

Thomas Paine: *An American Patriot*

Based on a manuscript by **Mae Kramer Silver**

Last week ~ Chapter 3

Who Was "Anonymous?" Thomas Paine tells a story about an English boy who despised the way his country's royalty treated ordinary citizens.

Chapter 4 ~ The Secret Is Revealed

While Frederick liked Thomas Paine's story about the young English boy turning into a man, he wasn't really sure where it was leading.

What did Paine's story have to do with Mr. Anonymous of *Common Sense*?

The next afternoon, after Frederick finished his chores, he and Paine sat down. The story continued.

"When the young man married, his first wife died within a year," Paine continued. "Very sad, but still ambitious, he tried other work as a tax collector."

That work sent him to Lewes, England, where his serious talk about tax collecting problems convinced the other tax collectors they should ask him to write a petition to Parliament to change their poor and unsafe working conditions.

"In his petition the man asked for more salary, fewer hours, and other things," Paine continued. "He was actually surprised that he could write so well, that he had things to say, and that he knew how to put his thoughts in order ... an order that other people could understand."

Paine explained that the man carried the petition from Lewes to Parliament in London. Parliament was where the House of Lords and the House of Commons considered changes in English laws.

While he waited there for an answer, Paine continued, the man met a very famous person from America. His name was Benjamin Franklin.

"Our Dr. Benjamin Franklin ... from Philadelphia?" asked Frederick.

"Absolutely so," Paine responded.

"And what did Dr. Franklin say to him?" asked Frederick.

"Dr. Franklin told the tax collector he should go to Philadelphia," Paine said.

With that comment, Frederick's sister, Anna, opened the front door of the bookshop.

"Ah, Anna comes with some food," said Frederick, his stomach growling as he walked to the front of the shop to see his sister.

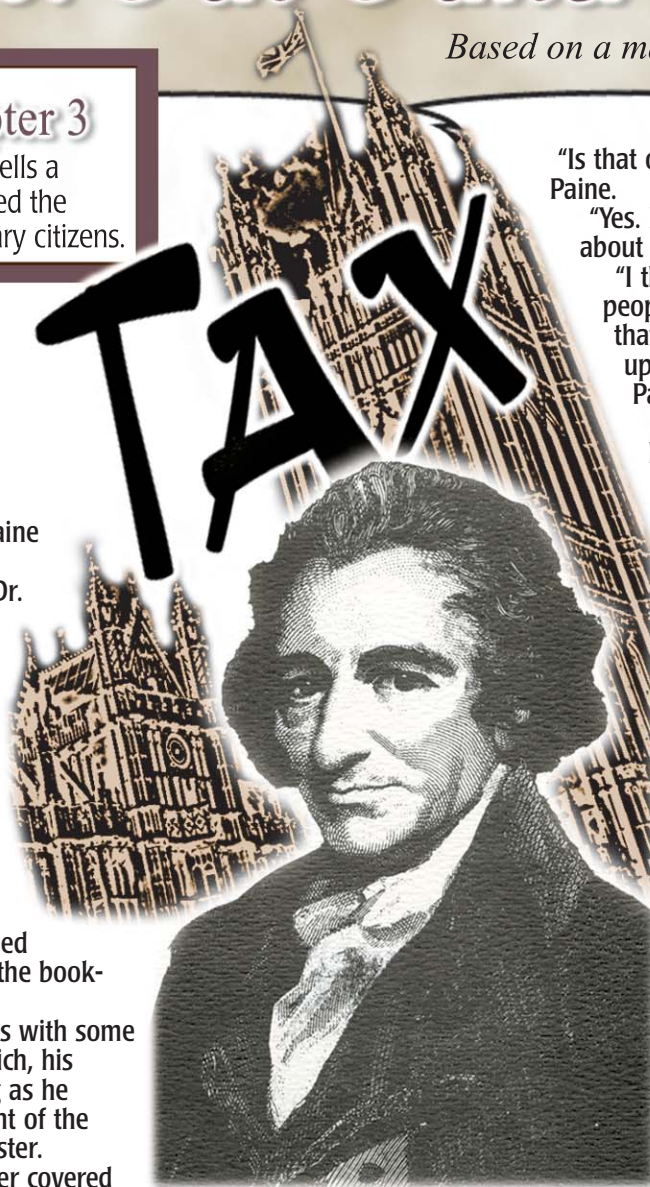
He peeked at her covered dish and saw a pamphlet under it. "Underneath the ham is *Common Sense*?" asked Frederick, who then stifled his laugh.

"What are you laughing at?" Anna asked, with one hand on her hip.

"You, a little girl, reading that," Frederick replied, pointing at the young girl.

"I am not so little. I am 10 years old. And Papa is teaching me Latin. So there," Anna said sternly. "Now I have some ham for Mr. Paine so I will find him."

When she found Paine in the back of the bookstore, she offered him food AND a question of her own. "Mr. Paine, do you know who has written this and why he wrote it?" Anna pointed to *Common Sense*.



"Is that of importance?" asked Paine.

"Yes. Because I want to know about him," she said.

"I think the writer wanted people in America to believe that they were ready to grow up and away from England," Paine said.

Anna asked, "How did he know that?"

"The writer had lived in England for many years and knew about the problems America had with England," Paine said. "He wrote that America had learned a lot during those years it was a colony to England," Paine replied as he cut into his ham. "And then there were always those wars that England waged, and each time they drafted Americans to fight in their wars."

"That was not very fair. I heard father talking about how it cost much money," said Anna.

"Yes, and the Americans did not want to pay for those English wars. You have learned your lessons well, Anna," Paine said.

"Thank you, Mr. Paine," said Anna as she danced herself around the room. "I think I know who wrote *Common Sense*." Frederick looked at his sister and laughed.

She stopped and pointed straight at Thomas Paine's large nose. "It is you," she said.

Thomas Paine smiled as he ate his last piece of ham, leaned back in his chair and patted his satisfied stomach. Frederick could not believe his sister got to say it before he did.

Yes, Thomas Paine was the man who wrote that small pamphlet ...

Common Sense ... that would eventually be printed in other languages and countries so that more than 500,000 copies would be made. Yet this was the first time he had really succeeded at any work.

He was 39 years old. He had tried a business and failed. He had run away to sea. He had been a tax collector, but briefly.

Yet when he took up the pen to write about ordinary people being mistreated by the law and the English government, he succeeded.

Some of his success came from his ability to debate, a skill he learned as part of the Headstrong Club, a Lewes, England, debating club that met every month.

It was well known that hardly anybody could win an argument against Thomas Paine.

But now, at a time when the new land of the colonies was seething with unrest about taxes and lack of control over their own affairs, the skills this man had—writing and debating—would become crucial.

Thomas Paine would be there when the word "independence" would be first whispered.

Q&A

Comprehension Question: Whom did Thomas Paine meet in Parliament? Why was that important?

NIE Activity: Independence is as important today for some countries as it was in Thomas Paine's day. Search the news for examples of places still fighting for independence. How are they going about it? At what cost? What crucial skills may they be lacking to accomplish their goal?

Essay Question: "The English Parliament was taxing the colonies to pay for their protection." Assess this statement in light of the comments in this story.

Serialized Story Guide for Teachers, Students and Parents:
www.njreadforlife.org/paineguide.html

Designed by Terry Bellucci

Next week ~ Chapter 5

The Times That Try Men's Souls

Thomas Paine's writing inspires a downtrodden Continental Army.

Read more about Thomas Paine: www.njreadforlife.org/paine.html