

# Thomas Paine "Common Sense"

## Rhetorical Analysis

Writer, Thomas Paine, in his pamphlet, "Common Sense", addresses the problems arising under British rule. Paine's main purpose is to use syntax, pathos, and other literary devices to bring awareness to the problems coming about and to convince people to start doing something about it. Throughout the pamphlet, Thomas Paine develops a very informal and sometimes even sarcastic tone when writing. Paine does this to use rhetorical questions and grab the attention of the reader. He also uses this as a way to persuade the reader to take action against the British so that problems in America will not get worse.

Paine begins in the introduction by using syntax to describe what he will talk about throughout the pamphlet. He explains that one of his main purposes of writing the piece was to help people and bring awareness to situations, and not compliment on what they've done so far. He then goes on to say that America will be affected by the actions of all men and little problems shouldn't be challenged, for example, what should be right in the first place. This is simply "Common Sense" to him.

Paine then starts to move on and continue to use syntax and lists throughout his writing. Syntax is one of the main rhetorical strategies used in the pamphlet. Paine uses it to help build emotion, describe relationships, and give parallels or opposites. In this case, he uses syntax to make a list of what he believes to be Common Sense. He talks about how a man should be able to cast aside all prejudice and focus on the bigger problems and broaden his perspective of things.

Paine also uses metaphors in his work. Paine uses the metaphor of a parent-child relationship when talking about Britain and America. He describes how England isn't a good mother country for abandoning its child (America) and forcing conflict onto her. He then goes on to say that Europe should be the "adopted parent" country to America because it is there where she is safe and treated kindly. This parent image is repeated throughout the pamphlet and used to prove that America should seek its independence from Britain.

Thomas Paine's use of parallels and pathos help to build emotion even though he says he's purpose isn't to build fear or hysteria. He contradicts himself by making a list of positives and giving a negative opposite to follow. This helps to build fear and describe what kind of men people are being faced with: "...weak men who cannot see, prejudiced men who will not see..." Not only does this state opposites, but it also states the weaknesses of men and he is pointing out flaws.

Thomas Paine concludes with using rhetorical questions. Rhetorical questions help Paine to reach his purpose by using a form of persuasion. He is asking a question to make himself seem more valid, but not actually wanting an answer. For example, he uses a list of them on page 331, asking his readers if any of these situations has ever happened to them. It helps him to gain his purpose of persuasion by building more emotion with every question he asks. It also helps him to gain a more informal tone so that it'll seem like he is appealing to the reader.

Paine helps to get his purpose across to his readers by using syntax to help make lists and build emotions. He also uses the image of a parent-child relationship to show how America was being neglected by Great Britain and it was only harming them to not try to become an independent nation. Paine thought that America would bring itself to disaster by not fighting for independence and that is what he tried to persuade his readers of in "Common Sense".