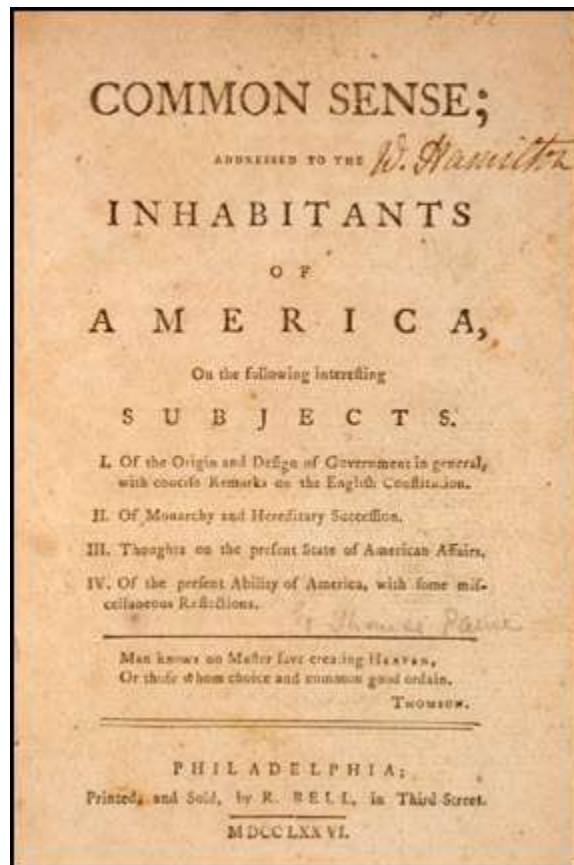




THINKING LIKE A HISTORIAN: PATRIOTS AND LOYALISTS



Common Sense by Thomas Paine: A Pamphlet from the Colonial Era

Unit Overview

Americans sometimes regard their colonial past as a time in which all colonists agreed on the subject of independence. In reality, not everyone thought that a separation from Great Britain was a good idea. Historians work to correct these types of false impressions through the careful study of primary and secondary

sources. The activities in this unit will help you see how this is accomplished. Let's get started.

Primary and Secondary Sources

When studying history, it is not unusual to encounter conflicting pieces of information. Various eyewitnesses, for example, may describe a particular event differently. Some accounts may include details not mentioned in others or may portray certain occurrences in an opposite order. It is the job of a historian to sift through the material, to analyze the evidence and to separate factual information from opinion or fiction. Then, the findings are used to construct arguments that support a particular interpretation of the facts. To do this work, historians rely on primary and secondary sources.

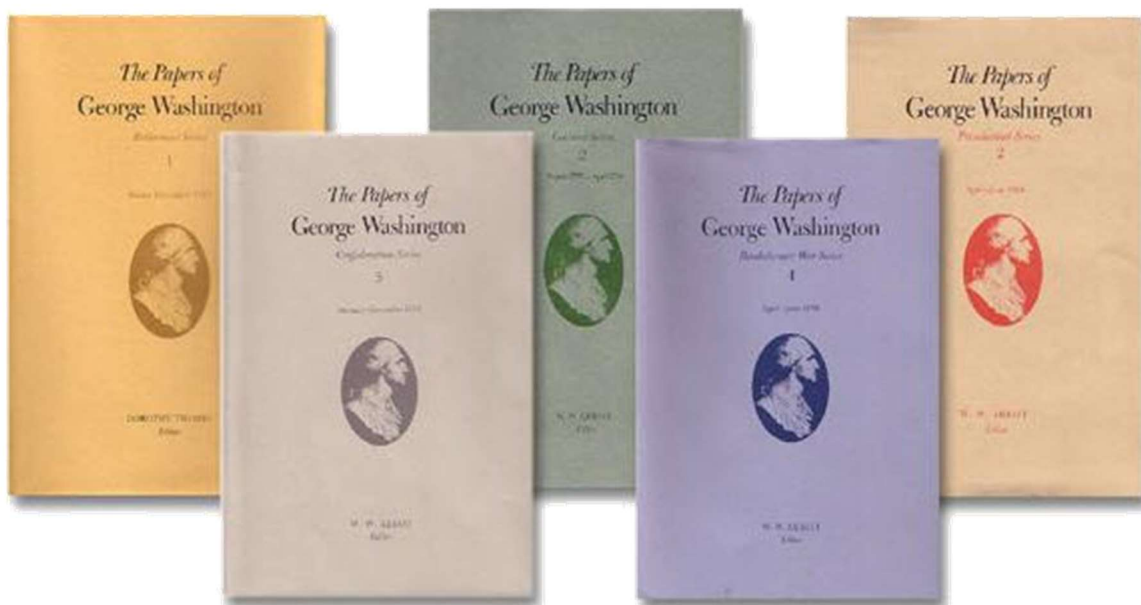


Image Courtesy of Mount Vernon Ladies' Association

Primary sources provide first-hand information about historical events and help researchers to learn what actually happened in a previous era. They are based on eye-witness accounts of individuals who lived during the time period in question. Diaries, letters, speeches, legal documents, written laws, newspaper editorials and journals are all examples of primary sources that have given us valuable glimpses of life in the past. Photographs, audio recordings, literature, cartoons, music and paintings also have been used to give accurate descriptions of earlier times. With

new developments in technology, historians analyzing the current century will regard email messages, cell phone records and posts on social media as primary sources. **Secondary sources**, on the other hand, explain the past by interpreting primary sources and are written by people who were not present at the events they discuss. Examples of secondary sources include textbooks, encyclopedias, articles from magazines, and television documentaries.



Go to Questions 1 through 4.

Bias and Primary Sources

Historians view sources with a critical eye and carefully analyze the information that they present. This is especially true of primary sources. While they describe the society and the times in which they were written, these resources reflect the writer's or creator's point of view and sometimes slant or ignore certain facts. Therefore, it is always important to take into account when, by whom and for what purpose a primary source was originally intended.

Let's look at an example. Four fictional newspapers from the colonial era are listed below. Read each description carefully.

- *The London Daily Chronicle*: Published in London, England, the *Chronicle's* staff agrees with the British government. Its editor has invested in the British East India Company and believes that saving the business is in the best interest of the empire. In his opinion, the colonists are behaving rebelliously and must be taught a lesson.
- *The Liberty News*: A member of the Sons of Liberty owns this paper which is published in Boston. The editor favors independence from Great Britain.
- *The Colonial Examiner*: The *Examiner* is also published in Boston. The editor prides himself on balanced and accurate reporting. He is trying to remain neutral on the subject of independence.
- *The Loyal Gazette*: Some colonists, known as Loyalists, did not consider the taxes imposed by the British to be unfair or to be good reasons to rebel. The editor of the *Gazette* agrees with this philosophy. Published in Charles

Town across the harbor from Boston, the paper's editorials frequently reflect his views.

Read the four fictional editorials pictured in the graphics below. Each one presents a different view of the Boston Tea Party.

Editorial A.: Rally, Mohawks!

In Boston, on December 16, 1773, hundreds of cheering onlookers saw the valiant efforts of 150 brave Patriots, who were disguised as Mohawk Indians, take part in a marvelous protest against the Tea Act passed by the detestable British government. Using their axes and making triumphant whooping sounds, these fine men split open the tea chests stored on the detested British ships in the Boston Harbor. They then dumped the hateful tea into the water, making a fine brew for his monstrous majesty, George III. The admirable Sons of Liberty have truly struck a marvelous blow for freedom!

Samuel Adams, John Hancock and Joseph Warren, the highly esteemed leaders of the Patriot group known as the Sons of Liberty, denied knowledge of who was involved in the excellent job of tea dumping, but felt the incident sent a wonderful message to the loyalist scum of Boston: Beware of Patriots' Justice!

Courtesy of the Ohio Department of Education

Editorial B: Tea Dumped into Boston Harbor

In Boston, on December 16, 1773, hundreds of onlookers saw an unknown group in action at the Boston Tea Party. About 150 men disguised themselves as Mohawk Indians and took part in a protest against the Tea Act passed by the British. Using their axes and making wild whooping sounds, they split open the tea chests stored on British ships in the harbor. They dumped the tea into the water.

Samuel Adams, John Hancock and Joseph Warren, leading members of the group known as the Sons of Liberty, were spotted in the vicinity. They had "No Comment" when asked whether their group was involved. The editor of this newspaper must caution both radical groups, the Patriots and the Loyalists, to refrain from causing any more violence. Most citizens only desire peace and safety in our beloved colony.

Courtesy of the Ohio Department of Education

Editorial C.: Wicked Unrest in the Colonies

In Boston, on Dec. 16, 1773, hundreds of the ungrateful American colonists watched as a terrorist group of 150 unlawful American rebels disguised themselves as Mohawk Indians in order to destroy valuable boxes of tea. These rude colonial bumpkins were violently protesting the Tea Act and our government's tax on tea. Using their axes and imitating the unsophisticated Indians' war cries, the disloyal, wild provincials split open the tea chests and dumped the tea into Boston Harbor.

Samuel Adams, John Hancock and Joseph Warren were discovered near the vicinity of this act of disobedience against the colonists' loving father, King George III. These leaders of the secret group, the Sons of Liberty, refused to deny this shameful act. These uncultured colonials are behaving like selfish children toward their mother country. Do they not realize their duty to England? They should be honored to be allowed to be a part of our beloved empire and understand their duty to pay for their own governance and protection.

Courtesy of the Ohio Department of Education

Editorial D: Hang the Cowardly Rebels

In Boston, on Dec. 16, 1773, hundreds of shocked onlookers jeered as 150 scruffy rebels disguised as Mohawk Indians basely protested against the Tea Act and the legal taxation of tea by our honorable British government. Using their axes and making ridiculous whooping sounds, the craven mob split open the tea chests stored on lawful British ships in the harbor. Then the lily-livered agitators dumped the extremely valuable contents into the waters.

Samuel Adams, John Hancock and Joseph Warren, the leading turncoats of the illegal group of malcontents known as the Sons of Liberty, were spotted skulking in the vicinity. Of course, the sniveling cowards denied all responsibility for the appalling episode of unwarranted violence against His Majesty's government. These rebels need to be reminded that not all colonists agree with their point of view. There are many of us who respect His Majesty and the British government.

Courtesy of the Ohio Department of Education



Go to Questions 5 through 16.

Loyalists and Patriots

Great Britain responded to the Boston Tea Party by issuing the Coercive or Intolerable Acts, pieces of legislation that led to further unrest in the colonies. Some radical colonists, who were called **patriots**, began to consider the idea of

separating from Britain, while the **loyalists** believed that a compromise with their home country was a better option. The First Continental Congress included participants from both groups, and delegates from each side reacted after the meeting adjourned. Along with editorials in newspapers, colonials often published essays on topics of interest in **pamphlets**, one or more pages that could be cheaply printed and distributed. Patriots and loyalists exchanged opinions on specific topics in what became known as the **pamphlet wars**. Samuel Seabury, a loyalist, made his thoughts on the First Continental Congress public in this manner and drew a response from Alexander Hamilton, a well-known patriot. Read their comments as quoted in the graphics below.

MY FRIENDS AND COUNTRYMEN,

Permit me to address you upon a subject which, next to your eternal welfare in a future world, demands your most serious and dispassionate consideration. The American Colonies are now involved in a scene of confusion and discord. The bands of civil society are broken, the ties of government weakened, and in some instances taken away. Individuals are deprived of their liberty, their property is frequently invaded by violence, and not a single Magistrate has the courage or virtue enough to interpose.

From this distressed situation it was hoped that the wisdom and prudence of the Congress assembled at Philadelphia would have delivered us. The eyes of all men were turned to the Congress, and ardently expected that some prudent scheme of accommodating our unhappy dispute with our Mother Country would have been adopted and pursued. But alas! They adjourned without attempting it. They have taken no one step that tended to peace. They have gone on from bad to worse, and have either ignorantly misunderstood, carelessly neglected, or basely betrayed the interests of all the Colonies. . . .

Will you be instrumental in bringing the most abject slavery on yourselves? Will you choose such committees as the Continental Congress? Will you submit to them, should they be chosen by a weak, foolish, turbulent part of the country people? Do as you please, but, by God that I will not. No, if I must be enslaved, let it be by a king at least and not by a parcel of unprincipled lawless Committeemen. If I must be devoured, let me be devoured by the jaws of a lion, and not gnawed to death by rats and vermin.

Samuel Seabury
November 16, 1774

FRIENDS AND COUNTRYMEN,

It was hardly to be expected that any man could be so presumptuous as openly to controvert the equity, wisdom, and authority of the measures adopted by the Continental Congress: a measure truly respectable on every account including the characters of the men who composed it, the number and dignity of their constituents, or the important ends for which they were adopted.

A little consideration will convince us that the Congress, instead of having ignorantly and carelessly neglected, or basely betrayed the interests of the colonies, has, on the contrary, devised and recommended the only effectual means to secure the freedom and establish the future prosperity of America upon a solid basis. . . .

What then is the subject of our controversy with the mother country? It is this: whether we shall preserve that security to our lives and properties which the law of nature, the genius of our constitution, and our colonial charters afford us, or whether we shall resign them into the hands of the British House of Commons, which is no more privileged to dispose of them than the Mogul King George? What can actuate those men who labor to delude any of us into a belief that the object of contention between the parent state and the colonies is only three pence upon tea?

The plan of electing members to represent us in general congress was that the wisdom of the people might be collected in devising the most proper and expedient means to repel this atrocious invasion of our rights. It has been accordingly done. Their decrees are binding upon all and demand a religious observance.

Alexander Hamilton
November 28, 1774

Both pamphlets, which were printed by James Livingston in New York, were read throughout the colonies. In 1775, members of the Connecticut branch of the Sons of Liberty were so offended by Seabury's comments that they traveled to New York, broke into Livingston's shop and destroyed his press.



Go to Questions 17 through 25.

What Happened Next?

In the spring of 1775, the Second Continental Congress assembled in Philadelphia. The delegates included what were to become some of America's best-known political figures. Their decisions, such as the formation of a Continental Army and

a formal declaration of independence, would have a profound impact on both North American and world history. In the next unit, you will see just how the big break up became official.



Additional Activities and Resources

[Unit 9 Identifying Primary and Secondary Sources Worksheet](#)

[Unit 9 What is the Big Idea? Worksheet](#)