

THOMAS PAINE

- A defender of human rights, political independence and intellectual freedom
- Thomas Paine contributed to the revolutionary activities in late-18th century America, France and England
- Representing enlightenment thought, Paine voiced ideas which had become commonplace

Biography

- Born 1737 in Thetford, England
- Born into a Quaker family, and had a humble upbringing
- He learns the trade of making women's corsets
- Age 20, goes to London for work
- Married Mary Lambert, a maid-in-service to a woolen-draper's wife. Mary dies within the year
- He made money by collecting dues for stamped goods (Stamp Act) but is fired for not examining the stamp
- Tries other odd jobs – corsets, teaching, preaching
- Pursued a rigorous self-education and became interested in politics
- He bought a tobacco and grocery shop and married the former shop owner's daughter, Elizabeth Ollive
 - ↳ Both the business and marriage failed
- While in London, he meets Benjamin Franklin
- 1775, boats to Philadelphia, in colonial America
- 1780s, made trips to England and France to promote their own revolutions
 - ↳ He became a hero among England's radical thinkers.
 - ↳ Exiled and condemned by those in power. Flees
- Arrested and imprisoned in Luxemburg. James Madison secures his release. Returns to America in 1802
- Not too popular on his return
 - ↳ While in Europe, he made some anti-Catholic and anti-George Washington writings
- Died 1809 in New Rochelle, New York
 - ↳ On his deathbed, his doctor asked him if he wished to accept Jesus Christ before passing. "I have no wish to believe on that subject,"



Thomas Payne and the Rights of Man, 1792

Reading some key excerpts . . .

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uL-3-Os-YV4> (3 minutes)

The Rights of Man – Timelines.tv History of Britain B11

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z8YjhncERoY> (7 minutes)

Philosophy (major ideas)

The unrestricted communication of ideas, the right of reform and freedom of religious belief are all natural rights

Government should exist only for the security, happiness and unity of humankind

Equity of natural property and the right of suffrage are essential for a free society

The rights of humankind originate at birth

Republican government is based on reason and engenders freedom; government by heredity succession is based on ignorance and reduces people to slavery

God is the first cause of all things; only by exercising reason can humankind discover God

“My mind is my own church.”

He criticizes the wickedness and inhumanity of the institution of slavery

- ↳ Paine argues that the slave, the proper owner of his own freedom, has a right to reclaim it, no matter how often it is sold
- ↳ This “mental revolution” – freeing humankind from the shackles of prejudice – permeates all of Paine’s thoughts