Dissecting “Common Sense”

Paine intended for “Common Sense” to be an argument. In order to work most effectively, an argument must do the following things…

- Appeal to logic (logos) and emotion (pathos) by using both facts and opinions
- Contain a thesis statement that clearly states the writer’s position and what he/she wants to persuade the reader to think and/or do.
- The writer must gather support, or evidence, for his/her position. This support may be in the form of reasons, examples, facts, statistics, and/or quotations.
- All support should be presented in a logical sequence (either most important to least important or vice versa).
- The writer should anticipate what critics will say to undermine his/her arguments, and come up with appropriate responses.

Read through the excerpts from “Common Sense.” Discuss as a group whether or not Paine was effective in making his argument according to the above requirements.

Using one sheet of paper for your group, do the following:

1. Put all members names at the top of the paper
2. Fold the paper in half vertically (hot dog style)
3. Label the left side “pathos” and the right side “logos”
4. Give at least two examples from “Common Sense” of each of these rhetorical appeals. Write out the example AND explain why this is effective.

Once you have completed this, come get a number from Mrs. McCown. After receiving your number, revisit the excerpts. Locate your number and rephrase that section of the pamphlet into Modern English. Don’t skip things or change the connotation; translate it as closely as you can. You will most likely have to look up some of the words. The most accurate and well-written translation from each hour will receive extra credit.

Write the number of your excerpt and your translation on the back of your group’s paper. Turn this into the basket by the end of the hour.