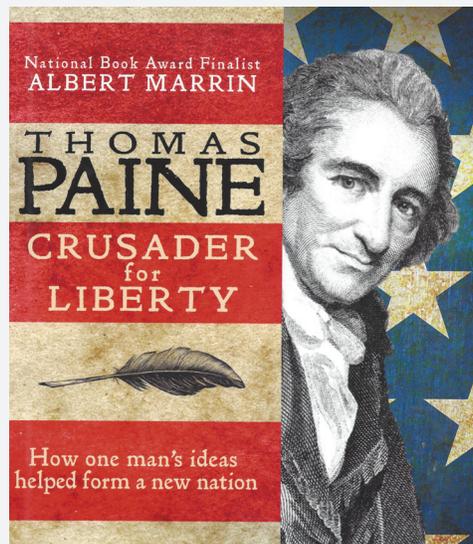


Second Reaction: Thomas Paine: A Champion for Freedom

Marrin, Albert. *Thomas Paine: Crusader for Liberty: How One Man's Ideas Helped Form a New Nation*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2014. Print.

Delphia S. Smith



Thomas Paine, a man with distinct features, is found on the cover of Albert Marrin's *Thomas Paine: Crusader for Liberty*. He is positioned in front of what appears to be the canton of the American flag. Paine was described as an intellectual and was often referred to as the father of the American Revolution. Even though he was originally from England, he later moved to America after several failed attempts of a substantial career in his country. Paine's writing became the catalyst for freedom, arguing against injustices in the realms of politics, civics, and religion, and was a major influence toward American independence. Marrin not only offers the reader of this chapter book a biographical tale of Thomas Paine—a man recognized as a revolutionist—but also an examination of his ideas that influenced historical significance and sought to change the world.

The reader first meets Thomas Paine in the beginning of the book. It is in the introduction of the book that the author outlines Paine's physical features and who he was as an individual. He was described as having a high forehead, a large red nose, and a red face marked with purple blotches. He was also considered outspoken because he talked endlessly, humane because he was always charitable to the poor, and mysterious because much about him is unknown. Paine lived through the Enlightenment, a period that began in the late 1600s and

lasted until the 1880s. This was a time of swift, dramatic change, where the advanced thinkers' intent was to end ignorance and poverty along with war and oppression. It was also a time of intense conflict where Europeans and Americans began to ask the tough questions about the government and the governing process. Paine addressed these questions in several of his writings, three of which became most popular. In *Common Sense*, Paine advised Americans to fight for their independence from England; in *Rights of Man*, he championed the French Revolution, while presenting a series of social reforms; and in *The Age of Reason*, he was critical of organized religion and crusaded for freedom of thought and one's right to freedom of religion without the fear of penalty.

Thomas Paine: Crusader for Liberty is divided into five chapters, each one chronicling a significant point in Paine's life. In chapter one, Marrin describes the life of Thomas Paine from his birth in England to the time he set sail aboard the London Packet, traveling from England to America. Chapter two continues with Paine's journey on the London Packet and the writing of his pamphlets *Common Sense*, which was recognized as America's first literary bombshell, and *The American Crisis*, which was used to rally the soldiers during the War for Independence. In chapter three, Marrin outlines an account of the French Revolution and Paine's prison experience; the relationship between himself and George Washington was also explored. Chapter four examined Paine's pamphlet, *The Age of Reason*, along with his views on the revolution and religion. Chapter five concludes with Paine's last days and his writing.

I shared this book with Michaela, a ninth grade student. While reading through the chapters, she was asked several questions in relation to Thomas Paine, his life, and his contributions, such as, "How would you describe Paine's 'Sunshine Patriot' in your own words?" After reading the book, Michaela was asked to conduct independent research on Thomas Paine and, in compilation with the reading of the book, share her feelings as it relates to his contribution to American history. In her response, she believed that Paine was a great asset to American history even though his ideas sparked a lot of criticism and, in some cases, anger throughout America and Europe. She also mentioned that the ideas in *Common Sense* fueled the revolution against the European colonies, ideas that are forever beneficial to the start of American culture.

This book is highly recommended as an addition to any classroom. Teachers, especially those of history, can use this book to introduce significant figures within America's history, namely Thomas Paine. Paine was described as a political activist and theorist, a revolutionary, and a notable figure within an American historical context. His writing played an influential role in the American Revolution, which subsequently paved the way for the Declaration of Independence.

About the Author

Delphia S. Smith is currently pursuing a PhD in curriculum and instruction with a focus on urban literacy at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. Prior to becoming a doctoral

student, Smith was an elementary school teacher for over eleven years. Smith's research interests include the reciprocity of reading and writing and its impact on students' comprehension—particularly those who struggle to read and write in the earlier grades—global literacy, school and curriculum reform, early grade assessment and retention, and educational equity.