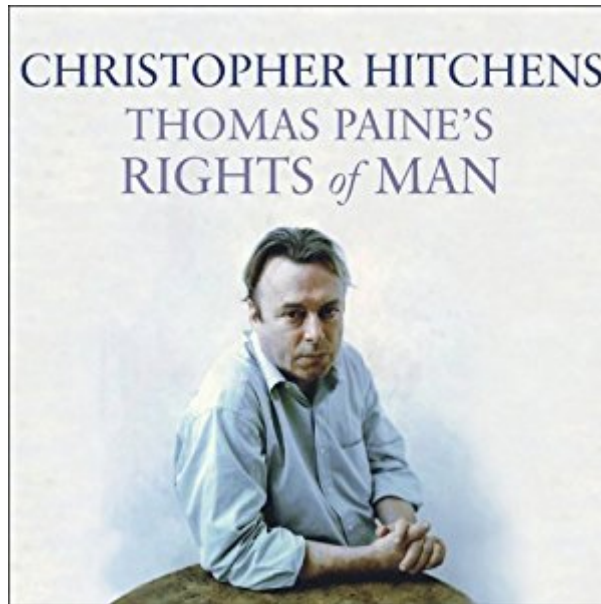


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Thomas Paine's Rights Of Man: A Biography: Books That Changed The World



Synopsis

Thomas Paine was one of the greatest political propagandists in history. The Rights of Man, first published in 1791, is the key to his reputation. Inspired by his outrage at Edmund Burke's attack on the uprising of the French people, Paine's text is a passionate defense of the rights of man. Paine argued against monarchy and outlined the elements of a successful republic, including public education, pensions, and relief of the poor and unemployed, all financed by income tax. Since its publication, The Rights of Man has been celebrated, criticized, maligned, and suppressed. But here, commentator Christopher Hitchens, Paine's natural heir, marvels at its forethought and revels in its contentiousness. Above all, he shows how Thomas Paine's Rights of Man forms the philosophical cornerstone of the world's most powerful republic: the United States of America.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Christopher Hitchens, whose previous publications include *Why Orwell Matters*; *Thomas Jefferson: Author of America*; and the international best seller *God Is Not Great*, has been called "a Tom Paine for our troubled times" (*The Independent*, London). In Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man*, Hitchens has penned an enlightening account of the life and work of Thomas Paine (1737-1809). "Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man*," he writes, "is both a trumpet of inspiration and a carefully wrought blueprint for a more rational and decent ordering of society, both domestically and on the international scene." Paine, "the firebrand of the Revolution," helped foment the American Revolution through his powerful and, for the times, incendiary, writings, most notably his first great work, *Common Sense* (published in 1776; its working title had been *Plain Truth*). Hitchens calls this earlier work "the largest

achievement in the history of pamphleteering. . . . Of Common Sense it can be said, without any risk of cliché, that it was a catalyst that altered the course of history." Later works by Paine include *The Crisis* (sometimes referred to as *The American Crisis*), *The Age of Reason*, and *Rights of Man*. It is Hitchens' commentary on the last-mentioned work which constitutes the lion's share of the present volume. Hitchens asserts that Paine's *Rights of Man* was "not just a paean to human liberty. It was partly a short-term polemic, directed in particular at Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France*." Edmund Burke, who had earlier supported the American Revolution, "seemed to be mutating from Whiggery through Toryism and into a full-blown reactionary."

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