

Thomas Paine (1737–1809) was a political thinker and writer from England who moved to America in 1774. His most famous pamphlet, *Common Sense*, urged American colonists to break from Great Britain. Published anonymously nine months after the beginning of the American Revolution, *Common Sense* would have an enormous influence on the Declaration of Independence. ♦ Read the following excerpts from *Common Sense* and the Declaration of Independence. Then, on a separate sheet of paper, answer the questions that follow.

### Common Sense and the Declaration of Independence

From *Common Sense*:

"I have heard it asserted by some, that as America [has] flourished under her former connection with Great Britain, that the same connection is necessary towards her future happiness, and will always have the same effect. Nothing can be more [deceptive] than this kind of argument. . . . America would have flourished as much, and probably much more, had no European power had anything to do with her. . . ."



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Thomas Paine

Source: *Common Sense*, by Thomas Paine. Available online at <http://libertyonline.hypermall.com/Paine/CS-frame.html>.

From the Declaration of Independence:

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.—That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed,—That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness. . . ."



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Thomas Jefferson

Source: Declaration of Independence. Available online at [http://www.archives.gov/national-archives-experience/charters/declaration\\_transcript.html](http://www.archives.gov/national-archives-experience/charters/declaration_transcript.html).

### Questions to Think About

1. What central idea, or theme, is presented in both excerpts?
2. According to the Declaration of Independence, when is it the right of people to alter or to abolish government?
3. Draw Conclusions What is the relationship between *Common Sense* and the Declaration of Independence? Explain.