

The Crisis, No. 1

by Thomas Paine



ABOUT THE READING Although the colonists had declared their independence in 1776, the year had been rough for the Continental Army. Thomas Paine traveled with the troops and wrote the first of his *Crisis* papers while sitting on a log and using a drum for a desk. The document's stirring words gave the Patriots new hope.

VOCABULARY

- consolation** comfort
- esteem** honor
- solace** assure
- unlamented** without grief



As you read the passage below, consider how Paine tries to persuade his readers.

These are the times that try men's souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of their country; but he that stands it *now*, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman. Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered; yet we have this **consolation** with us, that the harder the conflict, the most glorious the triumph. What we obtain too cheap, we **esteem** too lightly: it is dearness only that gives everything its value. Heaven knows how to put a proper price upon its goods; and it would be strange indeed if so celestial an article as *freedom* should not be highly rated. Britain, with an army to enforce her tyranny, had declared that she has a right not only to *tax*, but "to *bind* us in all *cases whatsoever*;" and if being *bound in that manner* is not slavery, then is there not such a thing as slavery upon earth. . . .

In turn . . . to those who have nobly stood, and are yet determined to stand the matter out: I call not upon a few, but upon all: not in this state or that state, but on every state. Up and help us; . . . throw not the burden of the day upon Providence,

What do you think Paine means by "summer soldier" and "sunshine patriot"?

Notice the memorable statements such as "What we obtain too cheap, we esteem too lightly."

but “show your faith by your works,” that God may bless you. It matters not where you live, or what rank of life you hold, the evil or the blessing will reach you all. . . . The heart that feels not now is dead; the blood of his children will curse his cowardice who shrinks back at a time when a little might have saved the whole . . . but he whose heart is firm, and whose conscience approves his conduct, will pursue his principles unto death. . . .

There are cases which cannot be overdone by language, and this is one. There are persons, too, who see not the full extent of the evil which threatens them; they **solace** themselves with hopes that the enemy, if succeed, will be merciful. It is the madness of folly to expect mercy from those who have refused justice. . . .

By perseverance and fortitude we have the prospect of a glorious issue; by cowardice and submission, the sad choice of a variety of evils—a ravaged country—a depopulated city—habitations without safety and slavery without hope. . . . 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**.

Notice Paine’s use of bold vocabulary in the last paragraph. Underline these words.

ANALYZING LITERATURE

1. Main Idea What is Thomas Paine trying to tell the colonists and soldiers?

2. Critical Thinking: Author’s Craft Paine uses a persuasive technique in *The Crisis*. How does he persuade his readers?

3. Activity You are a colonist in 1776. Write a letter to a friend still in England persuading him or her to accept the idea that America is justified in declaring its independence.