

Text: *The Crisis, No. 1*

Passage: “’Tis the business of little minds to shrink; but he whose heart is firm, and whose conscience approves his conduct, will pursue his principles unto death” (Paine 1894-96).

Question: In *The Crisis, No. 1*, how does Paine use guilt tactics and the merit of consciousness to impress the urgency of fortification against Great Britain’s control in order to maintain freedom in America?

Issue: Issue of Theme. This question deals with the theme of Paine’s insistence that America will succumb to the devilish, proprietary habitation of Great Britain’s rule if those who stand idle, choosing not to act on behalf of one side or the other, do not stand up for their country and defend its freedoms. This theme is continually reinforced throughout Paine’s dialogue. He emphasizes the unlamented shame a man will experience, and the effects of his cowardice on his heirs, should he choose not to join the fight for freedom.

Critical Approach: The Deconstruction approach makes for the best interpretation of Paine’s work. His philosophy of the presence of patriotism versus the absence of commitment and consciousness is used as a means of coercion. However, the implications of this philosophy are one-sided. It is not necessarily true that because a man chooses not to join a crusade, he does not wish for the same freedoms and well-being of his country. It appears that Paine’s interpretation of how freedom should be obtained is the only answer to the pressures by Great Britain. Perhaps other solutions were viable at the time, but they were not offered in this work. It could have been that a combination of Paine’s opinion along with those of others seeking freedom, would have resulted in fulfilling their quest without all the bloodshed.

Answer: Paine frequently references biblical passages to impress upon his subjects their righteous and religious obligations to join the cause for freedom. He also impresses upon those who were not committed to the cause that their negligence would cause future suffrage and shame for his family and children. While Paine praises those who will support their principles, whether it be a case of life or death, his precipitous condemnation of those not joining the effort against the tories was intended to impose feelings of guilt and shame, thus forcing these men into submission.