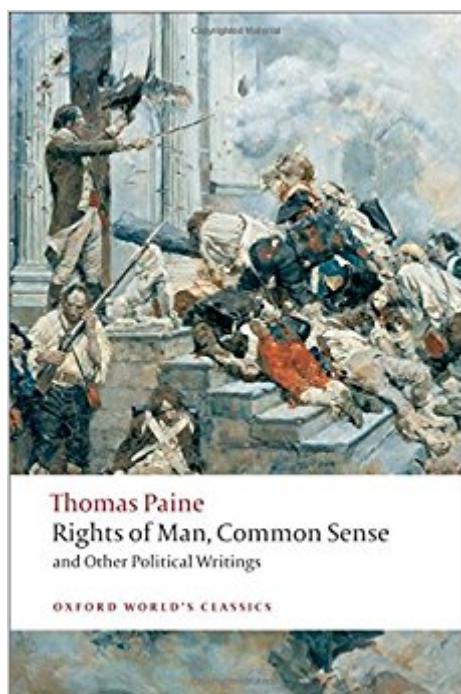


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# Rights Of Man, Common Sense, And Other Political Writings (Oxford World's Classics)



## Synopsis

Thomas Paine was the first international revolutionary. His *Common Sense* (1776) was the most widely read pamphlet of the American Revolution--and his *Rights of Man* (1791-2), the most famous defense of the French Revolution, sent out a clarion call for revolution throughout the world. Paine paid the price for his principles: he was outlawed in Britain, narrowly escaped execution in France, and was vilified as an atheist and a Jacobin on his return to America. This new edition contains the complete texts of both *Rights of Man* and *Common Sense*, as well as six other powerfully political writings--*American Crisis I*, *American Crisis XIII*, *Agrarian Justice*, *Letter to Jefferson*, *Letter Addressed to the Addressers on the Late Proclamation*, and *Dissertation on the First Principles of Government*--all of which illustrate why Paine's ideas still resonate in the modern welfare states of today. *About the Series:* For over 100 years Oxford World's Classics has made available the broadest spectrum of literature from around the globe. Each affordable volume reflects Oxford's commitment to scholarship, providing the most accurate text plus a wealth of other valuable features, including expert introductions by leading authorities, voluminous notes to clarify the text, up-to-date bibliographies for further study, and much more.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

'OUP's excellent series continues with a collection from the Christopher Hitchens *de ses jours*.'

Guardian

Author of Paine in Past Masters, Mark Philp is Fellow and Tutor in Politics at Oriel College, Oxford.

Thomas Paine is a radical democrat in the sense of someone who supports universal suffrage, the equality of all people, the leveling out of special privilege, the well-being of all people in a nation, fair and progressive taxation, lowering of taxes, the health of business and the economy, the preservation of natural and civic rights, and the assertion that the sovereignty and authority of government arises from the people. He not only supports these values but he also argues quantitatively as well as politically how they can be achieved simultaneously. Such positions are "radical" because they are opposed by many of those who rule so-called democratic governments, a fact as true today as it was in the Eighteenth Century. Most democratic governments are in need of reform because, as Paine puts it, "The man who is in the receipt of a million a year is the last person to promote a spirit of reform, in the event, it should reach to himself." (p. 257) Then as now most governments are run by millionaires. But Paine could diagnose what a good government would look like: "When it shall be said in any country in the world, my poor are happy; neither ignorance nor distress is to be found among them; my jails are empty of prisoners, my streets of beggars; the aged are not in want, the taxes are not oppressive; the rational world is my friend; because I am the friend of its happiness: when these things can be said, then may that country boast its constitution and its government." (p. 317) And his argument in "Rights of Man" was that England could not so boast. He hoped that America (and France) by contrast could and would continue to do so. But Paine was opposed and ridiculed by more than one of our "founding fathers", including John Adams. His thinking, however, especially that of "Common Sense" (included in this volume), which was massively published in pamphlet form, was very well received by the American colonies seeking an end to English oppression. It can be argued that without the mass publication of "Common Sense" there might not have been a revolution in North America, as without the work of Benjamin Franklin in France that revolution might not have succeeded. It is notable, then, that Paine was opposed by so many of the leaders--many of whom were "in the receipt of a million a year"--and that his thinking has continued to be suppressed or ignored. But every person, American or otherwise, who believes in his values as mentioned above should be familiar with the clear writing and thinking of this patriot. This volume is an excellent compendium, and it is not difficult to read despite its age. Beware, though--"they" probably don't want you to read it.

Thomas Paine was one of the most influential philosophers of his time, having lived through both

the American and French Revolutions during the 18th century. His concepts of human dignity, nationalism and the social contract were thematic of eternal principles that resonate to this day. Only his righteous anger and vitriol, while igniting the flames of patriotism in the USA, landed him in hot water in France. He did time in a Parisian prison, continuing to write to his audience abroad. It was his pessimism towards Christendom that made him a pariah, and it was not until decades later that he was recognized as a visionary as he is regarded to this day. Although his treatises are focused on his time in history, the principles are easily applied to current-day scenarios. He emphasizes the right to self-govern, mercilessly excoriating King George for his immoral subjugation of the Americas and the cowardice of those refusing to support the Revolution. We can see his resentment towards Christendom fomenting in his anger towards the Quakers, who cited Scriptural principles in their unwillingness to bear arms or rebel against authority. Paine cited the Divine right of Americans to realize their destiny in what he envisioned to one day become the most powerful nation on earth. In that, he became a prophet whose words rang through the centuries. Unlike many philosophers, Paine eschews flowery phrases and rhetoric in speaking out to the common man on common sense and the American crisis. This is a handy historical work easily accessible to educators and scholars alike. Beyond that, it is an excellent resource documenting the historical times as well as discussing the essential precepts of freedom and independence challenging many nations of the world to this day. It is a worthy read that everyone can learn from.

Arrived as described. Amazing that the general public (back in the 1770s) reading Thomas Paine's writings understood his works because they had in their lexicon words that are unfamiliar to today's public.

Still relevant

Classic. Must read for any individual concerned with the "rights" that every people should have.

Essential for anyone interested in the philosophy of government. Paine tears down the authority of monarchy (which was the unquestioned tradition of the time) and passionately explores the natural rights of man.

In the process of reading this now. I like it, as it goes along with the other stuff I've read about the American Revolution.

very helpful for kids in college

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