



## LITERATURE CONNECTION ACTIVITY

**Common Sense, Rights of Man, and Other Essential Writings of Thomas Paine by Thomas Paine**

### OBJECTIVE

Students become familiar with the tenets that are the basis of American democracy.

### MATERIALS

*Common Sense, Rights of Man, and Other Essential Writings of Thomas Paine* – Thomas Paine

### GET READY

- ✓ Arrange for students in your class to have copies of *Common Sense* by Thomas Paine.

### INSTRUCTIONS

- ✓ Provide some background for the reading of *Common Sense*, including information on Thomas Paine and the period in which he lived.
- ✓ Read aloud (or have a student read) the short introduction. After reading the introduction, engage your class in a brief discussion, asking, *Who is the “long and violent abuser of power” that Paine references? What did Paine mean when he said, “The cause of America is in a great measure the cause of all mankind?” What impression does the introduction give you of what is to come?*
- ✓ Inform your students that *Common Sense* essentially has four parts:
  - ✓ “Of the origin and design of government in general”
  - ✓ “Of monarchy and hereditary succession”
  - ✓ “Thoughts on the present state of American affairs”
  - ✓ “Of the present ability of America”
- ✓ Ask your students to conjecture what each section is about. Have your students share their guesses with the class.
- ✓ Next, break your students up into four groups, one group for each section of *Common Sense*.

(The group that covers “Thoughts on the present state of American affairs” should be slightly larger as it is a longer section.)

- ✓ Have each group read their section of *Common Sense* carefully. (This can be assigned for homework.)
- ✓ Tell each group that they need to think of a creative way to relate the information in their section to the rest of the class. Provide class time for students to brainstorm ideas. (Encourage students to think of all possibilities: video, visual arts, dramatics, etc.)
- ✓ Inform the groups they need to include in their presentations the more substantive points Paine makes in the section they were assigned. The groups should determine these points before developing their presentations.
- ✓ Give each group time to prepare their presentations.
- ✓ Have each group present in the order that their section appears in the book, each presentation followed by a question period from the class.
- ✓ After the last presentation, engage the class in a discussion on the complete *Common Sense*. (You can use the questions provided.)

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ★ *Why do you think Thomas Paine structured Common Sense to have the four sections we discussed?*
- ★ *Why do you think Common Sense caused such a sensation among Americans?*
- ★ *Why do you think Thomas Paine named his work Common Sense?*
- ★ *Do you think Common Sense resonates in our country today? How so?*