

Justin Dinh, Liane Cabrera Period 8  
Mrs. Bailin  
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The Crisis Analysis - Thomas Paine's "The American Crisis: PHILADELPHIA, Sept. 12, 1777"

### **1. Addresses the cost of freedom**

The section starts with, "THOSE who expect to reap the blessings of freedom, must, like men, undergo the fatigues of supporting it." In the beginning of this text, Thomas Paine asserts that fighting for freedom involves being resilient through loss and exhaustion. He does this in order to assure soldiers that their weariness is natural, and to motivate them to fight for their cause despite losses in terms of land. In the paragraph, Thomas Paine refers to the land lost as just a few acres which has a neutral connotation of being insignificant, in order to convey to the people that losing land is a small insignificant price to pay for their assured freedom. Furthermore, the sentences are primarily complex periodic sentences which forces the reader to continue until the end to emphasize Thomas Paine's message that the end result regardless of any defeats will be the same with the independence of the American people.

### **2. Belittles the threat of the British**

The section starts with, "Look back at the events of last winter and the present year, there you will find that the enemy's successes always contributed to reduce them." Thomas Paine belittles the threat of the British in these few paragraphs by mocking the poor condition of Howe's army and their decreasing numbers while dismissing them as simply lucky for a previous victory in order to raise morale among the colonists. As a result, the colonists realize that the British threat isn't as terrifying and overwhelming as it might seem. This is evident when Thomas Paine states, "What they have gained in ground, they paid so dearly for in numbers, that their victories have in the end amounted to defeats." Thomas Paine goes as far as to say that the British are still losing even when they win and uses words with negative connotations such as loss and disgrace to describe the British war efforts. Not only that, there is an appeal to logos by logically stating that the colonist's army could reinforce and double their numbers while the British are cut off from supplies. Furthermore, Thomas Paine calls the British a band of robbers which has a negative connotation of weakness and pettiness compared to a royal army from a world superpower. He then goes on to state that if the colonies weren't unlucky with the lay of the land causing them to disperse, then their entire army against the British would've resulted in an American victory in order to downplay the power of trained British military. The sentences are primarily long periodic sentences that present idea after idea while constantly building on the idea that the British are an inadequate threat.

### **3. List the qualities of men who defend their freedom**

The section starts with, “Men who are sincere in defending their freedom, will always feel concern at every circumstance which seems to make against them;” Thomas Paine lists the positive qualities of men who defend their freedom in order to encourage colonists to adopt the same qualities and to praise the heroes who already exhibit these traits. He uses words with positive connotation such as vigor, fortitude, heroism, hope, courage, and passion which helps to associate the American patriot with a heroic and righteous image. Not only that, he revisits the costs of freedom in which losses and dejection will occur and states that men defending their freedom will get back up with even more vigor and strength. Thomas Paine paints this image of persistence and immense dedication to freedom in order to bolster the colonist’s resolve and inspire hope. Long compound periodic sentences are also used in this section as a way to slowly and methodically lay out the qualities which are associated with the last word, heroism.

#### **4. Reassures the people of victory**

The section starts with, “There is a mystery in the countenance of some causes, which we have not always present judgment enough to explain.” Paine logically points out that it will be easier for them to fight against Britain in their own land in order to reassure the colonists of their worries of Britain advancing. He compares the British military as a disease and implies that it is their side that is the cure against them, enforcing the belief that the colonists will gain victory in the end. He also reassures the people by speaking about their army. He states that the people in the army are genuine public spirits and fight when times are hard unlike those who only fight when it is not needed in order for the colonists to see their army in a positive way and put their trust in this group that rose in order to protect the people. The short exclamatory sentence, “Thank God!” implies that God is on the side of the colonists and assures them that their current predicament and their future victory is at the will of God. Paine references an attack their army made in order to state that the whole of their army is much stronger together than apart, Paine further discredits Howe by expressing that the reason Howe has not attacked General Washington was because he knows he will not win, building the confidence of the colonists and casting doubt on the strength of the British.

#### **5. Establishes a turning point in the war**

The section starts with, “Gentlemen of the city and country, it is in your power, by a spirited improvement of the present circumstance, to turn it to a real advantage.” Thomas Paine establishes a turning point in the war by pointing out Howe’s weakening army and by calling upon the colonists to make a last stand against the enemy in order to ramp up the urgency of the situation and to convince the colonists to hold out a little longer for their independence. He once creates a tone of urgency in terms of life or death by stating, “... your all is at stake...” The purpose of this tone is to make the colonists give it their all and keep up the long struggle for their independence. Furthermore, he points out Howe’s weakness by stating that every shot will continue to weaken Howe which motivates the colonists to finally take out their enemy. Thomas Paine even regards Howe as the chief of plunderers which has a negative connotation that paints him as barbaric and greedy. On the other hand, he uses the word brave with a positive

connotation to allude to George Washington. He ends this section by stating that the colonists have to stop the enemy, save the city, and finally rout the enemy. By doing so, they will be regarded as heroes who served under a brave general against barbaric and savage plunderers. A situation like this inspires the colonists to participate in this conflict and also come out as heroes which would sound appealing to them.

#### **6. Urges colonists to act immediately**

The section starts with, "You have too much at stake to hesitate." This section has an urgent tone and this is seen when Paine states that they have no time to think and need to act immediately. He uses the other states as an example for the colonists in order to give them confidence in fighting by stating that if the states before them could drive off the invaders, then surely they'll be able to do it this time as well. Paine also gives the colonists a religious motivation by stating that it would be a sin to not fight against the British, referencing his earlier point in that their fight for freedom against Britain is not only a physical fight, but a spiritual fight. The phrase, "the dangers we have been saved from, and reflect on the success we have been blessed with," shows Paine's faith that God is on their side by using the word blessed which carries a religious connotation and stating that they have been saved from danger, implying that they had the help of God during times of danger. This also ties into his point that not fighting against the British is a sin because letting the British win would be putting all the work God did to help them win in vain and proving that God is not on their side, thus giving a sense of urgency to prove that it is them who are going to win the war.

#### **7. Directly addresses General Howe**

The section starts with, "I close this paper with a short address to General Howe." Addressing General Howe is showing that Paine is not afraid to confront him. He is not just addressing Howe, however, but also rallying the people against a common enemy. The use of the word sir to address Howe is not used in a respectful way and shows Paine's assuredness in their victory that he is able to disrespect the enemy in that way. He warns Howe that he is only marching closer to his defeat and the victories he has gained will lead to loss. Paine is assured that Howe is going to lose because the colonists will not stop in their fight for independence because they are passionate in their cause, unlike the British who don't fight for any purpose. He uses strong language to emphasize the difference of the two sides, stating that the colonists fight for "the ardent glow of generous patriotism" while stating that the British soldiers, most notably Howe, are just "tool[s] of a miserable tyrant." Further comparison is seen where Paine states that the British are fighting to enslave the country while the colonists are fighting to free it.