These are the times that try men's souls.

The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will in this crisis, shrink from the service of his country; but he that stands it now, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman. Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered; yet we have this consolation with us, that the harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph. What we obtain too cheap, we esteem too lightly; 'tis dearness only that gives everything its value. Heaven knows how to put a proper price upon its goods; and it would be strange indeed, if so celestial an article as Freedom should not be highly rated. Britain, with an army to enforce
her tyranny, has declared that she has a right (not only to tax) but "to
bind us in all cases whatsoever," and if being bound in that manner, is
not slavery, then is there not such a thing as slavery upon earth. Even
the expression is impious, for so unlimited a power can belong only
to God...

I have as little superstition in me as any man living, but my secret
opinion has ever been, and still is, that God Almighty will not give
up a people to military destruction, or leave them unsupposedly
to perish, who have so earnestly and so repeatedly sought to avoid
the calamities of war, by every decent method which wisdom could
invent. Neither have I so much of the infidel in me, as to suppose
that he has relinquished the government of the world, and given
us up to the care of devils; and as I do not. I cannot see on what
grounds the king of Britain can look up to heaven for help against
us; a common murderer, a highwayman, or a housebreaker, has as
good a pretense as he...

I once felt all that kind of anger, which a man ought to feel, against
the mean principles that are held by the Tories: a noted one, who
kept a tavern at Amboy, was standing at his door, with as pretty a
child in his hand, about eight or nine years old, as I ever saw, and
after speaking his mind as freely as he thought was prudent, finished
with this unfatherly expression, "Well! give me peace in my day." Not
a man lives on the continent but fully believes that a separation must
some time or other finally take place, and a generous parent should
have said, "If there must be trouble let it be in my day, that my child
may have peace"; and this single reflection, well applied, is sufficient
to awaken every man to duty. Not a place upon earth might be so
happy as America. Her situation is remote from all the wrangling
world, and she has nothing to do but to trade with them. A man
can distinguish himself between temper and principle, and I am
as confident, as I am that God governs the world, that America will
never be happy till she gets clear of foreign dominion. Wars, without
ceasing, will break out till that period arrives, and the continent
must in the end be conqueror; for though the flame of liberty
may sometimes cease to shine, the coal can never expire...

I turn with the warm ardor of a friend to those who have nobly stood,
and are yet determined to stand the matter out: I call not upon a few,
but upon all; not on this state or that state, but on every state; up and
help us: lay your shoulders to the wheel; better have too much force
than too little, when so great an object is at stake. Let it be told to the
future world, that in the depth of winter, when nothing but hope and
virtue could survive, that the city and the country, alarmed at one
common danger, came forth to meet and to repulse it. Say not that
thousands are gone, turn out your tens of thousands; throw not the
burden of the day upon Providence, but "show your faith by your

1. mean adj. here, small-minded.
2. Tories colonists who remained loyal to Great Britain.
works," that God may bless you. It matters not where you live, or what rank of life you hold, the evil or the blessing will reach you all. The far and the near, the home counties and the back, the rich and the poor, will suffer or rejoice alike. The heart that feels not now, is dead; the blood of his children will curse his cowardice, who shrinks back at a time when a little might have saved the whole, and made them happy. [I love the man that can smile at trouble; that can gather strength from distress, and grow brave by reflection.] '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. My own line of reasoning is to myself as straight and clear as a ray of light. Not all the treasures of the world, so far as I believe, could have induced me to support an offensive war, for I think it murder; but if a thief breaks into my house, burns and destroys my property, and kills or threatens to kill me, or those that are in it, and to "bind me in all cases whatsoever," to his absolute will, am I to suffer it? What signifies it to me, whether he who does it is a king or a common man: my countryman, or not my countryman; whether it be done by an individual villain or an army of them? If we reason to the root of things we shall find no difference; neither can any just cause be assigned why we should punish in the one case and pardon in the other.

Review and Assess

Thinking About the Selection

1. Respond: If you were a colonist who had remained loyal to the British how would you react to Paine's argument?

2. (a) Recall: In the second paragraph, what terms does Paine use to describe the British king? (b) Analyze: Is this description realistic or exaggerated? Explain. (c) Draw Conclusions: Is Paine trustworthy as a reporter of historical events? Explain.

3. (a) Recall: In the first paragraph, with what ideas does the author justify the struggle of revolution? (b) Interpret: What does Paine mean when he refers to "the summer soldier" and the "sunshine patriot"?

4. (a) Classify: Name two emotions to which Paine appeals in this essay. (b) Make a Judgment: Does Paine appeal more to emotion or to reason in this essay? Support your answer.

5. (a) Interpret: What is the main idea of this essay? (b) Support: What persuasive techniques does Paine use to develop his main idea? (c) Evaluate: In your opinion, how persuasive is Paine's essay?

Guided Reading Questions for "American Crisis, No. 1" by Thomas Paine

Name: ___________________________ Date: ___________________________

1. Interpret this quote: "These are the times that try men's souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will in this crisis shrink from the service of his country; but he that stands now deserves the love and thanks of man and woman."

2. What does Paine believe must be accomplished before Americans can be happy?

3. Provide supporting details that give evidence of Paine's views about the British point of view and the American point of view.

5. George Washington read this excerpt of "The American Crisis" to his men as they rowed across the Delaware River to surprise British soldiers at Trenton, N.J. Why do you think Washington chose this to read to men? Explain how it could be used to effectively motivate them on their night journey. Use language from "The Crisis" to explain your answer.