

# AMERICAN LITERATURE

## LITERATURE OF REVOLUTION ~ PART 2

## LECTURE NOTES

### Ben Franklin

#### Letter to Ezra Stiles

- In this letter, Franklin lays out his Creed of Belief.

#### Autobiography

- Franklin began writing this as a letter to his son William to describe the story of his life.



### Abigail Adams

The **Letters of Abigail Adams** give us a picture of life before, during, and after the Crusade for Independence from the perspective of an insider.

### Thomas Paine

He was a Political pamphleteer of questionable character

He met Ben Franklin in England and was inspired to move to America in 1774



#### Paine was a Master of PROPAGANDA

- Propaganda is the use of a variety of communication techniques that create an emotional appeal to accept a particular belief or opinion, to adopt a certain behavior, or to perform a particular action.

##### 1. Bandwagon

- This technique tries to persuade everyone to "follow the crowd" and to "join in" because others are doing so as well.
- *Examples: an ad creates the illusion that everyone is buying the newest technology and you'll be left behind if you don't buy it, a news commentator gives the impression that everyone supports*

##### 2. Name-calling

- The practice of name-calling makes use of bad names and derogatory words in creating a negative opinion among the public, about a particular person/idea/group. It is used to make people **condemn** something without examining the evidence.
- *Examples: commie, Nazi, racist, sexist, elitist, anti-environmentalist, tea-bagger, or a back-handed phrase such as "No really intelligent voter would support his candidacy." (in other words, you are stupid if you don't vote for him)*

##### 3. Glittering Generalities

- Glittering generalities are words that have positive meanings expressing highly valued concepts. These virtuous words are linked to something in order to make people accept or approve of it without examining the evidence.
- *Examples: democracy, patriotism, family, freedom, honor, glory, love of country*

##### 4. Testimonial

- Testimonials are quotations or endorsements which attempt to connect a famous or respectable person with a product, idea, or policy, where the respectable person shows support of what the propagandist wants audience to accept unquestionably.
- *Examples: an athlete appears on the Wheaties box; an actor speaks at a political rally, the cool guy uses MAC and the nerdy guy uses Microsoft*

##### 5. Transfer

- It is a technique of linking one thing to other in an attempt to create the impression that both share the same qualities. The transfer technique can be used to generate positive or negative feelings.
- With *Positive* Transfer, the propagandist links the authority or prestige of something well-respected and revered, such as church or nation, to something he would have us accept.
- *Example: a political activist closes her speech with a prayer, those who support abortion call their position "pro-choice" (because everyone's for choice), a person declares their position is a matter of conventional wisdom (we all like wisdom), a politician associates social welfare programs with compassion and caring (we're all for compassion)*
- With *Negative* Transfer, the propagandist links a negative concept or idea to something he would have us reject.
- *Example: a presidential candidate associates his opponent with Hitler, a politician associates corporations with environmental problems*
- In the Transfer device, symbols are constantly used. The cross represents the Christian Church. The flag represents the nation. A person wearing a white lab coat represents scientific quality. A picture of Hitler represents evil. Barbed wire represents oppression.

## 6. Card stacking

- The card stacking technique is the way of promoting a particular idea by presenting only its positive aspects. Factual information which exhibits the negative aspects of the idea are not presented.

## 7. Plain Folks

- This technique is an attempt to convince the audience that a prominent person and his ideas are "of the people," that their views reflect the common interests of common people, and that they are also working for the benefit of the common person.
- *Examples: America's recent presidents have all been millionaires, but they have gone to great lengths to present themselves as ordinary citizens. Jimmy Carter presented himself as a humble peanut farmer from Georgia. Ronald Reagan was often photographed chopping wood. George Bush Sr. hated broccoli, and loved to fish. Bill Clinton ate at McDonald's and confessed a fondness for trashy spy novels. George W. Bush brought his wife coffee in bed every morning. Barack Obama is a master of the plain folks technique. He portrays himself as being a simple black man with a dream for a better America. He has actually used the term "black folks". He has many stories to show he is just like regular folk: He found it tough to pay off his student loans. He has a college fund for his girls. He & Michelle struggled as a young couple to pay their mortgage, etc...*

## Common Sense

- His first pamphlet - published in January of 1776
- He wholeheartedly urged political independence from England
- He even called for a Declaration of Independence to be drawn up and it was the following summer

## The American Crisis (the first of these essays is in our textbook)

- A series of essays that appeared irregularly throughout the war, especially at points when the patriots' cause seemed to be faltering

## The Rights of Man

- He linked the French Revolution with the American Revolution (even though the revolutions were extremely different!)

## The Age of Reason (a portion of this is in our textbook)

- His intent was to free men from what Paine regarded as false religion
- His views aroused great bitterness in America and ruined his reputation

## Phillis (Phyllis) Wheatley

Known as the first prominent black writer in America

She was born in Africa and brought to America as a slave

Her poetry expresses deep belief in God and a thankfulness for the circumstances that allowed her to know Him

She received an education from the lady who owned her

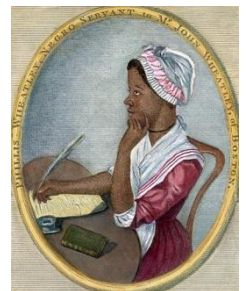
She eventually gained her freedom on October 18, 1773

She even appeared before General Washington in March of 1776 for her poetry

She was a strong supporter of the Revolutionary Cause

**On Being Brought from Africa to America**

**To the University of Cambridge**



## Patrick Henry

Patrick Henry is perhaps best known for the speech he made in the House of Burgesses on March 23, 1775, in Saint John's Church in Richmond, Virginia.

Thomas Jefferson credited Henry with being the man who "set the ball of Revolution rolling."

His immortal words have been described as "the most famous cry for freedom in the world."

**Give Me Liberty or Give me Death Speech**

