

Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death!

Paraphrasing

● Many colonists thought that the Americans and British would end up fighting one another. One colonist who believed that Americans should be willing to fight for their freedom was Patrick Henry of Virginia. Read the last part of Patrick Henry's famous speech to the members of Virginia's House of Burgesses. Use the glossary to determine the meaning of unfamiliar or difficult words.

Besides, sir, we shall not fight our battles alone. There is a just God who presides over the destinies of nations, and who will raise up friends to fight our battles for us. The battle, sir, is not to the strong alone; it is to the vigilant, the active, the brave. Besides, sir, we have no election. If we were base enough to desire it, it is now too late to retire from the contest. There is no retreat but in submission and slavery! Our chains are forged. Their clanking can be heard on the plains of Boston! The war is inevitable—and let it come!! I repeat it, sir, let it come!!!

It is vain, sir, to extenuate the matter. Gentlemen may cry, peace, peace; but there is no peace. The war is actually begun! The next gale that sweeps from the north will bring to our ears the clash of resounding arms! Our brethren are already in the field! Why stand we here idle? What is it that gentlemen wish? What would they have? Is life so dear or peace so sweet as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery?

Forbid it, Almighty God—I know not what course others may take; but as for me, give me liberty or give me death!

GLOSSARY

base—lacking higher qualities of mind or spirit

destinies—outcomes; fates

election—choice

extenuate—partly excuse

idle—useless; inactive

inevitable—certain

presides—controls

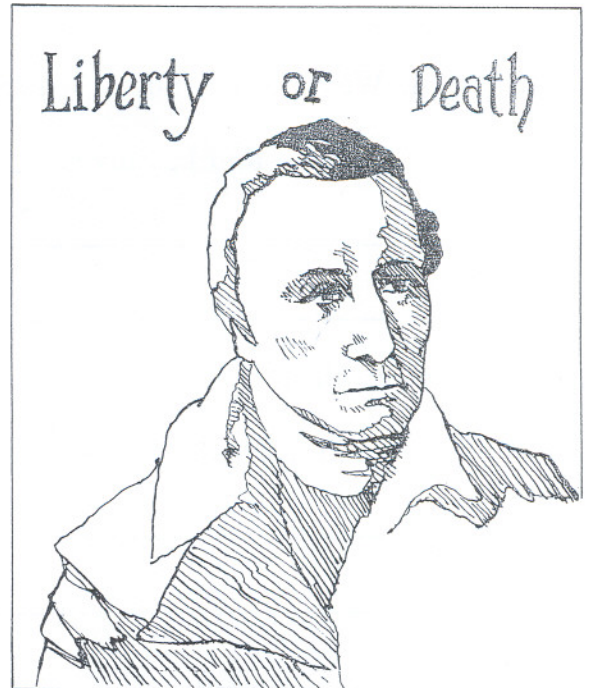
resounding—making a loud sound

retire—withdraw

submission—giving in

vain—useless; foolish

vigilant—alert; watchful



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GIVE ME LIBERTY OR GIVE ME DEATH!

● In his speech, Patrick Henry expressed some stirring ideas. Some of these ideas are written below in more modern language. Using the glossary on page 23 for help, write the sentence or sentences Patrick Henry used to express each idea.

1. I would choose to die rather than live without freedom. _____

2. We will not win by strength alone. We must be alert, watchful, active, and brave. _____

3. Is living peacefully worthwhile if one must be a slave? _____

4. We have no choice. We cannot avoid a battle. If we do not fight, we must give up and be slaves. _____

5. Calling for peace is useless because the battle has already begun. It is coming closer. We're already at war. _____
