“Common Sense” by Thomas Paine
Translation Exercise

Directions: Each of the following 10 summary statements corresponds to an excerpt from “Common Sense.” Place the number of the correct summary statement in the blank preceding its matching excerpt.

Summary Statements:

1. It is absurd to have a big continent as America be controlled by such a little island.

2. England protected us for her own self-interests, not out of love.

3. We deserve independence as our right. We don't want to be dependent on a king who may be crazy. It is safer to have a legal document as support.

4. If England is the "parent," she has not been a good one to us. Many fled England because of persecution in the mother country.

5. We've tried everything. Now it's time to act.

6. Nothing good can come from a continued connection to Britain. We can sell our goods elsewhere.

7. The law should be all powerful, not some king.

8. There will always be wars between England and other countries, and these wars interfere with American trade.

9. Some say that we need England for future prosperity. America didn't grow BECAUSE of England. We would have grown without her too.

10. Everything points to the fact that we should separate from England. Even the distance between England and America serves as proof that England was never to have ruled America.
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Excerpts:

_____ A. Volumes have been written on the subject of the struggle between England and America. Men of all ranks have embarked in the controversy, from different motives, and with various designs: but all have been ineffectual, and the period of debate is closed. Arms as a last resort decide the contest; the appeal was the choice of the king, and the continent has accepted the challenge. . . .

_____ B. I have heard it asserted by some, that as America hath flourished under her former connection with Great Britain, the same connection is necessary towards her future happiness, and will always have the same effect. Nothing can be more fallacious than this kind of argument. We may as well assert that because a child has thriven upon milk, that it is never to have meat, or that the first twenty years of our lives is to become a precedent for the next twenty. . . . America would have flourished as much, and probably much more, had no European power taken any notice of her.

_____ C. But she has protected us, say some. That she hath . . . defended the continent at our expense as well as her own is admitted. . . . We have boasted the protection of Great Britain without considering that her motive was interest, not attachment; and that she did not protect us from our enemies on our account, but from her enemies on her own account. . . .

_____ D. But Britain is the parent country, say some. Then the more shame upon her conduct. Even brutes to not devour their young, nor savages make war upon their families. . . . Europe, and not England, is the parent country of America. This new world hath been the asylum for the persecuted lovers of civil and religious liberty from every part of Europe. Hither have they fled, not from the tender embraces of a mother, but from the cruelty of the monster; and it is so far true of England, that the same tyranny which drove the first emigrants from home, pursues their descendants still. . . .

_____ E. I challenge the warmest advocate for reconciliation to show a single advantage that this continent can reap by being connected with Great Britain. I repeat the challenge; not a single advantage is derived. Our corn will fetch its price in any market in Europe . . .
F. Europe is too thickly planted with kingdoms to be long at peace, and whenever a war breaks out between England and any foreign power, the trade of America goes to ruin because of her connection with Britain. . .

G. Everything that is right or natural pleads for separation. The blood of the slain, the weeping voice of nature cries, „TIS TIME TO PART. Even the distance at which the Almighty hath placed England and America is a strong and natural proof that the authority of the one over the other, was never the design of heaven. . .

H. Small islands, not capable of protecting themselves, are the proper objects for kingdoms to take under their care; but there is something very absurd in supposing a continent to be perpetually governed by an island. In no instance hath nature made the satellite larger than its primary planet; and as England and America. . . reverse the common order of nature, it is evident that they belong to different systems. England to Europe: America to itself. . .

I. But where, say some, is the king of America? I’ll tell you, friend, he reigns above, and doth not make havoc of mankind like the Royal Brute of Great Britain. [I]n America THE LAW IS KING. For as in absolute governments the king is law, so in free countries the law ought to be king, . . .

J. Nothing but independence . . . can keep the peace of the continent. . . A government of our own is our natural right; and when a man seriously reflects on the precariousness of human affairs, he will become convinced, that it is infinitely wiser and safer to form a constitution of our own in a cool deliberate manner, while we have it in our power. . .