

“The American Crisis” Explained a bit

The American Crisis is a pamphlet series by 18th century [Enlightenment](#) philosopher and author [Thomas Paine](#), originally published from 1776 to 1783 during the [American Revolution](#).

Often known as *The American Crisis* or simply *The Crisis*, there are 16 pamphlets in total.^[1] Thirteen numbered pamphlets were published between 1776 and 1777, with three additional pamphlets released between 1777 and 1783.^[2] Paine signed the pamphlets with the pseudonym, "Common Sense."

The pamphlets were written in the early parts of the American Revolution, during a time when colonists needed inspiring works. Paine, like many other politicians and scholars, knew that the Colonists weren't going to support the [American Revolutionary War](#) without proper reason to do so. They were written in a language that the common man could understand, and represented Paine's liberal philosophy. Paine also used references to God, saying that a war against [Kingdom of Great Britain](#) would be a war with the support of God. Paine's writings bolstered the morale of the American colonists, appealed to the English people's consideration of the war with America, clarified the issues at stake in the war, and denounced the advocates of a negotiated peace. The first volume begins with the famous words "These are the times that try men's souls."

The Crisis No. 1 starts out with the famous line "These are the times that try men's souls,"^[7] and goes on to talk about how Britain has no right to invade America, saying that it is a power belonging "only to God."^[7] He also says that "if being bound in that manner is not slavery, then there is not such a thing as slavery on earth."^[7] Paine obviously believes that Britain is essentially trying to enslave America. He then speaks a little about how the panicking of our sudden revolutionary war has both hindered and helped us. Paine then speaks of his experience in the fight for Fort Lee and their subsequent retreat. Afterwards, Paine remarks on an experience with a tory, a loyalist. He says the man told his child, "'Well! give me peace in my day,'"^[7] meaning he did not want the war to happen in his lifetime. Paine says that this is very "unfatherly"^[7] and he should want the war to happen in his time so it does not happen in his child's time. Paine then gives some advice on how to do better in the war. Finally, he finishes Crisis No.2 with a few paragraphs of encouragement, a vivid description of what will happen if we act like cowards and give up, and the closing statement, "Look on this picture and weep over it! and if there yet remains one thoughtless wretch who believes it not, let him suffer it unlamented."^[7]

The Crisis No.3 starts with, "Universal empire is the prerogative of a writer."^[8] Paine makes it obvious his feelings toward [George III of the United Kingdom](#) when he said, "Perhaps you thought America too was taking a nap, and therefore chose, like Satan to Eve, to whisper the delusion softly, lest you should awaken her. This continent, Sir, is too extensive to sleep all at once, and too watchful, even in its slumbers, not to startle at the unhallowed foot of an invader."^[8] Paine makes it

clear that he believes that King George was not up to their former standards when it came to his duties with the American Colonies. Paine also sheds light onto what he felt the future would hold for the up and coming America, "The United States of America, will sound as pompously in the world, or in history The Kingdom of Great Britain; the character of General Washington will fill a page with as much luster as that of Lord Howe; and Congress have as much right to command the king and parliament of London to desist from legislation, as they or you have to command the Congress."^[8] Paine then goes on to try to bargain with King George III, "Why, God bless me! What have you to do with our independence? we asked no leave of yours to set it up, we asked no money of yours to support it; we can do better without your fleets and armies than with them; you may soon have enough to do to protect yourselves, without being burthened with us. We are very willing to be at peace with you, to buy of you and sell to you, and, like young beginners in the world, to work for our own living; therefore, why do you put yourselves out of cash, when we know you cannot spare it, and we do not desire you to run you into debt?"^[8] In the conclusion Paine explains that he believes that, "... I consider independence as America's natural right and interest, and never could see any real disservice it would be to Britain."