**THOMAS PAINE THE CRISIS analysis**

After the colonists in America decided that they were going to move towards freedom from British rule, they found themselves faced with several problems. Many of these problems dealt directly with the threat of a British invasion to stamp out such a revolution. However, a major problem was an internal one. The feelings regarding independence were mixed throughout the colonies and divided among classes.

The Patriots, who wanted independence and found themselves among many devoted British loyalists who were totally against any ideas of breaking away from England.

Many neutrals felt that any attempt at independence would be an incoherent one. They felt that living under British control was adequate.

It would seem impossible that 13 colonies, made up of mostly farmers, could be able to mount such a war against the most powerful nation in the world.

[Thomas Paine](http://www.let.rug.nl/usa/B/tpaine/paine.htm) was the editor of the *Pennsylvania Magazine* in Philadelphia. A supporter of the move towards independence he used media as a weapon against British rule. He was strongly in favor of a war against Britain. Knowing that the war was going to need the support of all the colonists, he understood that unity was essential and found it necessary to offer what he could to help unite the thirteen colonies into one nation. In 1776, Paine wrote [*The Crisis, Number One*](http://www.let.rug.nl/usa/D/1776-1800/paine/AC/crisisxx.htm), a plain spoken commentary outlining obstacles the colonies faced in the struggle with Britain. His conviction was to unite all in the colonies and expose the tyranny of Britain in hopes of gaining the support of the Loyalists and neutrals to support the cause with the Patriots.

Paine wrote with fever and passion. His idea of a land free from British tyranny was developed through his writing. *The Crisis* was written in an elegantly simple voice. Paine stayed away from terminology that was incoherent to the many un-educated common artisans and craftsmen. It was written in common, everyday language. He understood that an easily readable circular would be accepted. In it he not only outlined the problems and struggles with Britain but argued them.

He starts out by telling people that "These are the times that try men's souls". He made the point that a soulful person would no longer allow themselves to be oppressed through the unfairness of such an evil kingdom as the British monarchy. He wanted the reader to become outraged and ignited with the same emotions that he and other patriots felt.

The average colonist was not going to simply support a war for independence. He had to make it more than that using many common relations between the American cause and beliefs that colonists held closely. He referred to God to promote the idea that a war against Britain would be a war in support of God. The British were seen, by Paine, as trying to accumulate a power that he claimed belonged only to God:

"God almighty will not give up a people to military destruction, or leave them without support to perish, who had so earnestly and so repeatedly sought to avoid the calamities of war, by every decent method which wisdom could invent".

He argued the colonists would be protected with God on their side.

Paine's interpretation of the British was a disapproving one. He wanted the colonists to understand that they did not have to accept restraint from the British. He made references to the British hold on the colonies as an intruder breaking into a private home to steal and ravage.

"...if a thief break into my house, burn and destroy my property, and kill or threaten to kill me, or those that are in it, and to "bind me in all cases whatsoever," to his absolute will, am I to suffer it?"

Paine wanted colonists to know that it was their right to live happy lives at their will. He wanted to give the feeling that the British were not only unjust in their acts on the colonies. Rather, it was a personal attack against the colonists.

Paine promoted the American cause, not necessarily a war. Though it is commonly known as the American Revolution he never used the term "Revolution" for obvious reasons. Many colonists, when thinking of a revolution, think of a bloody, violent attempt of overthrowing a government. It is understandable that the colonists would not be willing to fight a long, drawn out, bloody revolution. Therefore, Paine knew it was necessary to portray the upcoming war as a glorious event that was to give hope to all the repressed peoples of the world.

Paine claimed the British government was going to use the Loyalists against the Patriots by keeping the main actions of the war in the middle colonies where most Loyalists lived. He wanted the Loyalists to understand the danger they were in:

"...either they or we must change our sentiments, or one or both must fall."

*The Crisis* was written with such force against the British monarchy that many British loyalists turned against the crown. After reading Paine's work they had a better understanding of the desire that had gripped so many of their fellow colonists.

Paine's *The Crisis* became widely accepted throughout the colonies and persuaded many to join in the fight for independence. He had achieved what he set out to do. His adored, democratic style of writing changed the thoughts of many. It also changed the view of what independence meant. Before his writing many thought it was just going to be a bloody war. Paine took this idea further claiming it was a basic human right to fight against the terror of the British. His work was read by thousands and gave clear insight to just what the cause was all about.

Please answer the following questions after you do the reading:

1.  *The Crisis* was written at a time when not all Americans supported a war with England.  Why did Paine write this?  
2.  How did Paine write this essay so that the common person could understand it?  
3.  When he wrote the quote "these are the times that try men's souls..." what was he trying to accomplish?  
4. In what other way did he try to "connect" with the common colonist?  
5. How did Paine compare Great Britain to an "intruder?"   
6. Did Paine feel that a violent revolution was necessary?  
7. How did Paiune explain that loyalists were being "used?"  
8. How did most people view his work?  
9. In your own words, how did Paine "redefine" what the revolution was all about?