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BRIA

Bill of Rights In Action

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Independence Rules!

Teach Democracy is proud to bring you this special issue of BRIA on the theme of independence for the commemoration of the United States of America's 250th anniversary this year. The articles in this issue have been adapted from existing BRIA materials and address U.S. history and world history for middle school or high school courses. While using these articles and the accompanying writing and discussion questions, check out Teach Democracy's *America 250 and Counting!* contest for students at all K-12 grade levels, linked and described on page 16. Happy independence!

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The Haitian Revolution



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Engraving depecting an 1802 battle in the insurrection of enslaved people that would become the Haitian Revolution.

Following the American Revolution, Haiti's war for its own independence from France began as modern history's only successful revolt of enslaved people successfully winning their freedom. What became known as the Haitian Revolution led to the founding of the independent nation now called Haiti.

In the 1700s, Saint-Domingue emerged as the world's biggest producer of sugar, which required large numbers of laborers. During that century, French colonists enslaved the native Taino people for this work, but the Taino were largely wiped out by European diseases. The colonists replaced them with enslaved African people. By the late 1700s, Saint-Domingue was France's richest colony due to the sugar plantations.

By 1790, there were half a million people enslaved on Saint-Domingue's sugar plantations. Up to 10% of them died each year due to overwork, hunger, brutal treatment, and disease. The French King Louis XIV issued a decree to protect enslaved people from mistreatment, but the planters largely ignored this.

The Revolution Begins

In 1790, armed uprisings were led by many French Caribbean colonies. Saint-Domingue, however, did not participate. These uprisings drew inspiration from the American and French revolutions between 1776 and 1789. The revolutionaries were white people seeking self-rule and free people of color demanding an end to laws that discriminated against them. France easily put down the outnumbered rebels as those enslaved did not participate in these revolts.

In August 1791, a massive well-planned revolt of enslaved people erupted throughout Saint-Domingue. Enslaved rebels destroyed hundreds of sugar and coffee plantations and killed many French planters and their families. By September, 20,000 rebels had won numerous battles against French troops. The Haitian Revolution had begun.

Louverture: From Enslaved to Revolutionary

Toussaint Louverture was born around 1743 to enslaved West African parents on a plantation in Saint-Domingue. When the revolt hit Saint-Domingue in 1791, Toussaint was in his late 40s and not at first involved. However, he could speak French and helped in attempts to negotiate an end to the fighting. Toussaint proposed banning the use of the whip against the enslaved and adding an additional non-workday during the week. But the planters rejected this, and the revolt continued.

Toussaint was soon recognized as a key revolutionary leader and became committed to ending slavery. He adopted the last name "Louverture," from a French concept, meaning "the one who opened the way."

Spain, long an enemy of France, supported the Saint-Domingue rebellion from the neighboring colony of Santo Domingo. Louverture and other rebels joined the Spanish army, which then invaded Saint-Domingue to fight the French. At the same time, Britain also invaded to grab the sugar-rich colony.

But things changed quickly. In 1793, French generals proclaimed the emancipation of all enslaved people in Saint-Domingue to draw them into the fight against Spain and Britain. The French government confirmed the emancipation of enslaved people in Saint-Domingue in 1794. Then, in 1799, it declared the abolition of slavery throughout the French empire. Suddenly, formerly enslaved people became French citizens. France became the first major power to abolish slavery. However, the free people of color did not immediately gain full citizenship rights, which caused discontent among them.

'The Black Napoleon'

France promoted Louverture to a general in the French army and then lieutenant governor of Saint-Domingue. Louverture hand-picked an assembly to draft a constitution for the colony. The Constitution of 1801 forever abolished slavery: "All men who are born here live and die free and French." The Constitution entrusted Louverture with the control of the colony's government "for the remainder of his glorious life." He became known at this time as the "Black Napoleon," named after Napoleon Bonaparte who had recently seized power in France.

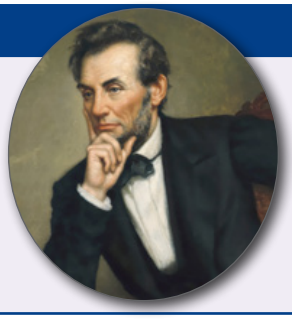


Portrait engraving of Toussaint Louverture, 1800.

Back in France, Napoleon was enraged by Louverture's constitution that seemed to be almost a declaration of independence. Early in 1802, Napoleon sent 43,000 soldiers and two-thirds of his navy to Saint-Domingue to restore French authority. Louverture declared, "We must die or live free."

DID THE HAITIAN REVOLUTION INFLUENCE ABRAHAM LINCOLN?

The United States did not recognize Haiti's independence until 1862. In that same year, American lawyer William Whiting wrote a book that used the example of the emancipation of the enslaved in Saint Domingue almost 70 years before to make the case for a presidential power to emancipate Southern enslaved people during the American Civil War. Abraham Lincoln read this book before deciding to issue the Emancipation Proclamation the following year.





To recruit fighters, Louverture used the fear of Napoleon bringing back slavery to Saint-Domingue, but many refused to join. Napoleon's army defeated Louverture in several battles, while Louverture's army responded with guerilla warfare tactics.

In May of 1802, Louverture negotiated a cease-fire. Shortly afterward, he was imprisoned in France. Louverture warned, "In overthrowing me you have cut down in Saint-Domingue only the trunk of the tree of liberty; it will spring up again from the roots, for they are numerous and they are deep."

France then ordered a policy of disarming all people formerly enslaved. Fearing a return to slavery, Black people resumed fighting. In the meantime, Napoleon was entangled in war with Britain and decided to abandon his plans for an American empire. He never sent troops back to Saint-Domingue, and he sold French Louisiana to the U.S. in 1803.

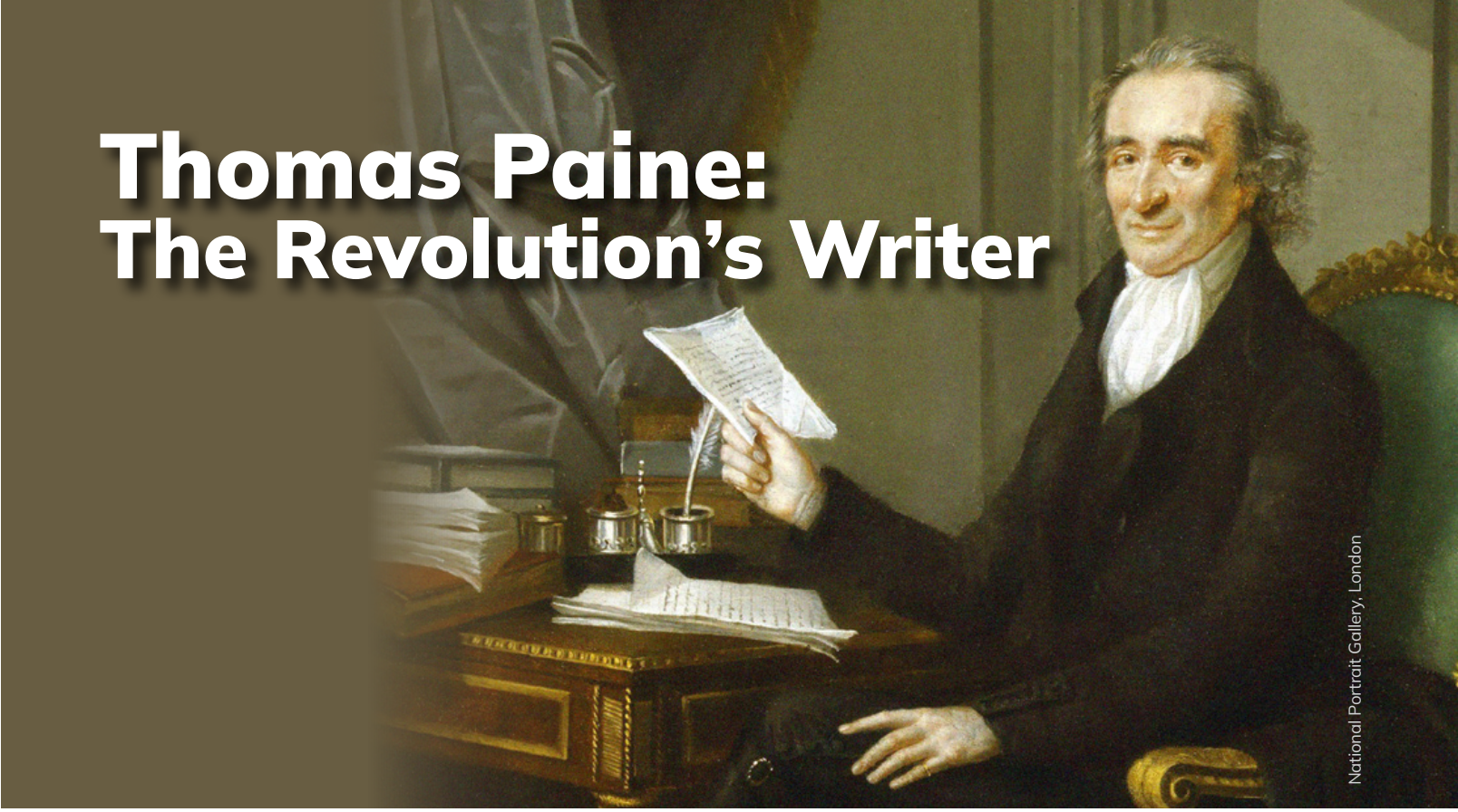
From the first slave revolt in 1791 until independence in 1803, about half the entire population of Saint-Domingue had been killed. Louverture died in a French prison at age 57, on April 7, 1803. On January 1, 1804, one of Louverture's top generals Jean-Jacques Dessalines declared the independence of Saint-Domingue. He renamed the country "Haiti," meaning "mountainous land" in the native Taino language. Haiti became the second independent nation in the Americas after the United States.

Author: Carlton Martz (1940-2025) was a retired high school teacher, librarian, and longtime contributing writer to BRIA and other Teach Democracy publications.

Writing & Discussion

1. Describe the progress of the Haitian Revolution from 1791–1804.
2. What do you think was the biggest mistake made by the French during the Haitian Revolution? Why?

Thomas Paine: The Revolution's Writer


National Portrait Gallery, London

Thomas Paine helped spark the American Revolution by challenging the idea of monarchy, demanding independence, and calling for a republic. He also played a role in defending the French Revolution and later described his vision of a just society far ahead of its time.

Born in Thetford, England, in 1737, Thomas went to London at age 20 to advance his education. London was buzzing with Enlightenment ideas at the time, such as using reason to discover natural laws and human rights. Paine attended lectures, learned to debate, and read books (including the Bible) and political pamphlets voraciously.

While in London, Paine tried several careers unsuccessfully until he met Benjamin Franklin, who represented the American colonies in London. Franklin convinced him to give America a try. In 1774, the 33-year-old Paine quickly sailed for America and landed in the middle of growing hostility between England and her colonies.

Common Sense

Paine found a job as a magazine editor and writer. He wrote articles on a variety of subjects that ranged from cruelty to animals to the abolition of slavery.

By 1775, tensions between Britain and its American colonies reached a crisis. Colonists' protests against taxes had given way to violence against customs officials. British soldiers occupied Boston as a result, leading to more violence like the Boston Massacre. In 1775, the new Continental Congress attempted to negotiate with Parliament and King George III. But the British refused to compromise and instead sent more troops to put down the growing rebellion.

After the king's troops clashed with Americans at Lexington and Concord in April 1775, Paine wrote a pamphlet, arguing for independence and the establishment of an American republic. He wrote in plain language to appeal to the "common man." He titled it *Common Sense*.

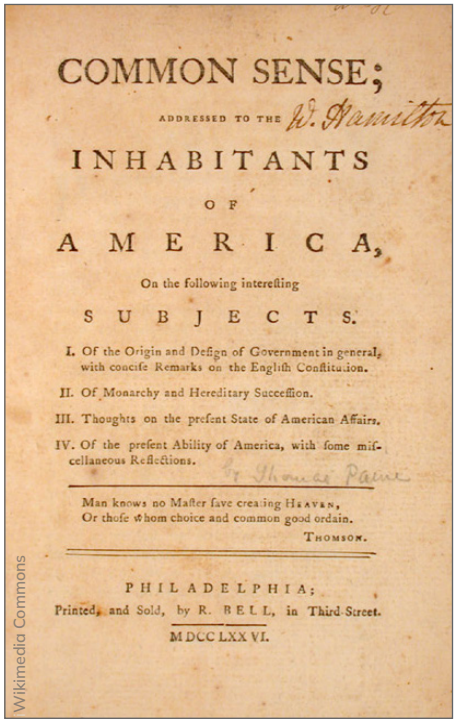
Paine first argued that England's system of government was a tyranny. It granted the king and aristocracy more power than Parliament's elected House of Commons.

Paine attacked the whole idea of a hereditary monarchy. He thought it absurd that kings and queens could pass on the monarchy to their children or other family members, even if they had no skills or talents for governing. What use is a king? Paine asked. Only to make war and impoverish the nation, he answered.

Paine ridiculed the origin of the English monarchy. Paine reminded his readers that the first English king, William the Conqueror, was not only a French invader. He also made himself king against the consent of the English people.

Paine argued for immediate independence. After the battles of Lexington and Concord, Paine explained, he had lost all desire for negotiating with the "Pharaoh of England," explaining that staying with England meant being dragged into Europe's never-ending wars, which would ruin American trade. In America, he wrote, "THE LAW IS KING."

Paine called for a constitutional convention to establish a democratic republic. He wrote, "A government of our own is our natural right." He insisted that a written American constitution should secure "freedom and property to all men, and above all things, the free exercise of religion."


COMMON SENSE;

ADDRESSED TO THE INHABITANTS OF AMERICA,

On the following interesting SUBJECTS.

I. Of the Origin and Design of Government in general, with concise Remarks on the English Constitution.

II. Of Monarchy and Hereditary Succession.

III. Thoughts on the present State of American Affairs.

IV. Of the present Ability of America, with some miscellaneous Reflections.

Man knows no Master save creating HEAVEN,
Or those whom choice and common good ordain.
THOMSON.

PHILADELPHIA:
Printed, and Sold, by R. BELL, in Third-Street.
M DCC LXX VI.

Wikimedia Commons

The original Common Sense *pamphlet, published in 1776.*

Published early in 1776, Paine's *Common Sense* electrified Americans and prompted the Declaration of Independence a few months later. The pamphlet also made Paine America's first best-selling author. A quarter million copies were printed by the end of 1776. Paine donated all the profits to General Washington's army.

'The Times That Try Men's Souls'

Paine joined the war for independence as a general's aide, but Washington and others realized he could offer greater service as a writer. Thus, he began writing a series of essays that together are called *The American Crisis*.

When Paine began writing the Crisis essays in December 1776, the revolutionary fight was in trouble due to military defeats, short-term enlistments, desertions, and lack of financial support. In the first Crisis essay, Paine called for patriotic sacrifice:

> *These are the times that try men's souls. The summer soldier and sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of their country; but he that starts it now, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman. Tyranny like hell, is not easily conquered. . . .*

Paine's words had an immediate effect. Washington had the essay read to his troops just before their surprise Christmas Eve crossing of the Delaware River to attack Hessian troops.

Throughout the Revolutionary War, Paine successfully boosted American morale and goaded men of wealth to finance the cause. He continued to donate the profits of his writings to the army. When the war ended, Paine was a Revolutionary War hero but impoverished. New York gave him a farm confiscated from a Tory Loyalist.

Paine admired the French constitution and went to England to argue in support of the French Revolution. He also voiced the radical position that all monarchies should be abolished throughout Europe, and that people have the right to overthrow their governments. He was prosecuted for his radical opinions in England and fled to France.

In France he was given honorary citizenship and elected to the National Convention in 1792, during the revolution. However, he opposed the revolutionary government's widespread use of the death penalty, including for the king who was beheaded in 1793. Convicted for treason, he was imprisoned in Paris for almost a year.

The U.S. ambassador to France (and future president) James Monroe was able to get Paine released from prison. And one of his few remaining American friends, Thomas Jefferson, was elected president in 1801 and invited Paine back to America.

At age 65, Paine returned to the United States, but not as a hero. Many condemned him as an atheist and dangerous radical. He continued to write on American politics and prodded Jefferson to make the Louisiana Purchase. He died in 1809 with only a few mourners in New York City.

Today, however, Paine's hope for democratic republics sweeping away hereditary rulers has become a reality in much of the world.

Author: Carlton Martz (1940-2025) was a retired high school teacher, librarian, and longtime contributing writer to BRIA and other Teach Democracy publications.

Writing & Discussion

1. What do you think was Paine's most important contribution to the American Revolution? Why?
2. What did Paine mean by "common sense" in his pamphlet? How did he argue for that common sense throughout his whole life?

Simón Bolivar and Independence in South America



Wikimedia Commons

Simón Bolivar signing the Decree of War against Spanish colonial rule.

Simón Bolivar is best known as the liberator of most of Spanish South America. He was also a revolutionary thinker who tried to adapt democratic ideas and social reforms to the nations he liberated.

Simón Bolivar was born in 1783 in Caracas, Venezuela, then a Spanish colony. Bolivar was born into a wealthy, elite family. At the time, Venezuela's social and economic elite consisted of those born in Spain and creoles (people with Spanish parents, but who were born in the New World).

Important positions in the colonial government were reserved for the Spanish-born, and creoles resented being barred from holding them. The remainder of Venezuela's population consisted of free Black people, enslaved Africans, Indigenous people, and mixed-race groups.

Becoming a Revolutionary

In 1803, Bolivar left Venezuela for Paris and began studying Enlightenment thinkers such as Locke, Rousseau, and Montesquieu. One lesson he learned was that each nation's laws should fit that nation's character. He also studied the revolutionary ideas of the American Thomas Paine about the necessity of national independence. Bolivar vowed to break the chains of Spanish rule in his homeland.

Bolivar returned home in 1807. The following year, Napoleon invaded Spain and sent King Ferdinand VII into exile. Resistance forces in Spain established their own government, called the Central Junta. A junta is a group that rules a country after taking power by force. Caracas creoles proclaimed a junta to govern Venezuela, and the junta idea of independence spread throughout Spanish South America.

On July 5, 1811, the Caracas Junta in Venezuela declared full independence from Spain, the first anywhere in Spanish South America to declare independence. The revolutionaries established a republic, which was strongly influenced by the idea of federalism in the U.S. Constitution.

In 1812, Spanish troops from Puerto Rico landed to crush the republic. Spanish soldiers and those loyal to Spain entered Caracas with little resistance. Supporters of the republic fled, Bolivar among them. The First Republic collapsed.

Revolutionary Thinker

Exiled to the port city of Cartagena in New Granada, Bolivar wrote a manifesto. In it, he argued that the biggest mistake of the republic was to adopt U.S. federalism. In practice, Bolivar explained, this allowed each province and city to rule itself and ignore national needs, including defense against the Spanish and royalists. "Our division, not the Spanish forces," he declared, is what defeated the republic.

DATE SOUTH AMERICAN NATIONS GAINED INDEPENDECE FROM SPAIN

Country	*Independence Date*
Argentina	July 9, 1816
Bolivia	August 6, 1825
Chile	September 18, 1810
Colombia	July 20, 1810
Ecuador	August 10, 1822
Paraguay	May 14, 1811
Peru	July 28, 1821
Uruguay	August 25, 1825 *
Venezuela	July 5, 1811

* From Spain and then from Brazil

With hardly any military background, Bolivar recruited an army in New Granada and led it eastward into Venezuela. He defeated the Spanish in one battle after another. His reputation grew, and more men joined him. But he was defeated in Caracas and exiled again in 1813, this time to the island of Jamaica.

He gathered yet another army, largely made up of creole exiles and Europeans from the nearby island nation of Haiti. Enslaved people in Haiti had fought their own war for freedom and won independence from France in 1804.

Re-entering Venezuela in 1816, Bolivar recruited enslaved people and others into his army. "Unity, unity, unity — that must be our motto," he cried. He argued for the liberation of the enslaved people, proclaiming that a nation "cannot be simultaneously free and enslaved."

Over the next few years, Bolivar mounted successful military campaigns against the Spanish in Venezuela and New Granada. Bolivar captured Caracas in June 1821, permanently ending Spanish rule there. A constitutional convention voted to unify Venezuela and New Granada into the Republic of Colombia.

The Liberators

The Republic of Colombia's Congress unanimously elected Bolivar as the new nation's first president for a four-year term. Bolivar accepted, but only if he could continue the unfinished independence of Spanish South America.

Jose de San Martin was another creole liberator who led a war for independence in his home country of Argentina in 1816. He then led an army to liberate Chile in 1818 and coastal Peru in 1820. Soon after, he agreed to have the republican Congress make Bolivar dictator of Peru. To the dismay of many Peruvian creoles, Bolivar decreed that land be distributed and schools set up for the Indigenous people, who made up a large majority of the population.

Bolivar's army general Antonio Jose de Sucre was a liberator himself. His army liberated Ecuador from Spain in 1822. On April 1, 1825, de Sucre's army defeated the Spanish in Upper Peru. It was the last battle of the liberation wars, ending 300 years of Spanish colonial rule in South America. On August 6, Upper Peru declared its independence as the new Republic of Bolivia.

The Bolivian Constitution

The newly created Republic of Bolivia asked Bolivar to write its constitution in 1826. The Bolivian Constitution reflected Bolivar's design for government he believed suitable for South American nations. In the constitution, Bolivar established:

- A representative democracy with the people holding ultimate political power.
- A three-house legislature that would divide the responsibility for certain areas of law-making.
- A judiciary to safeguard freedom, equality, and security.
- The abolition of slavery.
- The prohibition of torture.
- A bill of rights with guarantees for civil liberties, property, press freedom, and privacy in the home.

The Bolivian Constitutional Congress adopted most of what Bolivar proposed. But it delayed ending slavery, and it made Catholicism the official religion.

In 1830, Bolivar died at age 47. New leaders of Venezuela called him a tyrant and refused his burial in Caracas. He was buried in Colombia, abandoned by friends and hated by enemies. But in 1842, he was reburied in Caracas and is today remembered as a revolutionary hero throughout South America.

Author: Carlton Martz (1940-2025) was a retired high school teacher, librarian, and longtime contributing writer to BRIA and other Teach Democracy publications.

Writing & Discussion

1. Why did Bolivar reject the U.S. form of government for the liberated nations of Spanish South America? What did he propose, instead?
2. Was Bolivar a greater military or political leader for South America? Give reasons for your answer.

Phillis Wheatley: Poet of Freedom



Phillis Wheatley was born around 1753 in West Africa. She was kidnapped from the area and brought to the islands of the West Indies in the Caribbean Sea where she was enslaved. Around the age of seven, she was considered too young to work in the sugar cane fields there. So, she was put on a ship that sailed to Boston with other enslaved Africans who were considered too feeble for the harsh conditions of the Caribbean.

Upon arriving in Boston in 1761, Phillis was purchased and enslaved by John Wheatley. She became the personal servant to his wife, Susanna. The family who enslaved her named her after the ship that brought her to Boston, the "Phillis." They gave her their last name, as was the custom at the time.

In the North, where the Wheatleys were, there were more literacy resources for enslaved children than in the South during colonial times. The Wheatleys taught Phillis to read and write in English, Latin, and Greek. She also learned theology, history, and literature while she was still forced to complete her full-time work obligations.

Phillis wrote her first published poem at around age 13, which was printed in the Newport Mercury. The poem was a story about two sailors she had met at the Wheatleys' home who nearly drowned at sea in a storm.

Fame and Freedom

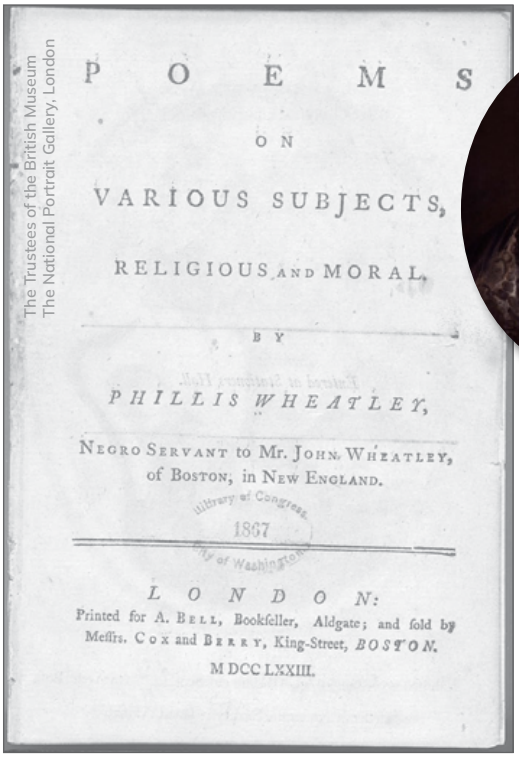
Soon she published more poems. At that time, poems were often published individually on large sheets of printed paper called broadsides. At age 17, she wrote "On the Death of the Rev. Mr. George Whitefield, 1770." George Whitefield was a Christian minister who was one of the founders of the Methodist Church. Whitefield had converted Susanna Wheatley to Methodism, and she had, in turn, converted young Phillis. The poem began with these lines:

Hail, happy Saint, on thy immortal throne!
To thee complaints of grievance are unknown . . .

A Boston newspaper advertised broadsides of the poem in October 1770. Within weeks, newspapers throughout the Northeast advertised her poem. By mid-November, it was published in London, England. Other poets became admirers of Phillis Wheatley. Soon, she was famous in England and in the American colonies.

In England, publishers were more friendly than American publishers to the idea of a book by an African American poet. Susanna Wheatley reached out to friends there, and Phillis travelled to London in 1773. An English countess admired Phillis' poetry as well as several other formerly enslaved African American writers. The countess funded the publication of Phillis' first and only book of poetry in 1773, titled *Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral*. The book made her fame grow more.

While in London, Phillis befriended abolitionists. She could have declared her own freedom while in London, but she chose to first return to Boston in 1773. Susanna herself had grown to oppose slavery. "At the desire of my friends in England," Phillis wrote, John Wheatley emancipated Phillis from enslavement in 1773. She lived for the next few years with the Wheatleys as a free woman.



The Trustees of the British Museum
The National Portrait Gallery, London



Selina Hastings, Countess of Huntingdon, was the British aristocrat who funded the publication of Wheatley's only book of poems. Wheatley dedicated the book to her.

Supporting Independence

Phillis Wheatley was a strong supporter of the fight for independence from Britain and used her poetry to show support for the movement. She wrote a poem in 1776 titled "To His Excellency General Washington" in which she praised the military commander of the Continental Army, George Washington:

Fix'd are the eyes of nations on the scales,
For in their hopes Columbia's arm prevails.
...
Proceed, great chief, with virtue on thy side,
Thy ev'ry action let the Goddess guide.
A crown, a mansion, and a throne that shine,
With gold unfading, WASHINGTON! Be thine.

(Columbia was a goddess often used to symbolize the United States. It is how the District of Columbia, the nation's capital, got its name.)

Washington appreciated her poetry so much that he invited her to visit him in Massachusetts, in March 1776, just months before the official start of the American Revolution. In his letter, Washington said of her poem that "the style and manner exhibit a striking proof of your great poetical talents."

Washington sent her poem to his former secretary, who had the poem published in the *Virginia Gazette* newspaper. Revolutionary writer Thomas Paine, famous for his pro-independence pamphlet *Common Sense*, republished Phillis' poem in his own magazine in April 1776.

While Phillis Wheatley strongly supported the American Revolution, she grew increasingly frustrated that the cause would allow a great many to remain enslaved. In a written eulogy for an American general she criticized patriots who claimed to be Christians wanting freedom, yet who supported the enslavement of Africans, "a blameless race." She compared American slavery to that of slavery in ancient Egypt, as recounted in the Bible. To her predominantly Christian readers, this was a serious admonishment.

'So Freedom Comes Array'd'

Eventually, she left the Wheatleys' home and met trader and shop owner John Peters, a free Black man. In 1778, they were married. Without any money of her own, Phillis struggled to publish any poetry during the war years. She also struggled with health problems due to chronic asthma. John's trade in rye, wheat, nails, and sugar was successful, at first. But Phillis still had to sew clothes for money to help support hers and John's young children.

In 1784, Phillis published "Liberty and Peace, A Poem," which celebrated the Treaty of Paris that ended the Revolutionary War. She wrote with optimism for the new nation, the United States of America:

So Freedom comes array'd with Charms divine,
And in her Train Commerce and Plenty shine.
...
To every Realm shall Peace her Charms display,
And Heavenly Freedom spread her golden Ray.

Phillis died in 1784 due to complications in childbirth. None of her three children survived into adulthood. While her life was short, Phillis Wheatley contributed much to American history and literature. She was the first African American and first enslaved person in American history to publish a book of poems. She was also only the third American woman to do so.

Authors: Principal writer Leslie Smith teaches social studies and English-language arts at Rowland High School in California, and co-writer Damon Huss is the director of publications at Teach Democracy.

Writing & Discussion

1. In what ways did Phillis Wheatley overcome hardships in her life?
2. How did the American Revolution influence Phillis Wheatley's life and career as a poet?

Lafayette: The 'Hero of Two Worlds'



Library of Congress

Painting depecting the winter enchapment at Valley Forge, 1777. On horseback: George Washington (L) and Lafayette (R).

In the late 18th century, two great political revolutions, the American and French, changed the world forever. One man was central to both: the Marquis de Lafayette.

A Frenchman in America

When he left France for America to help the colonists fight the British forces in 1777, the Marquis de Lafayette was only 19 years old. Born into a family of high social rank in France, Gilbert du Motier had the noble title of *marquis*, the second highest order of nobility in the country. Known as the Marquis de Lafayette, his family was long associated with French military heroes going back centuries. His father was a colonel killed in battle by British forces in the Seven Years' War (1756-1763). Lafayette himself was a lieutenant in the French Army since he was 13 years old.

When news of the American colonies' revolt against the British reached Lafayette, he felt compelled to take part. However, King Louis XVI of France ordered that French officers like Lafayette were forbidden from travel to the colonies to help the American Revolution. The king feared provoking another war with Great Britain.

Lafayette defied the king's order and found his way to South Carolina in June 1777. He was partly driven by personal ambition to gain military glory, continuing his family's legacy. But he was also inspired by the colonists' struggles against France's despised enemy, Great Britain.

Given his inherited wealth, Lafayette served in the Continental Army for free. His eagerness for the American cause appealed to Revolutionary leaders, and they made him a major-general. George Washington, who would come to regard him as a son, immediately placed him on his staff. Lafayette fought bravely in the battles of Brandywine, where he was wounded, as well as Barren Hill, Monmouth, and Rhode Island, and endured the terrible winter at Valley Forge with Washington.

Perhaps more significant than his fighting in battle was the role he played in getting French support for the Revolutionary effort. In 1779, he traveled back to France to press King Louis XVI to send aid to the Continental Army. But because Lafayette had disobeyed the order not to travel to America, the king had him placed under house arrest for eight days. Nonetheless, Lafayette was thereafter able to work with Benjamin Franklin, a very popular American diplomat in Paris at that time. Together, they secured 6,000 French troops to be sent to help Washington's army under the command of General Rochambeau. Lafayette returned to America.

Revolutionary Victory

In early May 1780, Washington placed Lafayette in charge of a small army with orders to harass the British in Virginia. For months, aware of his troops' low numbers and uncertain of his own talents, Lafayette played a cat-and-mouse game with the British. Sometimes he shadowed them as they moved through the countryside, other times he fought small skirmishes. More often, he withdrew when the British threatened to turn on him.

In late summer 1781, Lafayette moved his small army around a seaport where his enemy, a much larger British force, was digging in. The British general there, the experienced Lord Cornwallis, had camped his army at the small city of Yorktown. With little natural protection from a land-based attack, Cornwallis seemed unaware that a powerful French fleet was hovering off the coast, ready to block any rescue efforts of the British Navy. He was trapped.

After trapping Cornwallis's army in Yorktown, Lafayette's small force waited for several weeks for General Washington and French General Rochambeau to arrive. The ensuing Siege of Yorktown ultimately caused the defeat of the British in the American Revolutionary War in 1783.

Lafayette and the French Revolution

Lafayette crossed the ocean back to his family and native France a few months after the end of the American Revolution. Inspired by the political ideals of Enlightenment philosophers, he returned to a nation still governed by a king and aristocrats.

Heavy taxes, internal tariffs, and requirements that peasants provide free labor for the nobility had already led to poverty and hunger. Bad weather turned hunger into famine. The Seven Years' War had also caused long-term financial crisis that Louis XVI and his ministers had been unable to solve.

To address the crises, Louis took the extraordinary step of convening the Estates General at Versailles in May 1789. The Estates General was an assembly that consisted of representatives of the three traditional classes, or estates, of French society: The First Estate was the clergy; the Second Estate was the nobility; the Third Estate was the common people, businessmen, peasants, and everybody else in the French nation — over 98 percent of the nation's population.

Lafayette attended the Estates General as a representative of the nobility of Auvergne. His service in the American Revolution had also made him a hero in France even among people who detested the nobility. During the estates' debates about taxes and voting procedures, bread prices spiked across France causing civil unrest. Out of frustration, the Third Estate broke away to deal with the crises. On June 17, 1789, the Third Estate, joined by some nobles and clergy, declared itself the National Assembly, representing all of France. The National Assembly asserted control of taxation and state finances. This act was a bold seizure of authority away from the king. The French Revolution had begun.

Working with Thomas Jefferson and another French revolutionary leader, Lafayette authored the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen*, which the National Assembly adopted in August 1789. This new revolutionary government's statement of the "rights of man and citizen" declared:

> Men are born and remain free and equal in rights. Social distinctions can be based only upon public good.
>
> The aim of every political association is the preservation of the . . . rights [of] liberty, property, security, and resistance to oppression.
>
> Liberty consists in the power to do anything that does not injure others . . . .

Lafayette hoped to make the nation a constitutional monarchy, with limited authority given to the king. But mobs of hungry peasants ransacked and burned the estates of nobles, many of whom fled France with their lives and wealth. The king and queen themselves were imprisoned and finally executed in 1793. By that time, Lafayette had already fled France.

He spent several years in prison in Prussia and Austria while trying to escape to the United States. George Washington and Napoleon Bonaparte lobbied for Lafayette's eventual release in 1797. Acclaimed in France and the United States as the "Hero of Two Worlds," he died in Paris on May 20, 1834.

Author: Patrick Jenning is the author of *The Long Winding Road of Harry Raymond: A Detective's Journey Down the Mean Streets of Pre-War Los Angeles* (2021).

Writing & Discussion

1. Based on your knowledge about the American Revolution, what are some similarities between the American and French Revolutions?
2. List Lafayette's major achievements for American independence and revolution in France. Then, rank them in order of importance and give your reasons for your rankings.

Standards Addressed

The Haitian Revolution

California History-Social Science Standard 10.4: Students analyze patterns of change in the era of New Imperialism in at least two of the following regions or countries: Africa, Southeast Asia, China, India, Latin America, and the Philippines. (2) Discuss the locations of colonial rule of such nations as England, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Russia, Spain, Portugal, and the United States. (3) Explain imperialism from the perspective of the colonizers and the colonized and the varied immediate and long-term responses by the people under colonial rule. (4) Describe the independence struggles of the colonial regions of the world, including the roles of leaders. . . .

California History-Social Science Framework (Grade Eight), Ch. 12, p. 241: How did American calls for independence inspire other nations, such as France and the French colony of Haiti? Students learn about both the significance of the American Revolution to other nations and also the pivotal role of other nations in affecting the course of the war.

California History-Social Science Framework (Grade Ten), Ch. 15, p. 328: How do the French, American, and Haitian Revolutions compare to one another? Many new leaders established constitutional governments that echoed principles from the Glorious Revolution, Enlightenment ideas embodied in the English Bill of Rights, the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen, and the United States Constitution.

Common Core State Standards: SL.6-8.1, SL.6-8.3, RH.6-8.1, RH.6-8.3, RH.6-8.10, WHST.6-8.10; SL.9-10.1, SL.9-10.3, RH.9-10.1, RH.9-10.3, RH.9-10.10, WHST.11-12.10.

C3 Framework Indicators: D2.His.15.6-8. Evaluate the relative influence of various causes of events and developments in the past; D2.His.14.9-12. Analyze multiple and complex causes and effects of events in the past.

Thomas Paine: The Revolution's Writer

California History Social Science Standard 8.1: Students understand the major events preceding the founding of the nation and relate their significance to the development of American constitutional democracy. (2) Analyze the philosophy of government expressed in the Declaration of Independence, with an emphasis on government as a means of securing individual rights . . . .

California History Social Science Standard 10.2: Students compare and contrast the Glorious Revolution of England, the American Revolution, and the French Revolution and their enduring effects worldwide on the political expectations for self-government and individual liberty. (3) Understand the unique character of the American Revolution, its spread to other parts of the world, and its continuing significance to other nations.

California History Social Science Standard 11.1: Students analyze the significant events in the founding of the nation and its attempts to realize the philosophy of government described in the Declaration of Independence. (1) Describe the Enlightenment and the rise of democratic ideas as the context in which the nation was founded. (2) Analyze the ideological origins of the American Revolution, the Founding Fathers' philosophy of divinely bestowed unalienable natural rights . . . .

California History-Social Science Framework (Grade Five), Ch. 8, p. 109-110: Who were the Patriots? What were their grievances? . . . . Students study Thomas Paine's *Common Sense*, published in January 1776. Paine galvanized support for independence by persuasively arguing that America needed to break free from a government that violated the natural rights of its citizens.

Common Core State Standards: SL.6-8.1, SL.6-8.3, RH.6-8.1, RH.6-8.3, RH.6-8.10, WHST.6-8.10; SL.9-10.1, SL.9-10.3, RH.9-10.1, RH.9-10.3, RH.9-10.10, WHST.11-12.10; SL.11-12.1, SL.11-12.3, RH.11-12.1, RH.11-12.3, RH.11-12.10, WHST.11-12.10.

C3 Framework Indicators: D2.Civ.8.6-8. Analyze ideas and principles contained in the founding documents of the United States and explain how they influence the social and political system; D2.His.15.6-8. Evaluate the relative influence of various causes of events and developments in the past; D2.His.14.9-12. Analyze multiple and complex causes and effects of events in the past.

Simón Bolivar and Independence in South America

California History Social Science Standard 10.2: Students compare and contrast the Glorious Revolution of England, the American Revolution, and the French Revolution and their enduring effects worldwide on the political expectations for self-government and individual liberty. (1) Compare the major ideas of philosophers and their effects on the democratic revolutions in England, the United States, France, and Latin America (e.g., John Locke, Charles-Louis Montesquieu, Jean- Jacques Rousseau, Simón Bolivar, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison).

California History Social Science Standard 12.9: Students analyze the origins, characteristics, and development of different political systems across time, with emphasis on the quest for political democracy, its advances, and its obstacles. (6) Identify the ideologies, causes, stages, and outcomes of major Mexican, Central American, and South American revolutions in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Common Core State Standards: SL.9-10.1, SL.9-10.3, RH.9-10.1, RH.9-10.3, RH.9-10.10, WHST.11-12.10; SL.11-12.1, SL.11-12.3, RH.11-12.1, RH.11-12.3, RH.11-12.10, WHST.11-12.10.

C3 Framework Indicators: D2.Civ.8.9-12. Evaluate social and political systems in different contexts, times, and places, that promote civic virtues and enact democratic principles; D2.His.14.9-12. Analyze multiple and complex causes and effects of events in the past.

Phillis Wheatley: Poet of Freedom

California History-Social Science Standard 8.9: Students analyze the early and steady attempts to abolish slavery and to realize the ideals of the Declaration of Independence. (6) Describe the lives of free blacks and the laws that limited their freedom and economic opportunities.

California History-Social Science Framework (Grade Eight), Ch. 12, p. 243:

What were the long-term costs of slavery, both to people of African descent and to the nation at large? In addition, students discuss the status of women in this era, particularly relating to voting and the ownership of property. Although political rights for women were not advocated by the Founding Fathers, some women, such as Abigail Adams, wrote explicitly about how women's interests, especially as mothers, needed to be considered by male leaders.

Common Core State Standards: SL.6-8.1, SL.6-8.3, RH.6-8.1, RH.6-8.3, RH.6-8.10; RL.8.10; WHST.6-8.10.

C3 Framework Indicators: D2.His.15.6-8. Evaluate the relative influence of various causes of events and developments in the past.

Lafayette: 'Hero of Two Worlds'

California History-Social Science Standard 5.3: Students understand the course and consequences of the American Revolution. (2) Describe the contributions of France and other nations and of individuals to the outcome of the Revolution (e.g., the Marquis Marie Joseph de Lafayette).

California History-Social Science Standard 8.1: Students understand the major events preceding the founding of the nation and relate their significance to the development of American constitutional democracy. (3) Analyze how the American Revolution affected other nations, especially France.

California History-Social Science Standard 10.2: Students compare and contrast the Glorious Revolution of England, the American Revolution, and the French Revolution and their enduring effects worldwide on the political expectations for self-government and individual liberty. (2) List the principles of . . . the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen (1789). (4) Explain how the ideology of the French Revolution led France to develop from constitutional monarchy to democratic despotism to the Napoleonic empire.

California History-Social Science Framework (Grade Ten), Ch. 15, p. 328: How do the French, American, and Haitian Revolutions compare to one another? Many new leaders established constitutional governments that echoed principles from the Glorious Revolution, Enlightenment ideas embodied in the English Bill of Rights, the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen, and the United States Constitution.

Common Core State Standards: SL.6-8.1, SL.6-8.3, RH.6-8.1, RH.6-8.3, RH.6-8.10, WHST.6-8.10.10; SL.9-10.1, SL.9-10.3, RH. 9-10.1, RH. 9-10.3, RH. 9-10.10, WHST. 9-10.10.

C3 Framework Indicators: D2.Civ.3.6-8. Examine the origins, purposes, and impact of constitutions, laws, treaties, and international agreements; D2.Civ.8.9-12. Evaluate social and political systems in different contexts, times, and places, that promote civic virtues and enact democratic principles; D2.His.15.6-8. Evaluate the relative influence of various causes of events and developments in the past; D2.His.14.9-12. Analyze multiple and complex causes and effects of events in the past.

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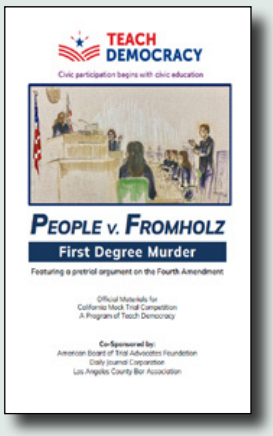
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People v. Fromholz First Degree Murder

Featuring a pretrial argument on the Fourth

People v. Fromholz is the trial of Haley Fromholz, a chef and contestant on a reality TV cooking show, who is charged with murdering celebrity judge Morgan Sears using poisonous mushrooms during the filming of the semi-final show.



The prosecution alleges that serving Sears mushrooms resulted in Sears's death the following day. The prosecution attributes the motive to a longstanding feud between Sears and Fromholz, and the $250,000 cash prize. Evidence presented includes Fromholz's use of a website to locate poisonous mushrooms and later Fromholz's deletion of computer files and search history.

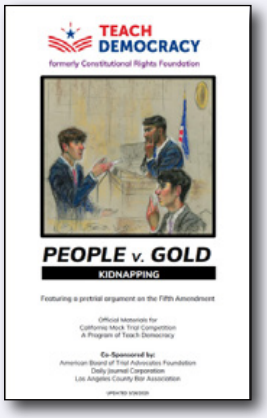
The defense argues that Fromholz did not kill Sears. The defense will deny that Fromholz ever had the premeditation necessary for intent in first-degree murder. The production staff checked the contents of Fromholz's ingredients prior to the show and identified no poisonous mushrooms. Further, the defense argues that another contestant also had a personal, contentious history with Sears and served Sears mushrooms during the same show, casting reasonable doubt on Fromholz's guilt.

The prosecution expert testimony will show that poisonous mushroom spores were found on Fromholz's jacket and that Fromholz's computer had been used to access websites that identified places where the deadly mushrooms grow. The defense expert will testify how easy it is for non-experts to confuse deadly mushrooms with non-poisonous mushrooms. The pretrial hearing centers on a defense motion to exclude testimony about the deletion of files on Fromholz's computer.

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People v. Gold Kidnapping

Featuring a pretrial argument on the fifth amendment



Logan Gold, the owner of the only hotel in town and assistant campaign manager to their spouse, Harper Dorais, a candidate for city council, is charged with the kidnapping of Taylor Alexander, a rival candidate to Dorais in the city council election.

A debate between the candidates was scheduled for three days before the election. Alexander did not show up for the depate. Dorais was present and Gold arrived late. Later that afternoon the sheriff's department received a phone call from Alexander claiming Alexander had been kidnapped.

The prosecution alleges that Gold abducted Alexander on the morning of the debate and under threat of violence, made Alexander drink a liquid that made Alexander unconscious. Alexander did not awake until after the scheduled debate. Alexander supported a measure to allow short-term rentals, which Gold opposed, giving Gold a motive to undermine Alexander's campaign.

The defense argues that Gold has an alibi and that Alexander may have faked the kidnapping in order to call into question Dorais's and Gold's reputations.

The testimonies of the county forensic investigator and the defense forensic expert will reveal different opinions about the evidence.

The pretrial hearing centers on a defense motion to exclude a potentially incriminating statement made by Gold while in police custody.

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Teach Democracy is providing K-12 teachers across the country with an activity focused on the Declaration of Independence and its importance to the ideals of our democracy today. For K-3, the theme is American Symbols. The activity has students create "public service announcements" and offers an opportunity for entry in our national contest.

We're excited and we hope you'll participate! For more details and to download the activity, go to: **https://teachdemocracy.org/america250**

	Activity	Contest
K-3	Learn about national symbols.	Drawing or slide showing favorite symbol, its meaning, and why it's your favorite.
3-6	Learn about why the colonists declared independence.	Drawing or slide about what people need to know today about the document.
6-8	Learn about the Declaration of Independence.	Slides or video about why ideas in the document are still important today.
9-12	Learn about the Declaration of Independence and natural rights	Social media post or video about why ideas in the document are still important today.

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