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Connections, Strategies, and Resources: Thomas Paine's *Common Sense*
References in blue are active hyperlinks

Connections: Social Studies, Humanities, Fiction/Nonfiction: This lesson clearly illustrates the depth and scope of Thomas Paine's powerful argument presented in *Common Sense*—past **and** present. This lesson also illustrates to our students just how *the written word can affect and effect monumental and LASTING impact and import*—long after initial publication. To paraphrase Umberto Eco, as well as Toni Morrison: a text's message does speak to the immediate and intended audience. But, more importantly, and more profoundly, the text engages future and diverse audiences who will read, attach their own reading and POV lens to the text, resulting in a continuing stream of new interpretations and applications unique to *their* needs and requirements. In this way a text remains alive *and* keenly relevant generation after generation—still *speaking, engaging, and inspiring*. (Eco, "Waiting for the millennium," *FMR*, No.2, July 1981, 66).

- **Summary:** What coheres the past and present Connections cited below are Thomas Paine's initial **Thematic Threads** presented and developed in the pamphlet—yet resonating powerfully to this moment in America's time: (a) Equity, (b) Freedom, (c) Security, (d) Independence, (e) Identity, (f) Reflection, (g) Prudence, (h) Fidelity, (i) Prudence, (j) Natural right, and (k) Natural liberty.
- **Connections:**
 - Contemporary: Women (1776): (a) Abigail Adams, (b) Mary Bell Washington, (c) Martha Washington, (d) Catherine Greene, (e) Lucy Knox, (f) Molly Pitcher, and (g) Elizabeth Freeman
 - Connections 19th Century:
 - African-American Periodical Press (1827): *Freedom's Journal*, 16 March 1827 Vol.1, No. 1. Eds. Samuel E. Cornish and John B. Russwurm
 - American Arts and Letters: "The American Scholar" Ralph Waldo Emerson (Oration in Cambridge, 31 August 1837)
 - Declaration of Sentiments: Seneca Falls Conference (1848): (a) Elizabeth Cady Stratton, (b) Susan B. Anthony, and (c) Frederick Douglass
 - American Civil War (12 April 1861-26 May 1865): (a) Abraham Lincoln, (b) Frederick Douglass, and (c) Harriet Tubman
 - Emancipation Proclamation (1 January 1863)
 - Gettysburg Address (19 November 1863)
 - General Order 143 (1863)
 - General Order 3 (19 June 1865)

- Connections: 20th and 21st Centuries: (a) Cultural and Social and Political Movements, (b) Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., (c) Rep. Barbara Jordan (TX), (d) Former President Barack Obama, and (e) President Joseph Biden

Strategies: *Note: some Thomas Paine quotes are repeated in activities because they apply to different style or message and apply to different periods.*

I. Close Reading, Analysis, and Making Connections:

- A. **Aim:** This activity encourages and allows social studies and ELA students to experience and examine Paine’s 18th century writing style, focusing on (grades 4-12; pre-service). Close reading, analysis, and inquiry are the comprehension targets. Each student-group or individual examines a passage or two, closely and deliberately, examining the way Paine constructs his argument using the list below as a guide. (*Note: Except for required ELA American, British, and World Literature surveys, our recommendation is for teachers to select passages for younger students and provide a few select passages from which older students may select themselves.*) The example excerpt below illustrates how students can analyze Paine’s style and techniques.
- B. **Writing Style:** Please know that this list is **inclusive of grades 4-12** and pre-service teachers who may want a review-primer, focusing on teaching reading and writing: (a) Mode of Writing (persuasive, with narrative and expository and descriptive elements) **Audience**, **Occasion**, **Purpose**; Rhetorical Appeals (logical, ethical, emotional); (b) Word Choice; (c) Use of Bolded Text; (d) Use of Capitalization; (e) Caesura (dashes); (f) Punctuation; (g) Syntax; (h) Simple Sentence; (i) Compound Sentence; (j) Complex Sentence; (k) Compound-Complex Sentence; (l) Repetition (anaphora); (m) Juxtaposition (comparison/contrast); (n) Illustration/Examples; (o) Statistics; (p) First-Person Narrative (memory); and (q) Historical References (Old Testament, history, factual data [monarchy and parliament]). (*Note: POV and Voice are the focus of another activity.*)
- C. **Activity:** As each group (or individual student) examines their passage(s), encourage them to express:
1. *what they think about the passage and how Paine constructed it*
 2. *how they would re-write or express the same idea*
 3. *determine if they themselves would be persuaded to act or not after reading Common Sense—In this section, be sure to ask students to be prepared to share-out for class conversation*
 4. Ask students to keep their findings and notes, for later use with another activity (#4).
- D. **Example Excerpts from Thomas Paine:**
1. “Here then, is the origin and rise of government; namely, a mode rendered necessary by the inability of moral virtue to govern the world; here too is the design and end of government, viz. freedom and security. And however our eyes may be dazzled with show, or our ears deceived by sound however prejudice may warp our wills, or interest darken our understanding, the simple voice of nature and reason will say, it is right” (“OF THE

ORIGIN AND DESIGN OF GOVERNMENT IN GENERAL, WITH CONCISE REMARKS ON THE ENGLISH CONSTITUTION, 16).

2. “Though I would avoid giving necessary offense, yet I am inclined to believe, that all those who espouse the doctrine of reconciliation may be included within the following descriptions. Interested men, who are not to be trusted; weak men, who CANNOT see; prejudiced men, who WILL NOT see; and a certain set of moderate men who think better of the European world than it deserves; and the last class, by ill-judged deliberation, will be the cause of more calamities to this continent, than all the other three” (THOUGHTS ON THE [PRESENT STATE OF AMERICAN AFFAIRS, 40).

II. **Thematic Threads-Constructing an Argument:** Students can manage this activity individually or in groups, depending on your decision. Reading as a class - as students read *Common Sense*, class discussions will, of course, explore and identify each thematic thread. Reading excerpts - one way to approach this reading and critical thinking strategy is to ask students to read the passage and then explore orally what they think the passage is conveying.

A. **Aim:** The instructional aim of this activity allows students (a) first-hand experience of reading a primary passage from a different historical era, (b) to analyze the passage so that they can rethink and rephrase the passage to reflect their own style and perspective, and (c) to explore and discuss with the class comparison and contrasts.

B. **Activity:**

1. Ask students to trace how Paine conveys a specific message/or point [allow students to rely on and utilize the Writing Style list above—on which you will selectively focus based on grade level and curriculum].
2. For older students, another way to approach the thematic threads is to allow them to re-write a selected passage as they would today—to *redact* the passage. Next, students will share their redactions for commentary and discussion. The aim here is to allow students to understand and experience how a thought and style from an earlier century can be re-expressed in contemporary writing styles and *yet remain persuasive*. Remember: Allow students the freedom to write as they wish *within appropriate* parameters.
3. Next, encourage students to share their redactions for collaborative discussion and analysis. (If some students are a bit shy, you may want students to submit their redactions to you, and later, you can share them out for class analysis without specific names.

III. **Voice—The Individual, The Population, and POV: Why IS One’s Voice So Important? Or, IS it?:**

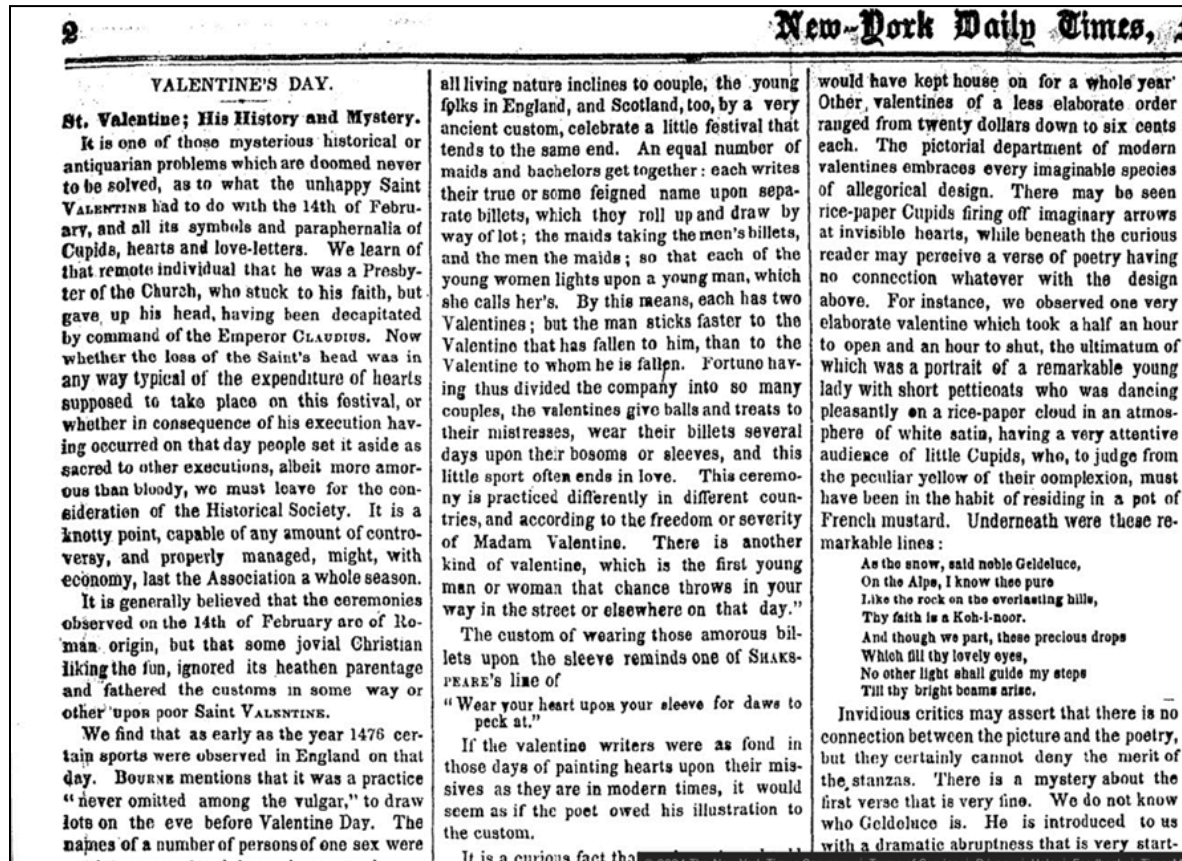
A. **Aim:** This activity is multifaceted: (a) to leverage students’ connection to social media, (b) to privilege their focus on “growing and developing” their own voice, and (c) to enable them to see and experience for themselves how the past can and does still reverberate and impact their present—their here and now. In addition, this activity allows students to experience and *read* how voice is not always vocal. On the contrary, through this activity students will explore how a

person can express *voice* through writing, art, music, and other forms—all without *any* physical utterance. More than any other generation, research has cited, GenZ as the most outspoken and focused generation since the Baby Boomers (“Generation Z: Rebels with a Cause,” Emily Anatole, Forbes, 8 April 2013; Jean. M. Twenge, *iGen: Why Today’s Super-Connected Kids Are Growing Up Less Rebellious, More Tolerant, Less Happy—and Completely Unprepared for Adulthood and what That Means for the Rest of Us*). Just as Thomas Paine believed that his one, singular voice could—and *did*—resonate with the colonists, GenZ also believes in the import and efficacy of their voices and perspectives. They embrace *process* and *reflection*. Our leveraging these traits will further hone students’ critical thinking and expression. Thomas Paine’s *Common Sense* illustrates the power one, singular voice can attain—and *through the written word*. This activity is one that can be class discussion as well as leveraging students’ interest in and interaction with social media. In so many ways, one can see and read *Common Sense* as a *form of social media* well-before the idea and phrase evolved in the 20th century. The pamphlet reached thousands when first published and continued to increase.

- B. **Activity:** As an oral and potentially fun activity, explore with students how a point of view or an idea can gain traction on social media (this approach not only will surprise students but also will immediately grab their attention. Next, move the examination to Paine’s *Common Sense*, and encourage them to examine, compare and contrast their first exploration into the impact Paine’s pamphlet had. Also, explore the audience’s attention-span today’s social media sometimes has and then compare and contrast with the *attention-span* of Paine’s pamphlet audience. (Analysis) The culminating conversation/exploration can be not only enlightening for teachers and students but also fun and informative—an activity-snapshot into the similarities *and* differences of audiences from different time periods.

IV. **Symbolism: 14 February 1776 and (reference an 1853 article on Valentine’s Day)**

- A. **Aim:** Most of us are familiar with Valentine’s Day. But how many of us *really think about* how the holiday began, why the holiday exists, *and* can the meaning of Valentine’s Day have other meanings and significance—beyond how people commemorate it today?
- B. **Activity:** To begin, read the following excerpt from the 1853 newspaper article, “St. Valentine: The History, the Mystery:” (*Note: the entire article is not here; whenever possible, students’ being able to experience a real primary source is important.*)



1. Now that you've reviewed a portion of the newspaper article, think about Paine's publishing the Philadelphia edition of *Common Sense* on 14 February 1776, Valentine's Day. What an interesting coincidence? Whether Paine intended to publish on Valentine's Day or not, reflecting on the day, date, and symbolic meaning is interesting to explore and analyze. Remember: Audience, Purpose, Occasion—the 3 critical ingredients for every *important and successfully delivered* argument.
2. Begin the class conversation with some overall questions about their understanding of Valentine's Day:
 - a) If you were trying to describe Valentine's Day to someone who had never experienced it or has no knowledge of it, how would you define the date?
 - b) What do you or your friends/family do or not do on Valentine's Day?

- c) Do you think there is only one way to understand/experience/define the date?
- d) As a class, explore how Thomas Paine’s argument in *Common Sense* could actually connect and relate to Valentine’s Day. For example, is the date solely for people in love, or could the meaning of the date relate to other types of love—such as love for one’s country—thereby, extending love for one another?
- e) Explore how Thomas Paine illustrates his love of America and what he envisions it *could* be.

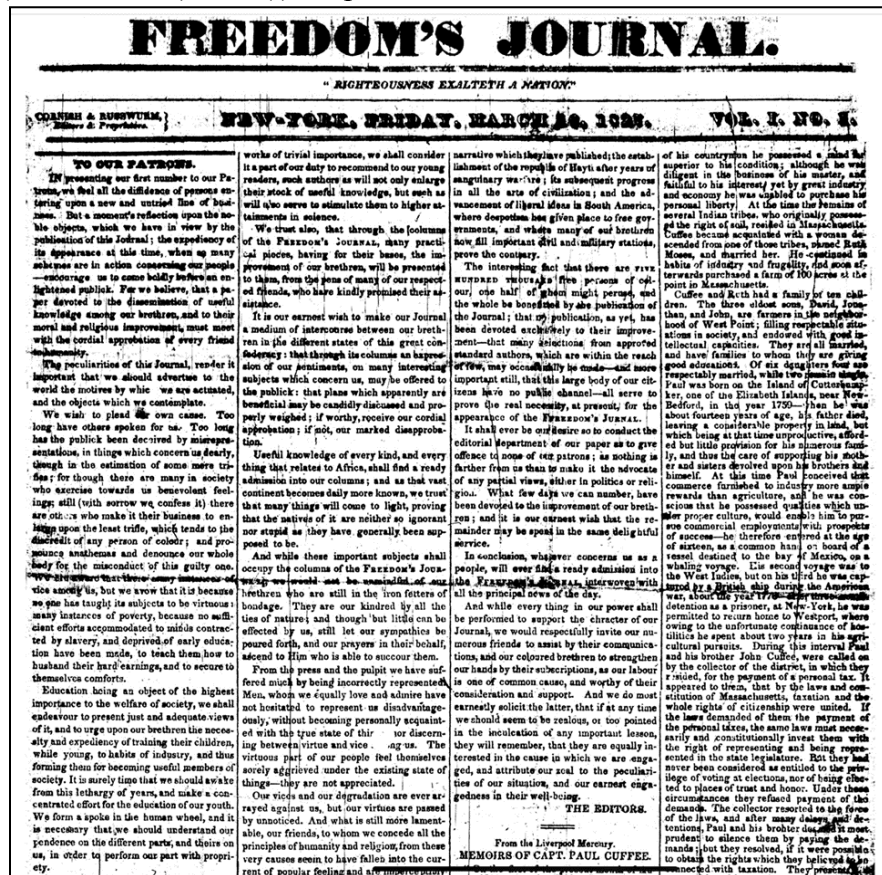
V. **Connections-Contemporary - Women and Thomas Paine’s Common Sense—How Text Can Affect and Inspire**

Reflection and Action: Yes, Thomas Paine’s *Common Sense* does address the masculine gender. This linguistic practice extended well into the 20th century, including the grammatical form/sequence (his or hers, for example). Of course, now, that practice has long been changed.

- A. **Aim:** Women were a critical and visual and active part of the road to the American Constitution, with Thomas Paine’s *Common Sense* providing the powerful, rhetorical blueprint—not only for the Constitution but also for the creation of what would become and remain the 3 branches of government: Executive, Judicial, Legislative. Women did not only read and listen, but they also became critical participants in the march toward the American Revolution. and, ultimately, the American Constitution - including (a) Abigail Adams, (b) Mary Bell Washington, (c) Martha Washington, (d) Catherine Greene, (e) Lucy Knox, (f) Molly Pitcher, and (g) Elizabeth Freeman.
- B. **Activity:** As a class, explore the following two links provided and those in the primary and secondary sources section that focus on some of the women who were Thomas Paine’s contemporaries: [The American Revolution Institute of the Society of the Cincinnati](#) and [Google Arts and Culture online interactive exhibit “Pining for Patriotism.”](#) This activity can apply to states that require elementary teachers to explore with students the roles women and children played during the nation’s *birth*. Middle and high school students can gather in groups, or, can individually explore who these women were along with their impact and contribution toward establishing “the road to the American Constitution.” As students work, set aside a bit of class time—15 mins—to share and discuss—
 1. Pre-knowledge/Awareness: In discussion, explore how much any of us are aware/familiar with the roles women and children forged in the road to America’s independence, the American revolution, and the U.S. Constitution.
 2. What they have found and what *they* think about it all.
 3. What do they know now or discovered that they *did not* know, or even have a clue?
 4. What else would they *like to know now*?

VI. **Connections - 19th Century:** Thomas Paine’s *Common Sense* continued to resonate and guide American governance—as the 19th century clearly attests. The American 19th century was a protean powerhouse in politics, arts and letters, and new perspectives on freedom, voice, choice, gender, and access.

- A. **Aim:** The list below provides an overview of the substantial impact Paine's argument and architectural blueprint toward an independent America with its own Constitution and separation of powers continued to inspire. Links are provided in the Primary/Secondary Resources section and include: (a) African-American Periodical Press (1827): *Freedom's Journal* (1827); (b) Declaration of Sentiments: The Seneca Falls Conference (1848): Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Frederick Douglass (also, publisher: *The North Star*, *Frederick Douglass's Paper*); (c) Abraham Lincoln—Speech to Republican State Convention 16 June 1858 (“A house divided”); (d) American Civil War (12 April 1861–26 May 1865): President Abraham Lincoln, Frederick Douglass, and Harriet Tubman; (e) Emancipation Proclamation (1 January 1863); (f) Gettysburg Address (19 November 1863); (g) General Order 143 (1863); (h) General Order 3 (19 June 1865); and (i) Ralph Waldo Emerson—“The American Scholar” (1837).



- B. **Activity:** Students can have multiple research and analysis activity-approaches here because, literally, so very many new perspectives and interests, and actions were emerging, almost simultaneously—politically, socially, constitutionally, *and* the emergence of America’s footprint in arts and letters. With this section, students can decide to drill into topics and/or people that may interest them—social studies and ELA. Interestingly, in this section, students can leverage their 21st century interest in technology, while still addressing curricular standards. For example, compare and contrast Emerson’s Man-Thinking and “amputated man” in “The American Scholar,” to Paine’s “Lovers of Mankind” and rights for all Mankind.” Links to help them are in Primary and Secondary Resources. Once students select their research or interest topic, allow them to research and read about the person, the movement/event, the document(s), Order, individual(s), speech.

VII. **Connections - Continuing Impact: Thomas Paine and the 20th and 21st Centuries:** Sometimes, words and points of view a person expresses or writes can become what we describe as *iconic*—a word or statement that merits remembered recognition, repetition, even adjusted to fit different time periods and/or moments in time. The following Common Sense excerpt has been repeated, paraphrased, and/or alluded to in every century since he first wrote it: “Some writers have explained the English constitution thus; the king say they, is one, the people another; the peers are an house in behalf of the king; the commons in behalf of the people; but this hath all the distinctions of a house divided against itself; and though the expressions be pleasantly arranged, yet when examined they appear idle and ambiguous; and it will always happen, that the nicest construction that words are capable of, when applied to the description of some thing which either cannot exist, or is too incomprehensible to be within the compass of description, will be words of sound only, and though they [words] may amuse the ear, they cannot inform the mind, for this explanation includes a previous question, viz. HOW CAME A KING BY A POWER WHICH THE PEOPLE ARE AFRAID TO TRUST, AND ALWAYS OBLIGED TO CHECK?” (“OF THE ORIGIN AND DESIGN OF GOVERNMENT IN GENERAL, WITH CONCISE REMARKS ON THE ENGLISH CONSTITUTION, 18).

- A. **Aim:** Examine, trace, and research how words, the message, perspective, style, and argument can resonate—or continue—generation to generation, century to century. Specifically, just *how do* Thomas Paine’s message, style, and voice continue to *shape America*. As cited earlier, President Abraham Lincoln, quoted from and later alluded to this portion of *Common Sense* in both his speech to the Republican Party (16 June 1858), as well as in his Gettysburg Address—at the height of the American Civil War. This pointed and profound excerpted argument—with deduction, illustration, exposition, and rhetorical question—has resonated throughout the 20th and 21st centuries, including: (a) Cultural and Social and Political Movements; (b) Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (Minister, Civil Rights Activist, and “Letter from a Birmingham Jail;” (c) Barbara Jordan (ran for the TX House of Rep and later won the state senate seat in 1960—the first African American state senator since 1883/ Later elected president of the Texas Senate, 28 March 1972—first Black woman to oversee any legislative body). Elected to U.S. House of Representatives (1972) (Speech 1976 and Address before House Judiciary Cmte 1974); (d) Former President Barack Obama (Inaugural Speech); and

(e) President Joseph Biden (Speech). The purpose of this section lies with illustrating how words and utterances can have *life* well-beyond the initial expression. Students in social studies experience how seemingly unique and separate moments and people from different times and spaces can, and often do, intersect—scaffolded ripples and cross-currents in time. Students in ELA learn to identify this relevant continuance as *verisimilitude*—the appearance of truth in a literary work: experiencing how authors of fiction, poets, playwrights can render reality through written words. Equally as important, social studies and ELA students also experience the same scaffolding and continuance in historical and nonfiction texts.

- B. **Activity:** Allow students to form groups; each group selects a movement, speech, or letter. Allow time for the students to read, discuss, and analyze. Encourage students to really break down each document and discuss among themselves: (a) Why do you think this sentiment has lasted for so long?, (b) What do you think it means to you now?, (c) Is the core of the 20th and 21st century quotes still relevant? Still meaningful?, (d) Now, try *paraphrasing* one of the modern quotes to what YOU would have it say to others today. [Paraphrasing: No more than four consecutive words from the original quote and using your own words to reflect the majority of the original quote]. Be sure students have access to the Primary and Secondary Resources list, as many of the links are interactive. Depending on the grade level, students can create a research piece to present, oral presentation to share with class, or class discussion. Middle and high school students can also research beyond the primary documents and movements listed to align with current events. (*Note: Be sure to remain neutral in your position. The primary focus and instructional aim of this project is for students to discover and explore the links between the past and their present from their points of view.*)

VIII. **Collaborative Pamphleteers Exhibit:** This activity is geared toward social studies and ELA.

- A. **Aim:** Some community libraries are beginning to have gatherings where students, parents, librarians, and teachers can come together, privileging students' voices and perspectives. This approach not only champions and showcases students and their voices and perspectives but also the setting and aim allows, even encourages, seemingly separate groups to come together to support, champion, *and learn from* students.
- B. **Activity:** After reading and exploring *Common Sense*, ask students if they'd be interested in coming together in groups of three or four to brainstorm an idea or position they want to publish in *their own* pamphlet. Of course, Thomas Paine's *Common Sense* will be the pattern—*not the topic*. Students' will select a topic on which each group agrees. (*Note: this activity is one that could be a collaboration between social studies and ELA.*) Once each group meets and decides on a topic, they will set about writing the sections of the pamphlet. After each person has created a section for the pamphlet, the groups will review, edit, revise, and polish for review and comments—just like all writers who submit drafts to editors. Next, once corrections and any additions have been made, each group will create their pamphlet. The pamphlets will all be on display for the school, or, like Summit Free Public Library in NJ, social studies and ELA teachers can collaborate with community libraries to bring students and parents together to attend. Students are

showcased. Parents have the opportunity to see and listen to their kids. Teachers have a moment to illustrate the import of what we do in the classroom in a real-life environment.

IX. **Direct Quotes, Indirect/Paraphrased Quotes, Allusion - Illustrations of How 20th and 21st Century references to Thomas Paine’s *Common Sense* continue to Influence and Persuade and Inspire—*Influencers Then and Now*:**

- A. **Quote #1:** “Some writers have explained the English constitution thus; the king say they, is one, the people another; the peers are an house in behalf of the king; the commons in behalf of the people; but this hath all the distinctions of a house divided against itself; and though the expressions be pleasantly arranged, yet when examined they appear idle and ambiguous; and it will always happen, that the nicest construction that words are capable of, when applied to the description of some thing which either cannot exist, or is too incomprehensible to be within the compass of description, will be words of sound only, and though they [words] may amuse the ear, they cannot inform the mind, for this explanation includes a previous question, viz. HOW CAME A KING BY A POWER WHICH THE PEOPLE ARE AFRAID TO TRUST, AND ALWAYS OBLIGED TO CHECK?” (“OF THE ORIGIN AND DESIGN OF GOVERNMENT IN GENERAL, WITH CONCISE REMARKS ON THE ENGLISH CONSTITUTION, 18).
- B. **Quote #2:** “The cause of America is in a great measure the cause of all mankind. Many circumstances hath, and will arise, which are not local, but universal, and through which the principles of all Lovers of Mankind are affected, and in the Event of which, their Affections are interested (“Introduction, 9-10) . . . from the errors of other nations, let us learn wisdom, and lay hold of the present opportunity—TO BEGIN GOVERNMENT AT THE RIGHT END” (OF THE PRESENT ABILITY OF AMERICA WITH SOME MISCELLANEOUS REFLECTIONS, 62).
- C. **Aim:** This activity is designed to illustrate first-hand how some familiar people have quoted and referenced Thomas Paine. The activity allows students to experiment with the concept and practice of quoting a source. Of course, because research and analysis threads throughout curricula—grades 4-12 and college—this skill is an important one to hone constantly, especially now, when citations and the style of quoting includes links, eBooks, websites, texts, for example.
- D. **Activity:**
 1. **Preparation:** First, review the terms: (a) Direct Quote: Word for word, exact replication of quote; (b) Indirect/Paraphrased Quote: No more than four consecutive words from the original quote and using your own words to reflect the majority of the original quote; and (c) Allusion: writer’s own words that closely parallel or rephrase original quote, usually, on which writer or speaker expands own argument or point.
 2. **Influencers:** Now, let’s compare/contrast a word that students today may very well assume belongs uniquely to them and juxtapose it with its original meaning and intent: *Influencer* (2007-present)—a now, a well-known 21st century term, meaning “a person who has become well-known through the use of the internet and social media, and uses celebrity to endorse, promote, or generate interest in specific products, brands, etc., often for payment (*OED*).” However, in the 18th century, an *influencer* was one who “or that which influences,” such as

a church leader, or attributes that would make a person a good individual: “Honour is one of the most powerful influencers of human nature,” (*Examination of Human Philosophy*, 1867) (*OED*). Thomas Paine and his *Common Sense* most assuredly affected and influenced American colonists to the extent that a nation—the United States of America—would be the ultimate result, guided and led by the American Constitution and by three branches of elected government: Executive, Legislative, Judicial. The people of the United States would review, weigh, select, elect, and assess its government. In lieu of personal wealth and stature a 21st century *influencer* seeks, Mr. Paine’s aim of influence was the thematic threads cited earlier—aims that would, if nurtured, endure through the life and existence of the United States of America.

3. **Examination:** So, how impactful and lasting has Paine’s argument been? Examine the following 19th, 20th, and 21st century direct and indirect quotes, as well as allusions to *Common Sense*? Now you’re ready to examine and analyze not only *how* others today have cited Thomas Paine’s words and thoughts in *Common Sense* but also experience how and under what circumstances the citations were made (**Audience**, **Purpose**, **Occasion**). For this activity, students may want to collaborate or work individually, or a bit of both.
 - a) Select one of the 19th, 20th or 21st century quotes.
 - b) Read, examine, and analyze the following: (a) Theme, (b) Writing style, (c) Audience, (d) Purpose, and (e) Occasion
 - c) Highlight, take notes, record thoughts and questions. Create a brief report of findings, including any extra thoughts or new questions to share-out with the class. Include in the share-out what you learned and think about Thomas Paine’s continued influence. Finally, include in your sharing whether you/group have any personal “take-aways.” In other words: *What do you know now or think now that you did not before you experienced Thomas Paine’s Common Sense and its ripple-effect through the following centuries.*

E. Quote List:

1. Ralph Waldo Emerson: “Our day of dependence, our long apprenticeship to the learning of other lands, draws to a close. . . . The state of society is one in which the members have suffered amputation from the trunk, and strut about so many walking monsters, --a good finger, a neck, a stomach, but never a man. Man is thus metamorphosed into a thing, into many things. . . . In this distribution of functions the scholar is the delegated intellect. In the right state he is **Man Thinking**. In the degenerate state, when the victim of society, he tends to become a mere thinker, or still worse, the parrot of other men’s thinking.” (“The American Scholar,” Oration in Cambridge, 31 August 1837, 77-78).
2. Abraham Lincoln:
 - a) “A house divided against itself cannot stand.” I believe this government cannot endure permanently half-slave and half-free. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved—I do not expect the house to

fall—but I do expect that it will cease to be divided. It will become all one thing, or all the other. Either the opponents of slavery will arrest the further spread of it, and place it where the public mind shall rest in the belief that it is in course of ultimate extinction; or its advocates will push it forward till it shall become alike lawful in all the States, old as well as new, North as well as South.” (“A House Divided” Speech delivered to Republican State Convention Springfield, Illinois, 16 June 1858)

- b) “Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal. . . . It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us, that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion, that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain, that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom, and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.” (“The Gettysburg Address” delivered 19 November 1863, Gettysburg, PA)

3. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.:

- a) “There comes a time when one must take a position that is neither safe nor politic nor popular, but he must do it because conscience tells him it is right.” (“Remaining Awake Through a Great Revolution, Sermon: 31 March 1968, at the National Cathedral, Washington, DC, in *The Atlantic Presents: King*, Spring 2018, 5).
- b) “. . . I am in Birmingham because injustice is here. Just as the prophets of the eighth century B.C. left their villages and carried their “thus saith the Lord” far beyond the boundaries of their home towns, and just as the Apostle Paul left his village of Tarsus and carried the gospel of Jesus Christ to the far corners of the Greco-Roman world, so am I compelled to carry the gospel of freedom beyond my own home town. Like Paul, I must constantly respond to the Macedonian call for aid. . . . We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. . . . Anyone who lives inside the United States can never be considered an outsider anywhere within its bounds. . . . We know through painful experience that freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed. . . . We have waited for more than 340 years for our constitutional and God-given rights. . . . we still creep at horse-and-buggy pace toward gaining a cup of coffee at a lunch counter. . . . One day the South will know that when these disinherited children of God sat down at lunch counters, they were in reality standing up for what is best in the American dream and for the most sacred values in our Judaeo-Christian heritage, thereby bringing our nation back to those great wells of democracy which were dug deep by the founding fathers in their formulation of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence.” (“Letter From Birmingham Jail,” April 1963)

4. Barbara Jordan:
 - a) My faith in the Constitution is whole; it is complete; it is total. And I am not going to sit here and be an idle spectator to the diminution, the subversion, the destruction, of the Constitution. (House Judiciary Cmte Statement. 24 July 1974)
 - b) We are a people in a quandary about the present. We are a people in search of our future. We are a people in search of a national community. We are a people trying not only to solve the problems of the present, unemployment, inflation, but we are attempting on a larger scale to fulfill the promise of America. We are attempting to fulfill our national purpose, to create and sustain a society in which all of us are equal. (1976 Democratic National Convention Keynote Address).
5. Barack Obama:
 - a) “Today we continue a never-ending journey to bridge the meaning of those words with the realities of our time. For history tells us that while these truths may be self-evident, they’ve never been self-executing; that while freedom is a gift from God, it must be secured by His people here on Earth. The patriots of 1776 did not fight to replace the tyranny of a king with the privileges of a few or the rule of a mob. They gave to us a republic, a government of, and by, and for the people, entrusting each generation to keep safe our founding creed. . . . My oath is not so different from the pledge we all make to the flag that waves above and that fills our hearts with pride.
 - b) They are the words of citizens [, sic] and they represent our greatest hope. You and I, as citizens, have the power to set this country’s course. You and I, as citizens, have the obligation to shape the debates of our time -- not only with the votes we cast, but with the voices we lift in defense of our most ancient values and enduring ideals.” (Inaugural Address, 21 January 2013)
6. Joseph R. Biden: “. . . There is no more fitting place than here today in Gettysburg to talk about the cost of division — about how much it has cost America in the past, about how much it is costing us now, and about why I believe in this moment we must come together as a nation. . . . For President Lincoln, the Civil War was about the greatest of causes: the end of slavery, the widening of equality, the pursuit of justice, the creation of opportunity, and the sanctity of freedom. . . . And he taught us this: A house divided could not stand. That is a great and timeless truth. . . .” (Vice President Joseph R. Biden as candidate for President, 6 October 2020)

Primary and Secondary Resources

- I. **C-SPAN and Library of Congress:** *Books That Shaped America: Thomas Paine’s Common Sense*
- II. **References within *Common Sense*:**
 - A. [Sir William Meredith—House of Commons](#) (p.31)
 - B. [Prime Minister Henry Pelham](#)

- C. [Battle of Lexington 1776](#)
- D. [Thomas Jefferson to Jonathan B. Smith, 26 April 1791](#) (on the first American publication)
- E. [1776 Timeline: Articles and Essays: 1764-1788](#)
- F. ["Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania to the Inhabitants of the British colonies"](#) (1767, John Dickinson, the first of twelve letters) - Massachusetts Historical Society

III. Google Arts and Culture: Images of the Revolutionary War in America:

- A. ["Pining for Patriotism"](#)
- B. [Women and the American Revolution](#): The American Revolution Institute of the Society of the Cincinnati

IV. Children and the American Revolution: Children played supportive and important roles during the American Revolution as messengers, drummers, helping with mending uniforms and gardening, even helping with the wounded. One young boy was Nathan Futrell:

- A. ["How kids helped during the Revolutionary War"](#) (Adam Sullivan, The Gazette, 3 July 2020; Updated 5 August 2020)
- B. [Video Game: Liberty's Kids: Live the Adventure of the American Revolution](#)
- C. "Trigg settler drummed his way into early U.S. history" Nathan Futrell, The Paducah Sun, Paducah, KY, Friday, 13 November 1981

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 11, 1981 HIGHLIGHTS, PADUCAH, KENTUCKY PAGE 3

Trigg settler drummed his way into early U.S. history



The burial site is where the Futrells' cabin once stood.
(Staff photo by Berry Craig)

By BERRY CRAIG
Sun Staff Writer

LAURA FURNACE, Ky. — The man reported to have been the youngest drummer boy in the Revolutionary War lies buried in wooded isolation near this Trigg County community that is no more.

Nathan Futrell, who joined the North Carolina militia at age 7, settled in Trigg County in 1828.

He died nine years later after farming, supposedly planting the first apple orchard in the county and running a grist mill.

His farm, house and mill were near the old iron smelting facility for which the Laura Furnace community was named.

Laura Furnace disappeared when this rugged section of Trigg County was incorporated into the Tennessee Valley Authority's Land Between The Lakes outdoor recreation and conservation area.

Futrell's childhood service in the War for Independence was recognized by Thurston B. Morton, the Daughters of the American Revolution and the Sons of the American Revolution.

Former Kentucky Sen. Morton hailed the drummer as "one of the youngest patriots to serve his nation during this great conflict."

The revolutionary Sons and Daughters lauded him as a "recognized patriot."

The account of Futrell's life was written for the L&L by Margaret Ballard Futrell of Hopkinsville.

She is the wife of Roger Futrell, a fifth-generation great-grandchild of the drummer.

Futrell was born in Northampton County, N.C., in 1773, according to Mrs. Futrell.

She also writes that his revolutionary war service was practically unknown until her husband obtained a collection of family papers in 1969.

They included a small yellowing affidavit which read:

"My Consorte (sic) Nathan Futrell served as a drummer player in the North Carolina Militia during the Revolution at age seven years."

The document, dated Jan. 3, 1828, is signed by his wife, Charity, whom he married in North Carolina in 1798.

The Futrell family sent the paper to the Kentucky State Police crime lab in Frankfort for proof of its authenticity.

"After a tedious process of chemical evaluation the chief of the laboratory issued a report that the document was of the 1825 period and in his professional opinion was an authentic document," she wrote.

The affidavit is in the possession of the Filson Club historical society in Louisville.

Mrs. Futrell wrote that the drummer's "tenure of duty was probably short-lived both because of his age and because he was attached to a militia group."

The Futrells crossed the Appalachian Mountains into Kentucky in 1799 with their infant daughter, Catherine. They first homesteaded in Christian County.

The family purchased 2,000 acres along Ford's Creek in Trigg County, crossed the Cumberland River and raised a cabin opposite the site of Laura Furnace, which was built in 1855.

Futrell also was a road surveyor and election judge.

After Futrell died at age 56, his wife kept a tavern for a short time at their double-pen with dogtrot cabin.

They reared nine children; the grandson of one, J.M. Futrell, was governor of Arkansas in the 1930s, according to Mrs. Futrell.

Another grandson, Daniel R. Futrell, is buried next to his grandparents.

He was Daniel R. Futrell of the 50th Tennessee Confederate Infantry, a Civil War soldier who lost his life at Fort Donelson, Tenn.

Charity Futrell died in 1872 at age 96.

The Futrells are buried on a hilltop above where their cabin stood. For many years only two fieldstones marked their final resting place.

Now a gray granite tombstone stands over their graves.

In 1968, the state historical society erected a metal marker along U.S. 68 at the site of Golden Pond, a town gone like Laura Furnace.

A similar marker was placed by the gravel road that winds past the Futrell family plot.

- D. [Committee of Style--Composing the U.S. Constitution](#)
- E. [Spirit of '76](#). Copy of painting by Archibald M. Willard, 1876–National Archives
- V. **Nineteenth Century:**
 - A. [The American Scholar](#)—Ralph Waldo Emerson (Speech: 31 August 1837; Published Essay—31 August 1837)
 - B. [Women’s Suffrage Memorabilia](#)
 - C. [Declaration of Sentiments at Seneca Falls](#) (July 1848) LOC
 - D. [Douglass, Stowe, Stanton at Conference](#)
 - E. [Abraham Lincoln “House Divided” Speech](#)-1858
 - F. [“Gettysburg Address.”](#) 19 November 1863, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania
 - G. [General Order 143](#) [allowing Blacks—free and slave—to join the efforts for American independence (National Archives)]
 - H. [General Order No. 3](#) [Enforcing the Emancipation Proclamation in Texas] (National Archives)
 - I. [Elizabeth Freeman](#) - National Women’s History Museum
 - J. [The 19th-Amendment: Women Win the Vote \(1917-1920\)](#) (in 1920 the 19th Amendment was ratified to include Black women—18 August 1920)
 - K. [How Did Women Win the Nineteenth Amendment? A Strategy for Suffrage](#)
- VI. **20th and 21st Centuries:**
 - A. [Barbara Jordan: 1976 Democratic National Convention Address](#)
 - B. [Rep. Barbara Jordan, House Judiciary Cmte Statement](#), 24 July 1974, during the impeachment of President Richard Nixon
 - C. [Barbara Jordan: An Exhibition of the Congresswoman](#) (Google Arts and Culture)
 - D. [Martin Luther King, Jr. “Letter From a Birmingham Jail”](#) (1967) The Atlantic Presents King Spring 2018
 - E. [Barack Obama 2013 Inaugural Address](#) - White House Archives
 - F. [Joe Biden at Gettysburg](#) 2:08-3:43 (6 Oct 2020, C-SPAN)
- VII. **Other References: Articles, Books, Plays:**
 - A. Paine, Thomas. *Common Sense* The Origin and Design of Government. Rpt. King Solomon, 2021.
 - B. Briggs, Amy. “Espionage and Intrigue: Harriet The Spy,” *National Geographic History*. Vol 9. No 6. Feb/Jan 2024. (Brilliant piece with primary source quotes and images, focusing on not only Harriet Tubman and her roles in the Civil War, but also the echoes of Thomas Paine’s *Common Sense* throughout the piece.)
 - C. Eco, Umberto. “Waiting for the millennium,” *FMR*. No. 2, July 1981, 66. (Excellent essay: the quote cited here clearly defines the power texts can have over generations of time.)

- D. Morrison, Toni, *playing in the dark: whiteness and the literary imagination*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1992. (While there have been many redactions of William Shakespeare's plays, no one has ever attempted to examine voice and presence of Desdemona *and* her companion-servant Barbary, until Toni Morrison.)
- E. *Desdemona*. London: Oberon, 2012. The play premiered 26 October 2011.

