

of navies and armies? No, sir, she has none. They are meant for us; they can be meant for no other. They are sent over to bind and rivet upon us those chains which the British ministry have been so long forging. And what have we to oppose to them? Shall we try argument? Sir, we have been trying that for the last ten years. Have we anything new to offer on the subject? Nothing. We have held the subject up in every light of which it is capable; but it has been all in vain. Shall we resort to entreaty and humble supplication? What terms shall we find which have

not been already exhausted? Let us not, I beseech you, sir, deceive ourselves longer. Sir, we have done everything that could be done, to avert the storm which is now coming on. We have petitioned; we have remonstrated;⁸ we have supplicated; we have prostrated ourselves before the throne, and have implored its interposition⁹ to arrest the tyrannical hands of the ministry and Parliament. Our petitions have been slighted; our remonstrances have produced additional violence and insult; our supplications have been disregarded; and we have been spurned, with contempt, from the foot of the throne. In vain, after these things, may we indulge the fond¹⁰ hope of peace and reconciliation. There is no longer any room for hope. If we wish to be free—if we mean to preserve inviolate those inestimable privileges for which we have been so long contending—if we mean not basely to abandon the noble struggle in which we have been so long engaged, and which we have pledged ourselves never to abandon until the glorious object of our contest shall be obtained, we must fight! I repeat it, sir, we must fight! An appeal to arms and to the

8. **remonstrated** *v.*: objected; complained.
9. **interposition** *n.*: intervention; stepping in to try to solve the problem.
10. **fond** *adj.*: foolishly optimistic.

God of Hosts is all that is left us!¹¹

They tell us, sir, that we are weak; unable to cope with so formidable¹¹ an adversary. But when shall we be stronger? Will it be the next week, or the next year? Will it be when we are totally disarmed, and when a British guard shall be stationed in every house? Shall we gather strength by irresolution and inaction? Shall we acquire the means of effectual resistance, by lying supinely on our backs, and hugging the delusive¹² phantom of hope, until our enemies shall have bound us hand and foot? Sir, we are not weak, if we make a proper use of the means which the God of nature hath placed in our power. Three millions of people, armed in the holy cause of liberty, and in such a country as that which we possess, are invincible by any force which our enemy can send against us. 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.¹³ If we were base¹⁴ 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 may be heard on the plains of Boston! The war is inevitable—

11. **formidable** *adj.*: powerful; difficult to defeat.
12. **delusive** *adj.*: deceptive; misleading.
13. **election** *n.*: choice.
14. **base** *adj.*: showing little courage, honor, or decency.

Vocabulary

- supplication** (sup'lə-kā'shən) *n.*: plea; prayer.
avert (ə-vurt') *v.*: prevent; turn away.
spurned (spurnd) *v.*: rejected.
inviolable (in-vī'ə-lit) *adj.*: uncorrupted.
adversary (ad'vər-ser'ē) *n.*: opponent.
vigilant (vij'ə-lənt) *adj.* used as *n.*: those who are watchful.
inevitable (in-ev'i-tə-bəl) *adj.*: not avoidable.

4 Note Henry's use of **rhetorical questions**, or questions asked for effect with no answer anticipated.

5 How do these questions help anticipate the arguments of his opponents?

6 What **appeals to reason** does Henry make in this paragraph? What does he want the colonists to understand?

