporting independence. Students should not claim that the pamphlet changed every colonist's mind.