



## **Patrick Henry Printable Reading Comprehension**

Grade Level: 5+ | Word Count: 394 | Lexile 1050

### **Patrick Henry: Voice of Liberty**

#### **Early Years**

Patrick Henry was born in Hanover County, Virginia, on May 29, 1736, to John and Sarah Henry. Although he was mostly educated at home by his father, Patrick took an active interest in law, which he pursued on his own. In 1760, Patrick was admitted to the Virginia bar. He soon became a well-known and persuasive attorney and a staunch advocate for American independence.

#### **Vociferous Opposition to the Stamp Act**

Patrick Henry's words were extremely influential. In 1763, Henry argued against the King of England in the Parson's Cause case in Hanover County. Henry defended the right of the colony to fix the price of the tobacco in which the clergy were paid. When clergymen complained to the king, the ruling was nullified. Henry argued that any king who would veto a law implemented by a locally elected council is not a father to the people but a tyrant undeserving of the allegiance of his subjects. Henry was equally as vociferous in his opposition of the 1765 Stamp Act, which he voiced at the Virginia House of Burgesses. Despite cries of treason throughout the meeting room for his impassioned scolding of the Stamp Act and its creators, the House ultimately sided with Patrick Henry and his resolutions asserting that colonists, as Englishmen, have the exclusive right to tax themselves.

#### **Give me Liberty or Give me Death**

Henry became a delegate to the House of Burgesses in 1765 and served until 1774. Henry became a powerful voice in the quest for American independence and advocated the arming of civilians. His famous words, "Give me liberty or give me death," spoke for a generation of Americans ready to rebel against England.

#### **Political Contributions to the New Nation**

Patrick Henry was more than just a radical - he was a very successful politician. He was a delegate to the Virginia Provincial Convention in 1775 and was a member of the Continental Congress from 1774-1776. Henry was twice elected as governor of Virginia and led the fight for the Virginia Religious Freedom Act of 1785. Even though he was a Federalist, Henry opposed ratification of the US Constitution, asserting it jeopardized states' rights. He worked hard to have the Bill of Rights added to the Constitution. Henry died June 6, 1799.

1. **What does the passage suggest about Patrick Henry's education?**
  - a) He attended one of the best universities in Virginia
  - b) He was mainly self-taught, especially in law
  - c) He received little education and could not read
  - d) His father discouraged him from studying law
2. **Why did Henry argue against the King during the Parson's Cause case?**
  - a) He wanted to raise the salaries of the clergy
  - b) He believed the King was right to veto colonial laws
  - c) He felt local councils should control local decisions
  - d) He wanted to gain popularity in England
3. **What is the main idea of the section titled "Give me Liberty or Give me Death"?**
  - a) Henry refused to join the House of Burgesses
  - b) Henry was afraid to advocate for arming civilians
  - c) Henry encouraged colonists to support England
  - d) Henry became a strong voice for independence
4. **Which statement BEST describes Patrick Henry's political views later in life?**
  - a) He wanted a strong national government with unlimited power
  - b) He believed states' rights needed protection
  - c) He no longer cared about freedom of religion
  - d) He supported the Constitution without changes
5. **What can the reader infer about Henry's personality from his actions and speeches?**
  - a) He was shy and avoided confrontation
  - b) He was bold and unafraid to challenge authority
  - c) He always agreed with the majority
  - d) He preferred to work quietly behind the scenes
6. **Compare Henry's role in opposing the Stamp Act to his role in creating the Bill of Rights. What do these roles have in common?**
  - a) Both show Henry fighting for the power of the people
  - b) Both show Henry supporting strong federal control
  - c) Both involved Henry working closely with the King
  - d) Both were decisions he later regretted
7. **Which of the following BEST summarizes the entire passage?**
  - a) Patrick Henry was a famous inventor and lawyer who served as governor of Virginia
  - b) Patrick Henry's bold words and political efforts helped shape American independence and protect individual freedoms
  - c) Patrick Henry disagreed with all of America's founding documents
  - d) Patrick Henry avoided politics after his early speeches in Virginia

## Answer Key

1. **b** – He was mainly self-taught, especially in law
2. **c** – He felt local councils should control local decisions
3. **d** – Henry became a strong voice for independence
4. **b** – He believed states' rights needed protection
5. **b** – He was bold and unafraid to challenge authority
6. **a** – Both show Henry fighting for the power of the people
7. **b** – Patrick Henry's bold words and political efforts helped shape American independence and protect individual freedoms