

Guided Reading Questions for
The Elementary Common Sense of
Thomas Paine

Common Sense Activities for the Well Read Student

Introduction, Timeline, and Chapter 1

1. Why do you think Thomas Paine titled his pamphlet “Common Sense?”

2. The illustration right before Thomas Paine’s biography shows a young colonist looking at a sign that points in opposite directions. If you were the person in that picture, what would you be thinking? Which path would you choose?

3. In the Introduction are these words: “The founding fathers were like you and me, with extraordinary beliefs in the common good for their fellow citizens.” What do you think that means?

4. In the Introduction is a picture of Thomas Paine and King George III. If you were a colonist viewing these two pictures, which person would appeal to you more? Why?



5. Find the years 1754 and 1775 on the timeline. Why would the Continental Congress be interested in creating peace treaties with neighboring Indian tribes?

6. *Common Sense* was originally printed as a pamphlet. In those days, that meant it did not have a cover like a book or magazine has today. Its binding was not sewn or glued, but instead tied together with either coarse string or leather. This made it affordable to publish, which meant it could be sold cheaply so that most people could afford to buy a copy. Why was this important?

7. According to Thomas Paine, “It is the pride of kings that throws mankind into confusion.” What do you think he was trying to say about kings? How could having too much pride disrupt the lives of others?

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