Words for Liberty

Read how Revolutionary-era writers shared ideas about liberty and power.

5.C.4.5.E "ideological writing (e.g., Thomas Paine, Mercy Otis Warren, Phillis Wheatley)."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline one idea each writer wanted readers to believe, and circle the kind of writing each used to share it.

Three Writers, Three Ways

1. In 1776, a printer could sell a small pamphlet that changed a reader's mind. Thomas Paine's *Common Sense* argued that the colonies should separate from Britain. Paine believed people should choose their own government instead of obeying a king because he was born into a royal family. His short, direct sentences helped ordinary readers follow his argument. A pamphlet was easy to carry and pass to another person.

2. Mercy Otis Warren shared political ideas through plays. In *The Adulateur*, she made a power-hungry character look foolish. Warren used this story to criticize British officials and warn that giving leaders too much power could threaten liberty. A play let readers follow characters' words and judge their choices. Warren's writing showed that women could take part in the public debate over government.

3. Phillis Wheatley used a poem to explore liberty. In her 1773 poem addressed to the Earl of Dartmouth, she welcomed hopes for freedom in the colonies. She also told how she had been taken from Africa and brought to America as an enslaved child. Wheatley wanted readers to think about her own desire for freedom, not only the colonies' desire. Her poem connected a public argument to a deeply personal experience.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What did Paine want readers to believe about government, and what reason did he give?

2. How did Warren use a play to warn readers about government?

3. How did Wheatley use her own life to make readers think about liberty?

4. How did Paine and Warren use different kinds of writing to challenge British rule?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine you are writing to a town newspaper in 1776. In three sentences, share your own idea about fair government or liberty and give a reason for it without repeating one of the writers' arguments.

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PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline one idea each writer wanted readers to believe, and circle the kind of writing each used to share it. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What did Paine want readers to believe about government, and what reason did he give?	**People should choose their own government, not obey a king simply because he was born into a royal family.**
2	How did Warren use a play to warn readers about government?	**She made a power-hungry character look foolish to criticize British officials and warn that too much power could threaten liberty.**
3	How did Wheatley use her own life to make readers think about liberty?	**She wrote about being taken from Africa and enslaved, connecting her desire for freedom to the colonies' hopes for freedom.**
4	How did Paine and Warren use different kinds of writing to challenge British rule?	**Paine used a direct pamphlet to argue for separation from Britain. Warren used a play with a power-hungry character to criticize British officials.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

A fair government should listen to people before it makes new rules. If leaders hear only wealthy voices, they may overlook problems faced by workers and farmers. People should be able to share their concerns in public meetings.

Accept answers that accurately connect each writer's political idea to the writing described in the passage. For Your Turn, look for an original idea, a supporting reason, and three sentences.