ABOUT THE AUTHOR/BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Thomas Paine anonymously published a pamphlet called *Common Sense* in January 1776. It was a cry for complete independence from Britain. In this pamphlet, Paine stated that England, the mother country, was “devouring her young.” Paine’s pamphlet became extremely popular, and when he enlisted in George Washington’s army, he started writing the first of a series of sixteen pamphlets called *The Crisis*. Washington ordered this first pamphlet to be read aloud at every military campground. Paine’s writings were based on ideas that were developed in Europe during the Age of Enlightenment. These rights included the belief that if the government, which the people voluntarily submitted to, went beyond its bounds, then the people could voluntarily end it.

LITERARY ELEMENTS

- **Tone**: an author’s attitude toward his/her subject matter or toward the audience
  - Objective: free from bias; information is mostly fact-based
  - Subjective: biased and opinionated

READING AND RESPONDING

1. *p. 124* Discuss what kinds of “times” Paine is discussing in the first line of the excerpt: “These are the times that try men’s souls.”
   
   *The “times” that he’s referring to are known as trying times, times that test people, such as times of war, poverty, diseases, etc.*

2. *p. 124* Analyze Paine’s reasoning in the first paragraph. What are some different comparisons he uses to illustrate his point?
   
   *Paine says the harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph; tyranny is hell, whereas freedom is heaven.*

3. *p. 124* Why does Paine compare taxation without representation to slavery?
   
   *Paine makes this comparison because it ennobles the colonial struggle. The conflict is elevated from an argument over taxes to a struggle for freedom and independence.*

4. *p. 124* According to Paine, what gives something its value?
   
   *The dearness of something gives it its value.*

5. *p. 125* Does Paine seem objective and removed or subjective and emotional when he says, “Whether the independence of the continent was declared too soon, or delayed too long, I will not now enter into an argument; my own simple opinion is, that had it been eight months earlier it would have been much better”?
   
   *Paine’s tone seems objective and removed as he expresses his “simple opinion.”*
(6) p. 125 To whom does Paine compare the English king? What emotions does Paine appeal to when describing the king?

*He compares the king to a murderer, a highwayman, or housebreaker. He appeals to the emotions of disgust and hatred.*

(7) p. 125 What connection do you think Paine sees between the panics in European history Paine describes and the experience the colonists were facing?

*Panics bring people together while revealing those who are unwilling to fight for a cause.*

(8) p. 125 What does Paine feel is missing from the colonists’ struggle when he mentions Joan of Arc?

*He feels that the colonists need a symbol of hope and strength, like Joan of Arc.*

(9) p. 125 What does Paine say about the effect of panics on British sympathizers?

*He says that if the Americans appear to be losing the war, British sympathizers will reveal themselves.*

(10) p. 124-5 Which Americans does Paine criticize in the opening of his essay and at the end of page 125? Which Americans does he praise?

*He criticizes the “summer soldier,” the “sunshine patriot,” and the “disguised tory.” He praises the supporters of the cause of freedom.*

(11) p. 126 From whom is Paine seeking help?

*He is calling on everyone, on all states.*

(12) p. 126 What does Paine imply about those people who do not act? How does this contribute to his tone?

*People who do not act might as well be dead; future generations will curse their cowardice. Paine’s tone becomes much more forceful and threatening.*

(13) p. 126 What are three qualities of people who pursue their principles?

*They possess brave hearts, clear consciences, and the ability to pursue their principles unto death.*

(14) p. 124 Paine suggests that this is not an “offensive” war. Why does he feel this way? Why do you think Paine might have chosen this analogy as his final argument?

*Since the king acts like a thief, he should be punished like one. Paine may have chosen this analogy to show the colonists not to be intimidated by the king’s status.*

(15) p. 126 When is war justified, according to Paine?

*War is justified when it is defensive.*

(16) p. 126 Summarize what Paine is saying from the statement “Not all the treasures of the world” to the end of the excerpt.

*He is saying that nothing would cause him to start a war, because that is murder. However, when someone threatens him and his property, he will fight back, whether he is a common criminal or a king.*
How does Paine use religion as part of his argument? How effective is this approach in persuading the reader?

_Paine claims that only God can rule a people “in all cases” and that God wouldn’t desert a people who have tried so hard to avoid war._

In what ways does Paine express the Enlightenment idea that government should operate by “the consent of the governed”?

_By criticizing Britain for denying the colonists’ right to agree or disagree with governing policies._

Paine encourages his fellow citizens to defend themselves against British tyranny. What kinds of qualities does Paine encourage the colonists to have? How might these qualities help to define the new nation?

_Paine encourages his readers to have courage, to support the revolutionary cause, and to understand the danger of British tyranny. The new nation would uphold similar values of strength and freedom._