

ADAMS, HENRY, & PAINE

It takes more than bad policy makers to create a revolution. As Jefferson wrote in the Declaration of Independence: "Mankind are more inclined to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed." Revolutions don't just happen. Someone has to make them happen. In the colonies, three men were especially important in the early 1770s in creating tension, organizing resistance, and arousing people to act.

SAMUEL ADAMS (1722–1803), a Harvard graduate, was one of the worst financial managers in the colonies. His father loaned him £1,000 to start a business; he lost half of it in a bad debt to a friend and the rest by himself. He inherited his father's business, and it went broke. He became Boston's tax collector and did not collect the taxes to keep the city going. By the time he was 42 years old, his hair was gray and his hands trembled. His interest in politics, however, was making him a leader.

As a member of the Caucus Club, a political group ranging from shipyard workers to intellectuals, he led the fight against the Stamp Act and Lieutenant Governor Hutchinson. During the battle over the Townsend Duties, he organized the Committee of Correspondence and the boycott. Other colonies imitated what Massachusetts was doing. He wrote articles for the *Boston Gazette*, and when Governor Bernard went to England, he declared a public festival with bonfires and roaring cannons. It was he who labelled the incident in Boston in 1770 as a "horrid massacre" and persuaded an engraver, Paul Revere, to make a cartoon showing soldiers shooting down unarmed civilians.

He was involved in organizing the Boston Tea Party and the call for a Continental Congress. When he went as a delegate, it was the first time in his life he had left Massachusetts. His friends fixed up his house and barn and gave him new clothes and shoes to wear.

The British did not know how to handle him. Although he was poor, he had no interest in money, so could not be bribed. Any attempt to arrest him would create a situation beyond Gage's control.

No one would have predicted greatness for **PATRICK HENRY** (1736–1799) as a young man. Since he hated picking tobacco worms off of leaves so much, his father gave him a store to run; it went broke. When he married, their parents gave the couple 300 acres of land and six slaves; the house burned, and he went back to running a store. It went broke. Without a way to support his wife, he turned to law, but he passed the bar exam only after he promised to study some more. When he appeared in his first big case, the jury members were amazed and awed by his presentation.

In 1765 he was elected to the House of Burgesses, where he sat with George Washington, Richard Henry Lee, and legal scholar George Wythe. He was almost alone in



Samuel Adams led the colonists in Massachusetts in protests against the British.

creating opposition to the Stamp Act, and the resolutions he offered were later toned down, but his reputation spread to other colonies as a man who stood up against royal authority. From 1767 to 1773, his law practice took most of his time. By 1773 he was thinking more about independence and ways to achieve it. He predicted that England would drive the colonies to rebellion; if that happened, France, Spain, and Holland (England's enemies) would support the American cause.

Henry was chosen as a delegate to the First Continental Congress where he gave a fiery speech: "The distinctions between Virginians, Pennsylvanians, New Yorkers and New Englanders are no more. I am not a Virginian, but an American." Another delegate, hearing Henry speak for the first time, called him "the completest speaker I ever heard," and looked forward to more examples of his ability. The crisis in Boston grew worse, and Virginia militia units began regular drills. Some Burgesses urged caution, but Henry said they were blind to painful truth, and closed his speech with the famous words: "Give me liberty or give me death!"

Growing up in a London slum with little love or money, THOMAS PAINE (1737–1809) was also a failure at everything he tried. His formal education at a charity school ended when he was 13, and he grew up in the streets and taverns. He married twice, but neither marriage lasted. Somehow, he met Benjamin Franklin, who wrote a letter of introduction for him: "Mr. Thomas Paine is very well recommended to me as an ingenious young man. He goes to Pennsylvania with a view of settling there." When the ship docked at Philadelphia, Paine was so sick he had to be carried off.

It was 1774, and the colonies were rapidly moving toward revolution. Paine caught the spirit of the times. He became a writer for the *Pennsylvania Magazine*, discussing topics from science to emancipation.

In January 1776, Paine's 47-page pamphlet, *Common Sense*, was published, and the chronic failure became an instant celebrity. In his pamphlet, Paine expressed his views on government: "Society in every state is a blessing, but Government, even in its best state, is but a necessary evil." Of the role of the king in England, he said: "A King hath little more to do than to make war and give away places; which in plain terms, is to impoverish the nation and set it together by the ears." *Common Sense* sold 120,000 copies in the first three months and about 500,000 in all.

Three men, all of whom had overcome failures, showed how different abilities worked together to create a revolution: Adams, the organizer; Henry, the public speaker; and Paine, the man with the poison pen. In the events from 1773 to 1776, their influence would be great.

Activity

Every revolution since the American Revolution has had its organizers, crowd stirrers, and writers. Have the class rate them in importance from 1 to 3.

Name _____ Date _____

CHALLENGES

1. What public office had Samuel Adams held?

2. What was the purpose of the Caucus Club?

3. What was Adams' response to Governor Bernard leaving the colony?

4. Why didn't the British arrest Adams?

5. What issue first made Patrick Henry famous in other colonies?

6. Who did Henry think would come to the aid of the colonies in case of a war with England?

7. What is probably Henry's most famous quote?

8. Who wrote a letter of introduction for Thomas Paine?

9. What was Paine's first famous pamphlet?

10. How many copies of that pamphlet were sold in the first three months?

Name _____ Date _____

POINTS TO PONDER

1. All three of these men were failures in their younger days. What effect do you think that had on their attitude toward England?

2. What does a good political speech need if it is going to move the listeners to action?

3. What risks were Paine, Henry, and Adams running when they spoke out so strongly against English rule?
