

Common Sense Summary



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1-Sentence-Summary: *Common Sense* is a classic piece of US history that will help you see the importance of societies coming together to form a fair governmental system and how these ideas paved the way for the American revolution.

Read in: 4 minutes

Favorite quote from the author:



One of the only facts I remember about US history from school was that the author of *Common Sense* was Thomas Paine. Unfortunately, the school system failed me and I couldn't remember what it was even about!

Thankfully I got to revisit it and discover the wealth of good information it contains. It's helped me remember how terrible life was for people living in America before the revolution and why a change was so necessary.

Although technically *Common Sense* was originally a pamphlet and not a book, its lessons are timeless. We learn a lot about the importance of society, good governmental systems, and so much more.

Here are the 3 greatest lessons I've learned from Thomas Paine:

1. We depend on each other to survive and thrive, and this means that we need society and rules to guide us.
2. Having kings and queens is a bad idea, it's better to elect representatives to enact laws that the people want.

3. Just like a teenager preparing to leave the home, America came to a point where it had to separate from its mother country.

Ready to understand the need for the American revolution? Let's begin!

Lesson 1: **Society and rules are a result of humans doing best when they work together.**

You can probably screw in a lightbulb with just one person. But there are many behind the scenes that make it possible. Between the electric company, the manufacturer of the lightbulb, and the retailer that sells it, you need a lot of people for one simple task.

This is just one reason why societies are so important. Nobody can realize their full potential without working with others. We must rely on other people to become successful. In the time of Thomas Paine, that might have meant plowing a field or moving logs.

Today, we still have to get others help to make even the most basic aspects of life go well. And just think of a complex project like a product or a surgery. Neither of these can happen without a team of people working together!

We also need others to help take care of us when we can't on our own. In the late 18th century if you had a high fever you'd die if you didn't have anybody to bring you water. Even today we need others to run errands for us when we're sick so that we can recover.

For these reasons, it's best that we all invest our time and effort into making sure that society prospers. And if we want that to happen, we need to have laws.

All of us are selfish and make bad choices sometimes. That means that people will hurt each other, which is not okay. Governmental systems help us set guidelines to prevent this. But it's important that we get our political leadership organized correctly.

Lesson 2: **Elected officials that enact what the people want is a better form of government than monarchy.**

Do you remember the last time you were trying to decide with your entire family where you should all go for dinner? The varying likes and dislikes makes this kind of choice pretty difficult. But can you imagine trying to get hundreds of thousands of people to agree on something?

This is another reason that establishing governments in society is so vital. If you do it wrong, though, it can only make matters worse. Which is why setting up representatives for groups within society is best. People can vote in elections for the individuals they want to speak for them.

It's important to get this process right also. **Having just one election isn't going to be good for making sure officials accurately represent the people.** Frequent polling, on the other hand, makes leaders review and stay up to date on the most critical current issues.

All of this outlines why monarchy is so terrible for society. If everybody truly is equal, is it fair to elevate one above all else? What's more, if you get one good ruler, what are the odds their heirs will be corrupt?

The ruler by birthright system also has no way of protecting people from an incompetent leader. Take the English monarchy, for example. There have been times where the one in charge was a child and others where the ruler was insane. And just like a bad parent, having a terrible leader is no fun.

Lesson 3: America had to separate from Great Britain, just like a teenager comes to a point where they need to leave the home.

Putting two and two together here, we can see the obvious choice that America had to sever the ties with its mother country.

If you look at it from the perspective of an adolescent getting ready to leave the home, it makes enough sense as it is. America had come of age and was now old enough to care for itself. It's only natural that the next step would be to fly the coop.

But the way that Britain treated it's "child" was even further evidence that it was time for a split.

For one, Britain tried to uphold its claim on America with some really bad logic. Their assumption was that people in the US were British. But that wasn't how the people in the states saw things. They wanted to be Americans.

If we look at the history of England, we can see why this makes no sense. Many citizens there were of French descent but didn't claim to be French. So why was it okay for them to assert dominance over the US by the opposite thinking?

Then you have the horrible tax situation that occurred in the US. Britain's heavy taxes laid waste to the American economy. And when citizens would try to oppose, they were punished. In the case of the Boston Tea Party, they even lost their lives defending themselves.

What's worse, these people didn't even have anyone representing them in the British parliament. This made British rule over America a tyranny. It wasn't long before the American revolution forever cemented the United States of America as its own free land.

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Common Sense Review

I've always known about *Common Sense* from US History in high school. But I never realized how interesting it is and the importance it had in America's history. I think these principles are timeless though and many, if not all of them still apply today!

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Who would I recommend the Common Sense summary to?

The 23-year-old university student who is studying political science, the 53-year-old who is politically involved and likes to remind themselves of America's beginning, and anyone with an interest in US history that would like to understand it better.

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