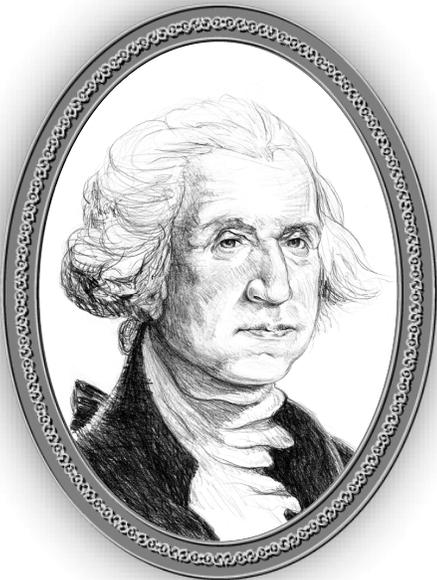


GEORGE WASHINGTON

(1732–1799)



The time is now and near at hand which must probably determine whether Americans are to be freemen or slaves. . . . Our cruel and unrelenting enemy leaves us the only choice of brave resistance, or the most abject submission. We have, therefore, to resolve to conquer or die.

—George Washington, 1776



Introduction

Americans have long appreciated the importance of George Washington to their nation's history. Deemed “the indispensable man” by one historian, Washington secured American independence as commander of the Continental Army and established republican traditions as the nation's first president. His unblemished character and force of personality steered men's hearts in combat and stirred their souls in peace. But only recently have historians begun to recognize Washington's intellectual contributions to the formation of the American republic. Though never a systematic thinker, Washington understood the relationship between political theory and practice and was a close associate of many of the leading statesmen of the day, such as James Madison, Alexander Hamilton, and Thomas Jefferson. Indeed, the friendship between Washington and Madison is one of the most important political partnerships of the Founding Era.

During the 1780s, Washington's home at Mount Vernon served as a crossroads for ideas that led to the shaping of the Constitution in 1787 at Philadelphia. Representatives of the Confederation Congress, delegates to the Constitutional Convention, and members of state ratifying conventions all stopped at Mount Vernon during the decade on their journeys north and south. Few of these conversations are recorded in detail, but no other private home in America was the scene of so many discussions among the politically powerful. It could justly be said that the outlines of the new republic were largely drawn one hundred feet above the Potomac River on a farm whose location marked the exact geographic midpoint between North and South.

Relevant Thematic Essays for George Washington

- Republican Government
- Limited Government

In His Own Words: GEORGE WASHINGTON ON THE CONSTITUTION

Overview

In this lesson, students will learn about George Washington. They should first read as homework **Handout A—George Washington (1732–1799)** and answer the **Reading Comprehension Questions**. After discussing the answers to those in class, the teacher should have students answer the **Critical Thinking Questions** as a class. Next, the teacher should introduce the primary source activity, **Handout C—In His Own Words: George Washington on the Constitution** in which Washington admonishes citizens of the new nation to cherish the Constitution. As a preface, there is **Handout B—Vocabulary and Context Questions**, which will help the students understand the document.

There are **Follow-Up Homework Options**, which ask students to analyze Washington’s leadership qualities, or to reflect further on additional sections of Washington’s address. The **Extensions** option asks students to compare Washington to other historical figures.

Objectives

Students will:

- explain why Washington is known as “Father of His Country.”
- explain Washington’s reasons for not seeking a third term as President.
- understand the historical significance of Washington’s home, Mount Vernon.
- understand the purposes of Washington’s Farewell Address.
- analyze how the admonitions of Washington’s Farewell Address apply to modern society.
- appreciate the various roles Washington played in defending and creating the new nation and its government.

Standards

CCE (9–12): IIA1, IIC1, IIIA1, IIIA2

NCHS (5–12): Era III, Standards 1C, 3A, 3B, 3D

NCSS: Strands 2, 5, 6, and 10

Materials

Student Handouts

- Handout A—George Washington (1732–1799)
- Handout B—Vocabulary and Context Questions
- Handout C—In His Own Words: George Washington on the Constitution

Additional Teacher Resource

- Answer Key

Recommended Time

One 45-minute class period.
Additional time as needed for homework.

LESSON PLAN



I. Background Homework

Ask students to read **Handout A—George Washington (1732–1799)** and answer the Reading Comprehension Questions.



II. Warm-Up [10 minutes]

- A. Review answers to homework questions.
- B. Conduct a whole-class discussion to answer the Critical Thinking Questions.
- C. Ask a student to summarize the historical significance of George Washington.

George Washington was a Virginia farmer who commanded the Virginia militia and the Continental Army. Washington was chosen to preside over the Philadelphia Constitutional Convention in 1787. He was then unanimously elected as the first president. He is known as the “Father of His Country.”



III. Context [5 minutes]

Explain to students that Washington’s Farewell Address to the nation was written with James Madison and Alexander Hamilton, and was never delivered orally. Rather, it was published in newspapers throughout the nation. The Address represents Washington’s legacy of service to the nation, and the excerpt on **Handout C** is a representative excerpt of a much longer (seventeen-page) document. Tell students that in his first paragraph, Washington is referring to the Articles of Confederation when he says “your first essay.”



IV. In His Own Words [20 minutes]

- A. Distribute **Handout B—Vocabulary and Context Questions** and **Handout C—In His Own Words: George Washington on the Constitution**.
- B. Divide students into six groups and have them read **Handout C** and complete **Handout B**.
- C. Assign each group one paragraph from the speech and have them rewrite the paragraph in their own words.
- D. Ask students to then write one or two discussion questions about the other paragraphs.
- E. When students have finished, ask the group that worked on the first paragraph to stand at the front of the classroom and have a spokesperson read aloud the original paragraph.
- F. Next, have a different student from the group present the group’s new paragraph.
- G. The class should then present their discussion questions to the remaining students in the group.
- H. Have each group in turn go to the front of the class and continue with the “speech” and discussion questions.

Suggested discussion questions/answers:

Paragraph One: *Why will the new Constitution better unify the country?/It will form a closer union and address common concerns of the people.*

Paragraph Two: *Why is the Constitution worthy of Americans’ confidence?/It was carefully crafted, balances government power with liberty, and provides within itself the means for constitutional change.*

Paragraph Three: *What is necessary for liberty?/Respect for the Constitution and the law.*

Paragraph Four: *What is one basis of American government?/The people’s right to change their government. Can people ignore the law because they don’t agree with it?/No—the Constitution as it exists should be respected, unless and until it is changed by the people.*

LESSON PLAN

Paragraph Five: *What does the people's power depend on?/The responsibility of people to obey the law.*

Paragraph Six: *What is one reason the country needs a strong government?/Its "extensive" size. What is the significance of "powers properly distributed?"/Separation of powers checks government abuse of liberty.*

- I. After all groups have presented, ask each student to write a one-sentence summary of Washington's message. Students should then share their sentences with the class.

Suggested responses:

- *The Constitution is worthy of Americans' confidence.*
- *Liberty depends on citizens obeying the law and the Constitution.*
- *The Constitution should be respected and cherished.*



V. Wrap-Up Discussion [10 minutes]

Tell students that in his Address, Washington warned Americans to "resist with care the spirit of innovation" regarding the principles of the Constitution. Ask the class if they believe Washington's message is relevant today. Why or why not?

Students may cite modern controversies about the separation of powers and which branches of government have the authority to do certain things such as declare war, outlaw certain practices, etc. Students may discuss calls for constitutional amendments and whether specific proposed amendments undermine or strengthen the spirit of the Constitution.



VI. Follow-Up Homework Options

- A. Ask students to list five qualities that George Washington had as a leader and write two or three sentences about how Washington embodied these traits.
- B. Have students choose one of the following quotes from Washington's Farewell Address and write a paragraph explaining whether they agree or disagree with Washington's idea.
1. *"And let us with caution indulge the supposition, that morality can be maintained without religion. It is substantially true, that virtue or morality is a necessary spring of popular government."*
 2. *"Promote . . . as an object of primary importance, institutions for the general diffusion of knowledge. In proportion as the structure of a government gives force to public opinion, it is essential that public opinion should be enlightened."*
 3. *"It is our true policy to steer clear of permanent alliances with any portion of the foreign world."*



VII. Extensions

- A. Have students research other historical and/or contemporary figures whom they believe embody the same kinds of leadership qualities as George Washington. Students should explain why they chose the leader(s) they did and provide specific examples of the characteristics these leaders have in common with Washington.
- B. Have students read more of Washington's Farewell Address and use it as the inspiration for their own Farewell Address that they might deliver to their school upon graduation. The text of George Washington's Farewell Address can be found at: <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/washing.htm>.

LESSON PLAN

Resources

Print

- Allen, W.B. *George Washington: A Collection*. Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1988.
- Brookhiser, Richard. *Founding Father*. New York: The Free Press, 1997.
- Ellis, Joseph J. *His Excellency: George Washington*. New York: Knopf, 2004.
- Flexner, James Thomas. *Washington: The Indispensable Man*. Reprint. Boston: Back Bay Books, 1994.
- Leibiger, Stuart. *Founding Friendship: George Washington, James Madison and the Creation of the American Republic*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2001.
- McDonald, Forrest. *The Presidency of George Washington*. Lawrence: The University Press of Kansas, 1974.

Internet

- George Washington's Mount Vernon. <<http://www.mountvernon.org/>>.
- George Washington Papers at The Library of Congress, 1741–1799. <<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/gwhtml/gwhome.html>>.
- Historic Valley Forge. USHistory.org. <<http://www.ushistory.org/valleyforge/washington/>>.
- The Papers of George Washington at The University of Virginia. <<http://gwpapers.virginia.edu/>>.
- “Rediscovering George Washington.” PBS. <<http://www.pbs.org/georgewashington/>>.

Selected Works by George Washington

- *Circular to the States* (1783)
- *First Inaugural Address* (1789)
- *Second Inaugural Address* (1793)
- *Farewell Address* (1796)

GEORGE WASHINGTON (1732–1799)

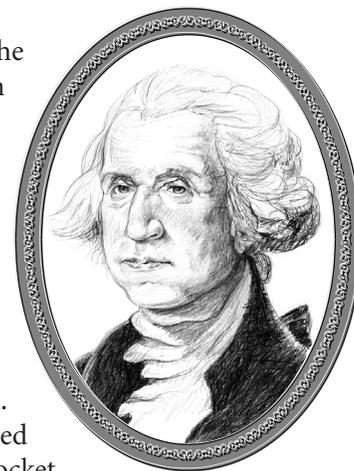
When we assumed the Soldier, we did not lay aside the Citizen.

—George Washington



George Washington had called this gathering, but the officers of the Continental Army did not expect their commander-in-chief to appear in person at the meetinghouse at Newburgh, New York. The year was 1783, and though the War for Independence had been won, Congress had failed to pay their salaries. They had been whispering for weeks about marching on Philadelphia and taking control of the government at gunpoint. Washington hoped that he could squelch the treasonous plans.

An officer was in the middle of a fiery speech when Washington appeared at the door. The room fell silent as the great commander strode to the front of the assembly and stepped onto a makeshift platform. Washington said he would read a letter from a congressman that promised the army would receive its due. Washington pulled the letter from his pocket and unfolded it. Then he hesitated and squinted at the paper in front of him. The men shuffled uneasily as their commander reached into his pocket again and removed a pair of reading glasses. Eyeglasses were considered a sign of physical weakness in the era, and Washington had worn his only in the presence of family. But now the general put them on in front of his officers for the first time. “Gentlemen,” Washington said, “you will permit me to put on my spectacles, for I have not only grown gray but nearly blind in the service of my country.” Many officers, reminded of the sacrifices made by their honorable commander, began to weep. With that, the Newburgh Conspiracy was over.



Background

George Washington was born on February 22, 1732, in Westmoreland County, Virginia. His father was a prominent planter who died when Washington was eleven years old. After his father’s death, Washington spent much of his time with his older half-brother, Lawrence, at his plantation home, Mount Vernon.

In 1752, Lawrence died, and Washington inherited the Mount Vernon Estate, which he eventually expanded to 8,000 acres. Washington owned thirty-six slaves at the time he acquired Mount Vernon. By the end of his life, he would own more than 300.

Love and War

Soon after Lawrence’s death, Washington became a major in the Virginia militia. Washington gained recognition for his bravery in combat during the French and Indian War. He was soon made commander of the entire Virginia militia. But Washington was denied the commission in the regular British army that he so desired. Disappointed, he resigned from the militia in 1758 and returned to Mount Vernon.

The next year Washington married the wealthy widow, Martha Dandridge Custis. Martha brought twenty slaves and two children to Mount Vernon. Washington spent the next fifteen years as a gentleman farmer, concentrating on expanding his plantation and improving farming methods. He also served in the House of Burgesses.

Revolution

In 1774, Washington represented Virginia at the Continental Congress. The following year, Congress selected him to be commander-in-chief of the Continental Army. Washington was a logical choice. His honored character was respected by all. He looked the part of a warrior, standing well over six feet tall with a martial demeanor. He was a Virginian, and his appointment rallied southerners to the Patriot cause.

For the next six years, Washington kept the American army alive in the face of a superior British force. In 1778, France signed a treaty of alliance with America. Three years later, Washington's force and the French navy joined together to bottle up the main British force under Lord Cornwallis at Yorktown, Virginia. With Cornwallis's surrender, the American Revolution was essentially over.

American Cato, American Cincinnatus

In 1783, Washington resigned his commission. Many observers in foreign nations were shocked. It was almost unprecedented for a victorious general to give up power voluntarily. But Washington had tried all his life to imitate two virtuous characters of ancient history.

Washington's favorite play was *Cato*, written by the Englishman Joseph Addison. The title character of the play was a Roman who died resisting the tyranny of Julius Caesar. Another ancient figure whom Washington admired was the legendary Cincinnatus. He was a Roman farmer who was called upon to take command of the republic's armies and repel Rome's enemies. After their defeat, Cincinnatus put down his sword and became a farmer once more.

Crossroads and Convention

Washington did not have a quiet retirement when he returned to Mount Vernon in 1783. Mount Vernon was a crossroads for political discussion. Guests such as James Madison and Gouverneur Morris spent hours in conversation with Washington about the state of the young nation. During these talks, Washington became convinced that the Articles of Confederation needed revision. "The confederation," Washington wrote in 1785, "appears to me to be little more than a shadow without substance."

Washington was chosen to preside over the Constitutional Convention of 1787, which was called to strengthen the central government. Though he said almost nothing during the debates, Washington's presence had important effects. First, it caused the delegates to be on their best behavior and reassured the country. It is also likely that the presidency would never have been entrusted to one person had the delegates in Independence Hall not known that Washington was certain to be the first chief executive.

The Presidency

Washington declared that the Constitution produced by the Convention was "little short of a miracle." He accepted the electoral college's unanimous decision that he be the first president. During his first term in office, Washington proved to be a nationalist on domestic issues, usually siding with his secretary of the treasury, Alexander Hamilton. The opposition to Hamilton's economic program was headed by the secretary of state, Thomas Jefferson. Political parties began to form around these two men, a development that Washington strongly disliked.

Washington's second term as president was challenged by foreign and domestic troubles. Party conflict worsened as Americans chose sides in the war between Britain and France

that broke out in 1793. But Washington was able to maintain official neutrality and keep the United States out of war. The president was also compelled to put down the Whiskey Rebellion, a tax revolt by distillers in western Pennsylvania.

“First in the Hearts of His Countrymen”

At the end of his second term as president in 1797, Washington retired to Mount Vernon for the third and final time. Tired of partisan politics, committed to rotation in the office of president, and concerned that if he died in office he would set an example that the president should serve for life, Washington chose not to seek a third term. It is often said that by doing so, he established the two-term tradition for presidents.

Washington’s prediction that he would not survive another four years proved accurate. He died of an inflamed throat on December 14, 1799. In his will, he provided for the freeing of all his slaves once Martha died. His death brought an outpouring of grief throughout America. Mock funerals were held in nearly every city, and hundreds of eulogies were given in his honor. Washington had justly earned the title, “Father of His Country.”



Reading Comprehension Questions

1. Why was Washington a logical choice to be commander-in-chief of the Continental Army?
2. What two ancient figures did Washington admire? Who were these men?
3. What important political role did Mount Vernon fulfill during the 1780s?

Critical Thinking Questions

4. How did George Washington’s actions at crucial times change the course of history?
5. In a eulogy for Washington, Henry Lee declared that the great Virginian was “first in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen.” What do you think Lee meant by this?

VOCABULARY AND CONTEXT QUESTIONS

Excerpts from the Farewell Address (1796)

1. **Vocabulary:** *Use context clues to determine the meaning or significance of each of these words and write their definitions:*
 - a. calculated
 - b. efficacious
 - c. unawed
 - d. acquiescence
 - e. enjoined
 - f. obligatory
 - g. presuppose
 - h. extensive
 - i. vigor
 - j. indispensable

2. **Context:** *Answer the following questions.*
 - a. When was this document written?
 - b. Who wrote this document?
 - c. What type of document is this?
 - d. What was the purpose of this document?

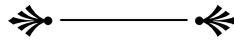
IN HIS OWN WORDS: GEORGE WASHINGTON ON THE CONSTITUTION

Excerpts from the Farewell Address (1796)

1. . . . You have improved upon your first essay, by the adoption of a constitution of government better calculated than your former for an intimate union, and for the efficacious management of your common concerns.
2. This government, the offspring of our own choice, uninfluenced and unawed, adopted upon full investigation and mature deliberation, completely free in its principles, in the distribution of its powers, uniting security with energy, and containing within itself a provision for its own amendment, has a just claim to your confidence and your support.
3. Respect for [the Constitution's] authority, compliance with its laws, acquiescence in its measures, are duties enjoined by the fundamental maxims of true liberty.
4. The basis of our political systems is the right of the people to make and to alter their constitutions of government. But the Constitution which at any time exists, till changed by an explicit and authentic act of the whole people, is sacredly obligatory upon all.
5. The very idea of the power and the right of the people to establish government presupposes the duty of every individual to obey the established government. . . .
6. In a country so extensive as ours, a government of as much vigor as is consistent with the perfect security of liberty is indispensable. Liberty itself will find in such a government, with powers properly distributed and adjusted, its surest guardian.

Source: "Washington's Farewell Address 1796." The Avalon Project at Yale Law School.
<<http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/washing.htm>>.

REPUBLICAN GOVERNMENT



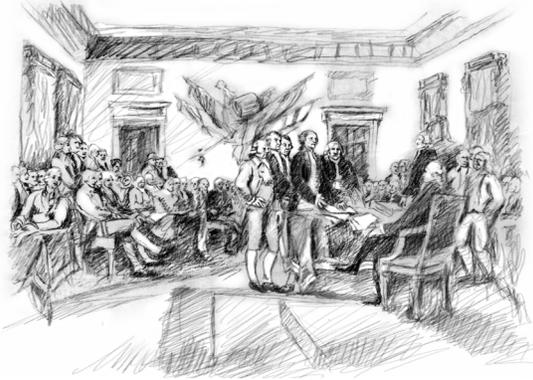
As Benjamin Franklin left Philadelphia's Convention Hall in September 1787, upon the completion of the work of the Framers of the Constitution, a woman approached him and asked the old sage of the Revolution what the delegates had created. Franklin responded, "A republic, Madame, if you can keep it." The woman's reaction to Franklin's reply is left unrecorded by history, but she might well have asked Franklin for a more detailed answer. Though the word "republic" was common currency in America at the time, the meaning of the term was imprecise, encompassing various and diverse forms of government.

Broadly, a republic meant a country not governed by a king. The root of the word is the Latin, *res publica*, meaning "the public things." "The word *republic*," Thomas Paine wrote, "means the *public good*, or the good of the whole, in contradistinction to the despotic form, which makes the good of the sovereign, or of one man, the only object of the government." In a republic, the people are sovereign, delegating certain powers to the government whose duty is to look to the general welfare of society. That citizens of a republic ought to place the common good before individual self-interest was a key assumption among Americans of the eighteenth century. "Every man in a republic," proclaimed Benjamin Rush, "is public property. His time and talents—his youth—his manhood—his old age, nay more, life, all belong to his country."

Republicanism was not an American invention. In shaping their governments, Americans looked to history, first to the ancient world, and specifically to the Israel of the Old Testament, the Roman republic, and the Greek city-states. New Englanders in particular often cited the ancient state of Israel as the world's first experiment in republican government and sometimes drew a parallel between the Twelve Tribes of Israel and the thirteen American states. In 1788, while ratification of the Constitution was being debated, one Yankee preacher gave a sermon entitled, "The Republic of the Israelites an Example

to the American States." Indeed, the Bible was cited by American authors in the eighteenth century more often than any other single source.

Americans not only knew their Bible, but also the history of the Greeks and Romans. The elite class mastered ancient languages and literature, a requirement of colleges at the time. To these men of the eighteenth century, ancient languages were not dead, nor were ancient events distant; rather, the worlds of Pericles and Polybius, Sallust and Cicero were vibrant and near. The relatively minor advancements in technology across 2,000 years—people still traveled by horse and sailing ship—



served to reinforce the bond eighteenth-century Americans felt with the ancients.

Like the Greeks and Romans of antiquity, Americans believed that government must concern itself with the character of its citizenry. Indeed, virtue was "the Soul of a republican Government," as Samuel Adams put it. Virtue had two connotations, one secular and the other sacred. The root of the word was the Latin, *vir*, meaning "man," and indeed republican virtue often referred to the display of such "manly" traits as courage and self-sacrifice for the common good. These qualities were deemed essential for a republic's survival. "A popular government," Patrick Henry proclaimed, "cannot flourish without virtue in the people." But virtue could also mean the traditional Judeo-Christian virtues, and many Americans feared that God would punish the entire nation for the sins of its people. "Without morals," Charles Carroll proclaimed, "a republic cannot subsist any length of time." New Englanders in particular sought to have society's institutions—government and schools as well as churches—inculcate such qualities as industry, frugality, temperance, and chastity in the citizenry. The Massachusetts Constitution of 1780, for example, provided for "public instructions in piety, religion, and morality."

The second ingredient of a good republic was a well-constructed government with good institutions.

“If the foundation is badly laid,” George Washington said of the American government, “the superstructure must be bad.” Americans adhered to a modified version of the idea of “mixed” government, advocated by the Greek thinker Polybius and later republican theorists. A mixed republic combined the three basic parts of society—monarchy (the one ruler), aristocracy (the rich few), and democracy (the people)—in a proper formula so that no one part could tyrannize the others. But Americans believed that the people of a republic were sovereign, so they sought to create institutions that approximated the monarchical and aristocratic elements of society. The Framers of the Constitution did just this by fashioning a single executive and a Senate once removed from the people. The problem, as John Adams pointed out in his *Thoughts on Government*, was that “the possible combinations of the powers of society are capable of innumerable variations.”

Americans had every reason to be pessimistic about their experiment in republicanism. History taught that republics were inherently unstable and vulnerable to decay. The Roman republic and the city-state of Athens, for instance, had succumbed to the temptations of empire and lost their liberty. The histories of the Florentine and Venetian republics of Renaissance Italy too had been glorious but short-lived. Theorists from the ancient Greek thinker Polybius to the seventeenth-century English radical Algernon Sidney warned that republics suffer from particular dangers that monarchies and despotisms do not. Republics were assumed to burn brightly but briefly because of their inherent instability. One element of society always usurped power and established a tyranny.

The great danger to republics, it was generally believed, stemmed from corruption, which, like virtue, had both a religious and a worldly meaning. Corruption referred, first, to the prevalence of immorality among the people. “Liberty,” Samuel Adams asserted, “will not long survive the total Extinction of Morals.”

“If the Morals of the people” were neglected, Elbridge Gerry cautioned during the crisis with England, American independence would not produce liberty but “a Slavery, far exceeding that of every other Nation.”

This kind of corruption most often resulted from avarice, the greed for material wealth. Several American colonial legislatures therefore passed

sumptuary laws, which prohibited ostentatious displays of wealth. “Luxury . . . leads to corruption,” a South Carolinian declared during the Revolutionary era, “and whoever encourages great luxury in a free state must be a bad citizen.” Another writer warned of the “ill effect of superfluous riches” on republican society. Avarice was seen as a “feminine” weakness; the lust for wealth rotted away “masculine” virtues. John Adams bemoaned “vanities, levities, and fopperies, which are real antidotes to all great, manly, and warlike virtues.”

Fear of government’s tendency to expand its power at the expense of the people’s liberty was part of Americans’ English political heritage.

The second meaning of corruption referred to placing private interest above the common good. This temptation plagued public officials most of all, who had ample opportunity to misappropriate public funds and to expand their power.

“Government was instituted for the general good,” Charles Carroll wrote, “but officers intrusted with its powers have most commonly perverted them to the selfish views of avarice and ambition.” Increasingly in the eighteenth century, Americans came to see government itself as the primary source of corruption.

Fear of government’s tendency to expand its power at the expense of the people’s liberty was part of Americans’ English political heritage. They imbibed the writings of late-seventeenth-century English radicals and eighteenth-century “country” politicians who were suspicious of the power of British officials (the “court”). Government corruption was manifested in patronage (the awarding of political office to friends), faction (the formation of parties whose interests were opposed to the common good), standing (permanent) armies, established churches, and the promotion of an elite class. Power, these country writers argued, was possessed by the government; it was aggressive and expansionist. Liberty was the property of the governed; it was sacred and delicate. The history of liberty in the world was a history of defeat by the forces of tyranny.

Though the history of republicanism was a dismal one, the lessons of history as well as their own colonial experience convinced the American Founders that they possessed sufficient information on which to base a new science of politics. “Experience must be our only guide,” John Dickinson proclaimed at the Philadelphia Convention; “reason may mislead us.” The Framers of the United States Constitution all had experience as public servants,

and it must be remembered that the document they produced did not spring forth as something entirely new in the American experience. Rather, the Founders had learned much from the operation of their colonial charters, state constitutions, and the Articles of Confederation.

At Philadelphia, the Founders focused on the proper construction of the machinery of government as the key to the building of a stable republic. The Constitution makes no mention of the need for virtue among the people, nor does it make broad appeals for self-sacrifice on behalf of the common good. It is a hard-headed document forged by practical men who had too often witnessed avarice and ambition among their peers in the state house, the courtroom, and the counting house. A good constitution, the Founders held, was the key to good government. Corruption and decay could be overcome primarily through the creation of a written constitution—something England lacked—that carefully detailed a system in which powers were separated and set in opposition to each other so that none could dominate the others.

James Madison, often called “The Father of the Constitution” because of the great influence of his ideas at Philadelphia, proposed to arrange the machinery of government in such a fashion as not to make virtue or “better motives” critical to the advancement of the common good. Acknowledging in *The Federalist Papers* that “enlightened statesmen will not always be at the helm,” Madison believed that the separate powers of government—legislative, executive, and judicial—must be set in opposition to one another, so that “ambition must be made to counteract ambition.”

“In framing a government which is to be administered by men over men,” Madison asserted, “the great difficulty lies in this: you must first enable the government to control the governed; and in the next place oblige it to control itself.”

James Wilson, representing Pennsylvania at the Philadelphia Convention, declared that the Constitution’s separation of powers and checks and balances made “it advantageous even for bad men to act for the public good.” This is not to say that the delegates believed that the republic could survive if corruption vanquished virtue in society. Madison himself emphasized the importance of republican virtue when defending the new government in *The Federalist Papers*. But the Framers

agreed with Madison that men were not angels, and most were satisfied that the Constitution, as George Washington put it, “is provided with more checks and barriers against the introduction of Tyranny . . . than any Government hitherto instituted among mortals.”

The question remained, however, whether one part of society would come to dominate. No matter how perfect the design, the danger remained that a faction would amass enough political power to take away the liberty of others. To combat this problem, classical republican theory called for creating a uniformity of opinion among the republican citizenry so that factions could not develop. The ancient Greek city-states, for example, feared anything that caused differentiation among citizens, including commerce, which tended to create inequalities of wealth and opposing interests. In contrast, Madison and the Founders recognized that factionalism would be inherent in a commercial republic that protected freedom of religion, speech, press, and assembly. They sought only to mediate the deleterious effects of faction.

Republics also were traditionally thought to be durable only when a small amount of territory was involved. The Greek city-states, the Roman republic, the Italian republics, and the American states all encompassed relatively small areas. When the Roman republic expanded in its quest for empire, tyranny was the result. Madison turned this traditional thinking on its head in *The Federalist Papers*, arguing that a large republic was more conducive to liberty because it encompassed so many interests that no single one, or combination of several, could gain control of the government.

Not all Americans accepted the Madisonian solution. Agrarians, such as Thomas Jefferson, were uncomfortable with the idea of a commercial republic centered on industry and sought to perpetuate a nation of independent farmers through the expansion of the frontier. Though uneasy about the “energetic government” created by the Constitution, Jefferson endorsed the Framers’ work after a bill of rights was added to the document. “Old republicans” like Samuel Adams and George Mason opposed the Constitution, even after the addition of a bill of rights, fearing that the power granted to the central government was too great and wistfully looking back to the Revolutionary era when virtue, not ambition, was the animating principle of government. But in 1789, as the new government went into operation,

[The Constitution] is a hard-headed document forged by practical men who had too often witnessed avarice and ambition among their peers.

most Americans shared the optimism of Benjamin Franklin, who had decided at the conclusion of the Philadelphia Convention that the sun carved into the back of the chair used by George Washington was a rising—not a setting—sun, and thereby indicative of the bright prospects of the nation.

“We have it in our power to begin the world over again,” Thomas Paine had written in 1776, during the heady days of American independence. And indeed the American Founders in 1787 were keenly aware that they possessed a rare opportunity.

Like the legendary Lycurgus of Ancient Greece, they were to be the supreme lawgivers of a new republic, a *novus ordo seclorum* or new order of the ages. The American Founders were aware that the eyes of the world and future generations were upon them, and they were determined to build an eternal republic founded in liberty, a shining city upon a hill, as an example to all nations for all time.

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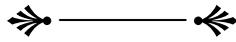
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LIMITED GOVERNMENT



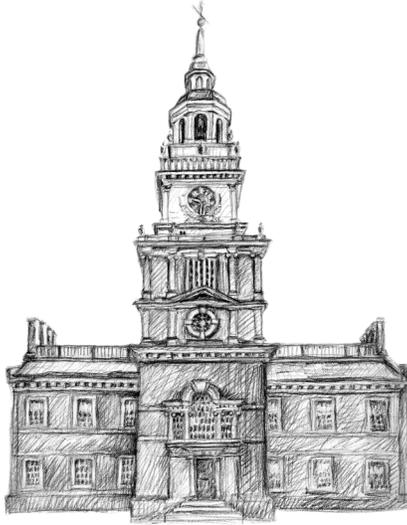
Thomas Jefferson accurately represented the convictions of his fellow colonists when he observed in the Declaration of Independence that a government, to be considered legitimate, must be based on the consent of the people and respect their natural rights to “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.” Along with other leading members of the founding generation, Jefferson understood that these principles dictated that the government be given only limited powers that, ideally, are carefully described in written charters or constitutions.

Modern theorists like John Locke and the Baron de Montesquieu had been making the case for limited government and separation of powers during the century prior to the American Revolution. Colonial Americans were quite familiar with Locke’s argument from his *Two Treatises of Government* that “Absolute Arbitrary Power, or Governing without settled standing Laws, can neither of them consist with the ends of Society and Government. . . .” Locke added that the reason people “quit the freedom of the state of Nature [is] to preserve their Lives, Liberties and Fortunes.” Civil society has no higher end than to provide for the safety and happiness of the people, and this is best done under a system of known rules or laws that apply equally to “the Rich and Poor, . . . the Favorite at Court, and the Country Man at plough.” For his part, Montesquieu argued that only where governmental power is limited in scope, and then parceled out among different departments, will people be free from oppression. Constitutional government, for modern natural rights theorists, should be limited government dedicated to the comfortable preservation of the people—that is, to their security, freedom, and prosperity.

John Adams echoed the beliefs of many Americans when he argued that only by creating a balance of forces within the government could the people hope to escape despotism and misery. An unchecked legislature, he observed, would be capable not only of making tyrannical laws, but of

executing them in a tyrannical manner as well. In his famous draft of a constitution for the commonwealth of Massachusetts, Adams declared that the “legislative, executive and judicial power shall be placed in separate departments, to the end that it might be a government of laws, and not of men.”

This document, along with his *Defence of the Constitutions of Government of the United States of America*, containing a strong case for checks and balances in government, were well known to the delegates who attended the Constitutional Convention of 1787.



James Wilson, one of the foremost legal scholars of the founding period and a delegate from Pennsylvania at the Constitutional Convention, agreed with Adams’ insistence that the power of government should be divided to the end of advancing the peace and happiness of the

people. In the words of Wilson, “In government, the perfection of the whole depends on the balance of the parts, and the balance of the parts consists in the independent exercise of their separate powers, and, when their powers are separately exercised, then in their mutual influence and operation on one another. Each part acts and is acted upon, supports and is supported, regulates and is regulated by the rest.”

Both the Articles of Confederation and the Constitution of the United States provided for governments with limited powers. As John Jay had discovered as America’s secretary of foreign affairs, the power of the central government was severely limited under the Articles and, hence, could be trusted to a unitary legislative department. Fear of governmental tyranny and a desire to preserve the power enjoyed by the new states resulted in the creation of a central government that could not effectively oversee interstate commerce or do other things that were critical to ensuring the safety and happiness of the people. In a letter to Edmund Randolph at the end of 1786, George Washington bemoaned the “awful situation of our affairs” which he attributed to “the want of sufficient power

in the foederal head.” Washington quickly joined the movement to create a new governmental system that was equal to “the exigencies of Union,” to quote from the instructions given the delegates to the Constitutional Convention of 1787.

The Constitution of 1787 grew out of a plan drafted largely by James Madison during the winter and spring before the Convention. The “Virginia Plan” proposed a central government that was supreme over the states. Evidence that the national government was to be entrusted with considerable power could be found in the provisions for a bicameral legislature and independent executive and judicial departments.

The delegates who attended the Constitutional Convention were sufficiently versed in modern political theory to understand that they would have to divide the power of the national government if they intended to entrust it with real authority over the lives of the people and the states. They understood the dangers of imparting considerable political power to a unitary sovereign. In this connection, there was never any doubt in their minds that they should create a government of “delegated and enumerated” powers, that is, that the government should only be entrusted with specified (enumerated) powers that derived directly from the people. While they worried about the “turbulence and follies” of democracy, they recognized that government had to be based on the consent of the people to be legitimate.

The Virginia Plan anticipated the bicameral legislature and independent executive and judicial departments found in the United States Constitution today. Building on Madison’s model, the delegates assigned responsibilities to the departments based on their peculiar characteristics. The six-year term of senators, for example, seemed to make this a proper institution to involve in foreign policy (e.g., ratification of treaties) since senators would have more time than members of the House of Representatives to acquaint themselves with international affairs and their longer terms and larger constituencies (entire states) also would give them more freedom to attend to matters other than the immediate interests of constituents back home. The House of Representatives was entrusted with the important power to initiate revenue (taxation) bills precisely because the members of

this chamber are tied so closely to the people by short terms and small districts.

In addition to matching powers and governmental responsibilities, the delegates were careful to position each department to “check and balance” the other departments. Examples are the executive’s veto power, the congressional impeachment power, and the judicial review power entrusted to the Supreme Court, the only national court formally established by the Constitution. Although in good Lockean fashion the legislative department was designed to be the preeminent department, it was still subjected to checks by the other branches of the government. Separation of powers as well as the system of checks and balances were devices for reducing the threat of governmental tyranny, not excluding legislative tyranny.

However, the constitutional arrangement, put into its final wording by Gouverneur Morris, was not driven entirely by a desire to eliminate the threat of tyrannical government. The system of separated and divided powers also was intended to promote competence in government. The president can employ his veto not only to check legislative action that he considers irresponsible, but to provoke Congress to improve a legislative enactment. The Senate can use its authority to ratify presidential nominations of cabinet officers or judges to ensure that qualified candidates are named to fill these positions.

Writing in *Federalist No. 9*, Alexander Hamilton identified the principle of separated and divided powers, along with checks and balances, as among the inventions of the new science of politics that had made republican government defensible. Madison described in *Federalist No. 51* the benefits of the governmental arrangement represented in the new Constitution: “In the compound republic of America, the power surrendered by the people is first divided between two distinct governments, and then the portion allotted to each subdivided among distinct and separate departments. Hence a double security arises to the rights of the people. The different governments will control each other, at the same time that each will be controlled by itself.” Significantly, Anti-Federalists as well as Federalists agreed that governmental powers should be limited and that these powers should be subject to internal as well as external checks.

There was never any doubt in their minds that they should create a government of “delegated and enumerated” powers . . .

It is important to emphasize that the Framers settled on an arrangement that divided yet blended the legislative, executive, and judicial powers. This facilitates interdepartmental checking while promoting mature deliberation. Their aim was to create a decent and competent democracy, something beyond mere non-tyrannical government. They placed the whole of the government, and even the people, under constitutional limitations. The Constitution is the supreme law of the land, not the enactments of Congress or the order of the president or the momentary will of the people. As Chief Justice Marshall declared in *Marbury v. Madison* (1803), “The distinction between a government with limited and unlimited powers is abolished, if those limits do not confine the persons on whom they are imposed, and if acts prohibited and acts allowed, are of equal obligation.” Even the

desires of the people are held in check by the Constitution. The political system still meets the criteria of democratic government, however, since the people hold the power, through their representatives, to amend the Constitution.

The paradigm of constitutional government embraced by the American people in 1787, that is, limited government based on the consent of the people and committed to the protection of fundamental rights, has become the dominant model throughout the world. The rhetoric of rights, whether couched in the language of natural rights or human rights, is universally appealing. Also universally accepted is the argument that rights are most secure when governmental powers are limited in scope and subject to internal and external checks.

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INTRODUCTORY ESSAY: EXPLAINING THE FOUNDING



In 1760, what was to become the United States of America consisted of a small group of colonies strung out along the eastern seaboard of North America. Although they had experienced significant economic and demographic growth in the eighteenth century and had just helped Britain defeat France and take control of most of North America, they remained politically and economically dependent upon London. Yet, in the next twenty-five years, they would challenge the political control of Britain, declare independence, wage a bloody war, and lay the foundations for a trans-continental, federal republican state. In these crucial years, the colonies would be led by a new generation of politicians, men who combined practical political skills with a firm grasp of political ideas. In order to better understand these extraordinary events, the Founders who made them possible, and the new Constitution that they created, it is necessary first to understand the political ideas that influenced colonial Americans in the crucial years before the Revolution.



“Parliaments and Juries.” “By the first,” Penn argued, “the subject has a share by his chosen Representatives in the Legislative (or Law making) Power.” Penn felt that the granting of consent through Parliament was important because it ensured that “no new Laws bind the People of England, but such as are by common consent agreed on in that great Council.”

In Penn’s view, juries were an equally important means of limiting arbitrary power. By serving on juries, Penn argued, every freeman “has a share in the *Executive* part of the Law, no Causes being tried, nor any man adjudged to loose [*sic*] Life, member or Estate, but upon the *Verdict* of his Peers or Equals.” For Penn, “These two grand Pillars of English Liberty” were “the *Fundamental vital Priviledges* [*sic*]” of Englishmen.

The other aspect of their government that seventeenth-century Englishmen celebrated was a system that was ruled by laws and not by men. As Penn rather colorfully put it: “In France, and other Nations, the meer [*sic*] Will of the Prince is Law, his Word takes off any mans Head, imposeth Taxes, or seizes a mans Estate, when, how and as often as he lists; and if one be accused [*sic*], or but so much as suspected of any Crime, he may either presently Execute him, or banish, or Imprison him at pleasure.” By contrast, “*In England*,” Penn argued, “the Law is both the measure and the bound of every Subject’s Duty and Allegiance, each man having a fixed Fundamental-Right born with him, as to Freedom of his Person and Property in his Estate, which he cannot be deprived of, but either by his Consent, or some Crime, for which the Law has impos’d such a penalty or forfeiture.”

This common law view of politics understood political power as fundamentally *limited* by Englishmen’s rights and privileges. As a result, it held that English kings were bound to rule according to known laws and by respecting the inherent rights of their subjects. It also enshrined the concept of consent as the major means to the end of protecting these rights. According to Penn and his contemporaries, this system of government—protecting as it did the “unparallel’d

THE COMMON LAW AND THE RIGHTS OF ENGLISHMEN

The political theory of the American colonists in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was deeply influenced by English common law and its idea of rights. In a guide for religious dissenters written in the late seventeenth century, William Penn, the founder of Pennsylvania, offered one the best contemporary summaries of this common-law view of rights. According to Penn, all Englishmen had three central rights or privileges by common law: those of life, liberty, and property. For Penn, these English rights meant that every subject was “to be freed in Person & Estate from Arbitrary Violence and Oppression.” In the widely used language of the day, these rights of “Liberty and Property” were an Englishman’s “Birthright.”

In Penn’s view, the English system of government preserved liberty and limited arbitrary power by allowing the subjects to express their *consent* to the laws that bound them through two institutions:

Privilege [*sic*] of Liberty and Property”—had made the English nation “more free and happy than any other People in the World.”

The Founders imbibed this view of English rights through the legal training that was common for elites in the eighteenth-century Anglo-American world. This legal education also made them aware of the history of England in the seventeenth century, a time when the Stuart kings had repeatedly threatened their subjects’ rights. In response, many Englishmen drew on the common law to argue that all political power, even that of a monarch, should be limited by law. Colonial Americans in the eighteenth century viewed the defeat of the Stuarts and the subsequent triumph of Parliament (which was seen as the representative of subjects’ rights) in the Glorious Revolution of 1688 as a key moment in English history. They believed that it had enshrined in England’s unwritten constitution the rule of law and the sanctity of subjects’ rights. This awareness of English history instilled in the Founders a strong fear of arbitrary power and a consequent desire to create a constitutional form of government that limited the possibility of rulers violating the fundamental liberties of the people.

The seriousness with which the colonists took these ideas can be seen in their strong opposition to Parliament’s attempt to tax or legislate for them without their consent in the 1760s and 1770s. After the Revolution, when the colonists formed their own governments, they wrote constitutions that included many of the legal guarantees that Englishmen had fought for in the seventeenth century as a means of limiting governmental power. As a consequence, both the state and federal constitutions typically contained bills of rights that enshrined core English legal rights as fundamental law.

NATURAL RIGHTS

The seventeenth century witnessed a revolution in European political thought, one that was to prove profoundly influential on the political ideas of the American Founders. Beginning with the Dutch writer Hugo Grotius in the early 1600s, several important European thinkers began to construct a new understanding of political theory that argued that all men by *nature* had equal rights, and that governments were formed for the sole purpose of protecting these natural rights.

The leading proponent of this theory in the English-speaking world was John Locke (1632–1704). Deeply involved in the opposition to the Stuart kings in the 1670s and 1680s, Locke wrote a book on political theory to justify armed resistance to Charles II and his brother James. “To understand political power right,” Locke wrote, “and derive it from its original, we must consider, what state all men are naturally in, and that is, a state of perfect freedom to order their actions, and dispose of their possessions and persons, as they think fit, within the bounds of the law of nature, without asking leave, or depending upon the will of any other man.” For Locke, the state of nature was “a state also of equality, wherein all the power and jurisdiction is reciprocal, no one having more than another.”

The political theory of the American colonists in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was deeply influenced by English common law and its idea of rights.

Although this pregovernmental state of nature was a state of perfect freedom, Locke contended that it also lacked an impartial judge or umpire to regulate disputes among

men. As a result, men in this state of nature gathered together and consented to create a government in order that their natural rights would be better secured. Locke further argued that, because it was the people who had created the government, the people had a right to resist its authority if it violated their rights. They could then join together and exercise their collective or popular sovereignty to create a new government of their own devising. This revolutionary political theory meant that ultimate political authority belonged to the people and not to the king.

This idea of natural rights became a central component of political theory in the American colonies in the eighteenth century, appearing in numerous political pamphlets, newspapers, and sermons. Its emphasis on individual freedom and government by consent combined powerfully with the older idea of common law rights to shape the political theory of the Founders. When faced with the claims of the British Parliament in the 1760s and 1770s to legislate for them without their consent, American patriots invoked both the common law and Lockean natural rights theory to argue that they had a right to resist Britain.

Thomas Jefferson offers the best example of the impact that these political ideas had on the founding. As he so eloquently argued in the Declaration of Independence: “We hold these

truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundations on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness.”

This idea of natural rights also influenced the course of political events in the crucial years after 1776. All the state governments put this new political theory into practice, basing their authority on the people, and establishing written constitutions that protected natural rights. As George Mason, the principal author of the influential Virginia Bill of Rights (1776), stated in the document’s first section: “All men are by nature equally free and independent, and have certain inherent rights, of which, when they enter into a state of society, they cannot, by any compact, deprive or divest their posterity; namely, the enjoyment of life and liberty, with the means of acquiring and possessing property, and pursuing and obtaining happiness and safety.” The radical implications of this insistence on equal natural rights would slowly become apparent in postrevolutionary American society as previously downtrodden groups began to invoke these ideals to challenge slavery, argue for a wider franchise, end female legal inequality, and fully separate church and state.

In 1780, under the influence of John Adams, Massachusetts created a mechanism by which the people themselves could exercise their sovereign power to constitute governments: a special convention convened solely for the purpose of writing a constitution, followed by a process of ratification. This American innovation allowed the ideas of philosophers like Locke to be put into practice. In particular, it made the people’s natural rights secure by enshrining them in a constitution which was not changeable by ordinary legislation. This method was to influence the authors of the new federal Constitution in 1787.

RELIGIOUS TOLERATION AND THE SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE

A related development in seventeenth-century European political theory was the emergence of arguments for religious toleration and the separation of church and state. As a result of the bloody religious wars between Catholics and Protestants that followed the Reformation, a few thinkers in both England and Europe argued that governments should not attempt to force individuals to conform to one form of worship. Rather, they insisted that such coercion was both unjust and dangerous. It was unjust because true faith required voluntary belief; it was dangerous because the attempts to enforce religious beliefs in Europe

had led not to religious uniformity, but to civil war. These thinkers further argued that if governments ceased to enforce religious belief, the result would be civil peace and prosperity.

Once again the English philosopher John Locke

played a major role in the development of these new ideas. Building on the work of earlier writers, Locke published in 1689 *A Letter Concerning Toleration*, in which he contended that there was a natural right of conscience that no government could infringe. As he put it: “The care of Souls cannot belong to the Civil Magistrate, because his Power consists only in outward force; but true and saving Religion consists in the inward persuasion [*sic*] of the Mind, without which nothing can be acceptable to God. And such is the nature of the Understanding, that it cannot be compell’d to the belief of any thing by outward force. Confiscation of Estate, Imprisonment, Torments, nothing of that nature can have any such Efficacy as to make Men change the inward Judgment that they have formed of things.”

These ideas about the rights of conscience and religious toleration resonated powerfully in the English colonies in America. Although the Puritans in the seventeenth century had originally attempted to set up an intolerant commonwealth where unorthodox religious belief would be prohibited, dissenters like Roger Williams challenged them and argued that true faith could not be the product of coercion. Forced to flee by the Puritans, Williams established the colony of Rhode Island, which offered religious toleration to all and had no state-supported church. As the Puritan Cotton Mather sarcastically remarked,

Natural rights became a central component of political theory in the American colonies . . . , appearing in numerous political pamphlets, newspapers, and sermons.

Rhode Island contained “everything in the world but Roman Catholics and real Christians.” In addition, Maryland, founded in the 1630s, and Pennsylvania, founded in the 1680s, both provided an extraordinary degree of religious freedom by the standard of the time.

In the eighteenth century, as these arguments for religious toleration spread throughout the English-speaking Protestant world, the American colonies, becoming ever more religiously pluralistic, proved particularly receptive to them. As a result, the idea that the government should not enforce religious belief had become an important element of American political theory by the late eighteenth century. After the Revolution, it was enshrined as a formal right in many of the state constitutions, as well as most famously in the First Amendment to the federal Constitution.

By reading the classics, the American Founders were introduced to an alternate political vision, one that legitimated republicanism.

COLONIAL SELF-GOVERNMENT

The political thinking of the Founders in the late eighteenth century was also deeply influenced by the long experience of colonial self-government. Since their founding in the early seventeenth century, most of the English colonies in the Americas (unlike the French and Spanish colonies) had governed themselves to a large extent in local assemblies that were modeled on the English Parliament. In these colonial assemblies they exercised their English common law right to consent to all laws that bound them.

The existence of these strong local governments in each colony also explains in part the speed with which the Founders were able to create viable independent republican governments in the years after 1776. This long-standing practice of self-government also helped to create an indigenous political class in the American colonies with the requisite experience for the difficult task of nation building.

In addition to the various charters and royal instructions that governed the English colonies, Americans also wrote their own Founding documents. These settler covenants were an early type of written constitution and they provided an important model for the Founders in the late eighteenth century as they sought to craft a new constitutional system based on popular consent.

CLASSICAL REPUBLICANISM

Not all the intellectual influences on the Founders originated in the seventeenth century. Because many of the Founders received a classical education in colonial colleges in the eighteenth century, they were heavily influenced by the writings of the great political thinkers and historians of ancient Greece and Rome.

Antiquity shaped the Founders’ political thought in several important ways. First, it introduced them to the idea of republicanism, or government by the people. Ancient political thinkers from Aristotle to Cicero had praised republican self-government as the best political system. This classical political thought was important for the Founders as it gave them grounds to dissent from the heavily monarchical political culture of eighteenth-century England, where even the common law jurists who defended subjects’ rights against royal power believed strongly in monarchy. By reading the classics, the American Founders were introduced to an alternate political vision, one that legitimized republicanism.

The second legacy of this classical idea of republicanism was the emphasis that it put on the moral foundations of liberty. Though ancient writers believed that a republic was the best form of government, they were intensely aware of its fragility. In particular, they argued that because the people governed themselves, republics required for their very survival a high degree of civic virtue in their citizenry. Citizens had to be able to put the good of the whole (the *res publica*) ahead of their own private interests. If they failed to do this, the republic would fall prey to men of power and ambition, and liberty would ultimately be lost.

As a result of this need for an exceptionally virtuous citizenry, ancient writers also taught that republics had to be small. Only in a small and relatively homogeneous society, they argued, would the necessary degree of civic virtue be forthcoming. In part, it was this classical teaching about the weakness of large republics that animated the contentious debate over the proposed federal Constitution in the 1780s.

In addition to their reading of ancient authors, the Founders also encountered republican ideas in

the political theory of a group of eighteenth-century English writers called the “radical Whigs.” These writers kept alive the republican legacy of the English Civil War at a time when most Englishmen believed that their constitutional monarchy was the best form of government in the world. Crucially for the Founding, these radical Whigs combined classical republican thought with the newer Lockean ideas of natural rights and popular sovereignty. They thus became an important conduit for a modern type of republicanism to enter American political thought, one that combined the ancient concern with a virtuous citizenry and the modern insistence on the importance of individual rights.

These radical Whigs also provided the Founders with an important critique of the eighteenth-century British constitution. Instead of seeing it as the best form of government possible, the radical Whigs argued that it was both corrupt

and tyrannical. In order to reform it, they called for a written constitution and a formal separation of the executive branch from the legislature. This classically inspired radical Whig constitutionalism was an important influence on the development of American republicanism in the late eighteenth century.

CONCLUSION

Drawing on all these intellectual traditions, the Founders were able to create a new kind of republicanism in America based on equal rights, consent, popular sovereignty, and the separation of church and state. Having set this broad context for the Founding, we now turn to a more detailed examination of important aspects of the Founders’ political theory, followed by detailed biographical studies of the Founders themselves.

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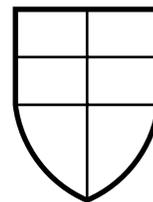
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ADDITIONAL CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

Visual Assessment

1. **Founders Posters**—Have students create posters for either an individual Founder, a group of Founders, or an event. Ask them to include at least one quotation (different from classroom posters that accompany this volume) and one image.
2. **Coat of Arms**—Draw a coat of arms template and divide into 6 quadrants (see example). Photocopy and hand out to the class. Ask them to create a coat of arms for a particular Founder with a different criterion for each quadrant (e.g., occupation, key contribution, etc.). Include in the assignment an explanation sheet in which they describe why they chose certain colors, images, and symbols.
3. **Individual Illustrated Timeline**—Ask each student to create a visual timeline of at least ten key points in the life of a particular Founder. In class, put the students in groups and have them discuss the intersections and juxtapositions in each of their timelines.
4. **Full Class Illustrated Timeline**—Along a full classroom wall, tape poster paper in one long line. Draw in a middle line and years (i.e., 1760, 1770, 1780, etc.). Put students in pairs and assign each pair one Founder. Ask them to put together ten key points in the life of the Founder. Have each pair draw in the key points on the master timeline.
5. **Political Cartoon**—Provide students with examples of good political cartoons, contemporary or historical. A good resource for finding historical cartoons on the Web is <http://www.boondocksnet.com/gallery/political_cartoons.html>. Ask them to create a political cartoon based on an event or idea in the Founding period.



Performance Assessments

1. **Meeting of the Minds**—Divide the class into five groups and assign a Founder to each group. Ask the group to discuss the Founder's views on a variety of pre-determined topics. Then, have a representative from each group come to the front of the classroom and role-play as the Founder, dialoguing with Founders from other groups. The teacher will act as moderator, reading aloud topic questions (based on the pre-determined topics given to the groups) and encouraging discussion from the students in character. At the teacher's discretion, questioning can be opened up to the class as a whole. For advanced students, do not provide a list of topics—ask them to know their character well enough to present him properly on all topics.
2. **Create a Song or Rap**—Individually or in groups, have students create a song or rap about a Founder based on a familiar song, incorporating at least five key events or ideas of the Founder in their project. Have students perform their song in class. (Optional: Ask the students to bring in a recording of the song for background music.)

Web/Technology Assessments

1. **Founders PowerPoint Presentation**—Divide students into groups. Have each group create a PowerPoint presentation about a Founder or event. Determine the number of slides, and assign a theme to each slide (e.g., basic biographic information, major contributions, political philosophy, quotations, repercussions of the event, participants in the event, etc.). Have them hand out copies of the slides and give the presentation to the class. You may also ask for a copy of the

presentation to give you the opportunity to combine all the presentations into an end-of-semester review.

2. **Evaluate Web sites**—Have students search the Web for three sites related to a Founder or the Founding period (you may provide them with a “start list” from the resource list at the end of each lesson). Create a Web site evaluation sheet that includes such questions as: Are the facts on this site correct in comparison to other sites? What sources does this site draw on to produce its information? Who are the main contributors to this site? When was the site last updated? Ask students to grade the site according to the evaluation sheet and give it a grade for reliability, accuracy, etc. They should write a 2–3 sentence explanation for their grade.
3. **Web Quest**—Choose a Web site(s) on the Constitution, Founders, or Founding period. (See suggestions below.) Go to the Web site(s) and create a list of questions taken from various pages within the site. Provide students with the Web address and list of questions, and ask them to find answers to the questions on the site, documenting on which page they found their answer. Web site suggestions:
 - The Avalon Project <<http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/avalon.htm>>
 - The Founders’ Constitution <<http://press-pubs.uchicago.edu/founders/>>
 - Founding.com <<http://www.founding.com/>>
 - National Archives Charters of Freedom <http://www.archives.gov/national_archives_experience/charters.html>
 - The Library of Congress American Memory Page <<http://memory.loc.gov/>>
 - Our Documents <<http://www.ourdocuments.gov/>>
 - Teaching American History <<http://www.teachingamericanhistory.org/>>

A good site to help you construct the Web Quest is: <<http://trackstar.hprtec.org>>

Verbal Assessments

1. **Contingency in History**—In a one-to-two page essay, have students answer the question, “How would history have been different if [Founder] had not been born?” They should consider repercussions for later events in the political world.
2. **Letters Between Founders**—Ask students to each choose a “Correspondence Partner” and decide which two Founders they will be representing. Have them read the appropriate Founders essays and primary source activities. Over a period of time, the pair should then write at least three letters back and forth (with a copy being given to the teacher for review and feedback). Instruct them to be mindful of their Founders’ tone and writing style, life experience, and political views in constructing the letters.
3. **Categorize the Founders**—Create five categories for the Founders (e.g., slaveholders vs. non-slaveholders, northern vs. southern, opponents of the Constitution vs. proponents of the Constitution, etc.) and a list of Founders studied. Ask students to place each Founder in the appropriate category. For advanced students, ask them to create the five categories in addition to categorizing the Founders.
4. **Obituaries and Gravestones**—Have students write a short obituary or gravestone engraving that captures the major accomplishments of a Founder (e.g., Thomas Jefferson’s gravestone). Ask them to consider for what the Founder wished to be remembered.
5. **“I Am” Poem**—Instruct students to select a Founder and write a poem that refers to specific historical events in his life (number of lines at the teacher’s discretion).

ADDITIONAL CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

Each line of the poem must begin with “I” (i.e., “I am...,” “I wonder...,” “I see...,” etc.). Have them present their poem with an illustration of the Founder.

6. **Founder’s Journal**—Have students construct a journal of a Founder at a certain period in time. Ask them to pick out at least five important days. In the journal entry, make sure they include the major events of the day, the Founder’s feelings about the events, and any other pertinent facts (e.g., when writing a journal about the winter at Valley Forge, Washington may have included information about the troops’ morale, supplies, etc.).
7. **Résumé for a Founder**—Ask students to create a resume for a particular Founder. Make sure they include standard resume information (e.g., work experience, education, skills, accomplishments/honors, etc.). You can also have them research and bring in a writing sample (primary source) to accompany the resume.
8. **Cast of Characters**—Choose an event in the Founding Period (e.g., the signing of the Declaration of Independence, the debate about the Constitution in a state ratifying convention, etc.) and make a list of individuals related to the incident. Tell students that they are working for a major film studio in Hollywood that has decided to make a movie about this event. They have been hired to cast actors for each part. Have students fill in your list of individuals with actors/actresses (past or present) with an explanation of why that particular actor/actress was chosen for the role. (Ask the students to focus on personality traits, previous roles, etc.)

Review Activities

1. **Founders Jeopardy**—Create a Jeopardy board on an overhead sheet or handout (six columns and five rows). Label the column heads with categories and fill in all other squares with a dollar amount. Make a sheet that corresponds to the Jeopardy board with the answers that you will be revealing to the class. (Be sure to include Daily Doubles.)
 - a. Possible categories may include:
 - Thomas Jefferson (or the name of any Founder)
 - Revolutionary Quirks (fun Founders facts)
 - Potpourri (miscellaneous)
 - Pen is Mightier (writings of the Founders)
 - b. Example answers:
 - This Founder drafted and introduced the first formal proposal for a permanent union of the thirteen colonies. *Question: Who is Benjamin Franklin?*
 - This Founder was the only Roman Catholic to sign the Declaration of Independence. *Question: Who is Charles Carroll?*
2. **Who Am I?**—For homework, give each student a different Founder essay. Ask each student to compile a list of five-to-ten facts about his/her Founder. In class, ask individuals to come to the front of the classroom and read off the facts one at a time, prompting the rest of the class to guess the appropriate Founder.
3. **Around the World**—Develop a list of questions about the Founders and plot a “travel route” around the classroom in preparation for this game. Ask one student to volunteer to go first. The student will get up from his/her desk and “travel” along the route plotted to an adjacent student’s desk, standing next to it. Read a question aloud, and the first student of the two to answer correctly advances to the next stop on the travel route. Have the students keep track of how many places they advance. Whoever advances the furthest wins.

AN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY GLOSSARY

Common Good: General conditions that are equally to everyone’s advantage. In a **republic**, held to be superior to the good of the individual, though its attainment ought never to violate the **natural rights** of any individual.

Democracy: From the Greek, *demos*, meaning “rule of the people.” Had a negative connotation among most Founders, who equated the term with mob rule. The Founders considered it to be a form of government into which poorly-governed **republics** degenerated.

English Rights: Considered by Americans to be part of their inheritance as Englishmen; included such rights as property, petition, and trials by jury. Believed to exist from time immemorial and recognized by various English charters as the Magna Carta, the Petition of Right of 1628, and the English Bill of Rights of 1689.

Equality: Believed to be the condition of all people, who possessed an equality of rights. In practical matters, restricted largely to land-owning white men during the Founding Era, but the principle worked to undermine ideas of deference among classes.

Faction: A small group that seeks to benefit its members at the expense of the **common good**. The Founders discouraged the formation of factions, which they equated with political parties.

Federalism: A political system in which power is divided between two levels of government, each supreme in its own sphere. Intended to avoid the concentration of power in the central government and to preserve the power of local government.

Government: Political power fundamentally limited by citizens’ rights and privileges. This limiting was accomplished by written charters or constitutions and bills of rights.

Happiness: The ultimate end of government. Attained by living in **liberty** and by practicing **virtue**.

Inalienable Rights: Rights that can never justly be taken away.

Independence: The condition of living in **liberty** without being subject to the unjust rule of another.

Liberty: To live in the enjoyment of one’s rights without dependence upon anyone else. Its enjoyment led to **happiness**.

Natural Rights: Rights individuals possess by virtue of their humanity. Were thought to be “**inalienable**.” Protected by written constitutions and bills of rights that restrained government.

Property: Referred not only to material possessions, but also to the ownership of one’s body and rights. Jealously guarded by Americans as the foundation of liberty during the crisis with Britain.

Reason: Human intellectual capacity and rationality. Believed by the Founders to be the defining characteristic of humans, and the means by which they could understand the world and improve their lives.

Religious Toleration: The indulgence shown to one religion while maintaining a privileged position for another. In pluralistic America, religious uniformity could not be enforced so religious toleration became the norm.

Representation: Believed to be central to republican government and the preservation of **liberty**. Citizens, entitled to vote, elect officials who are responsible to them, and who govern according to the law.

Republic: From the Latin, *res publica*, meaning “the public things.” A government system in which power resides in the people who elect representatives responsible to them and who govern according to the law. A form of government dedicated to promoting the **common good**. Based on the people, but distinct from a **democracy**.

Separation of Church and State: The doctrine that government should not enforce religious belief. Part of the concept of **religious toleration** and freedom of conscience.

Separation of Powers/Checks and Balances: A way to restrain the power of government by balancing the interests of one section of government against the competing interests of another section. A key component of the federal Constitution. A means of slowing down the operation of government, so it did not possess too much energy and thus endanger the rights of the people.

Slavery: Referred both to chattel slavery and political slavery. Politically, the fate that befell those who did not guard their rights against governments. Socially and economically, an institution that challenged the belief of the Founders in **natural rights**.

Taxes: Considered in English tradition to be the free gift of the people to the government. Americans refused to pay them without their consent, which meant actual **representation** in Parliament.

Tyranny: The condition in which **liberty** is lost and one is governed by the arbitrary will of another. Related to the idea of political **slavery**.

Virtue: The animating principle of a **republic** and the quality essential for a republic’s survival. From the Latin, *vir*, meaning “man.” Referred to the display of such “manly” traits as courage and self-sacrifice for the **common good**.

ANSWER KEY

3. Religion is needed to teach virtue, and virtue is required for the liberty of republican society.
4. Citizens must actively participate in republican government, which is not the case in monarchies.
5. History, commerce, and economics should be taught.
6. In addition to regular female education subjects, women should learn about government. As wives and mothers, they are men's support systems, and they mold young children into republican citizens.
7. Religion, liberty, and learning are inseparable, and have immeasurable positive effects on the happiness of society.

Handout D—Analysis: Contrasting Ideas of Education

Suggested answers for goals of education in Rush's time: a homogeneous society; creating citizens who can participate in republican government; instilling virtue; teaching history, commerce, and economics; preparing girls for the roles as wives and mothers; mixing religion and learning; creating a happy society.

GEORGE WASHINGTON

Handout A—George Washington (1732–1799)

1. Washington's great character was respected by all. He looked the part of a warrior, standing well over six feet tall and possessing a martial demeanor. He was a Virginian, and his appointment to command an army made up largely of New Englanders rallied southerners to the Patriot cause. Also, as a legislator, he had the confidence of the Congress, who knew that he would ensure military obedience to civilian authority.
2. Washington admired Cato and Cincinnatus. Cato was a Roman who died resisting the tyranny of Julius Caesar.

Washington also emulated the legendary Cincinnatus. He was a Roman farmer who was called upon to take command of the republic's armies and repel Rome's enemies. After helping to secure victory, Cincinnatus put down his sword and became a farmer once more.

3. Mount Vernon was a crossroads for political discussion during the 1780s. Prominent guests, such as James Madison and Gouverneur Morris, spent hours in conversation with Washington about the state of the young nation. During these talks, Washington became convinced that the Articles of Confederation needed revision.
4. Students might mention the following events: the Newburgh Conspiracy, Washington's leadership of the Continental Army, his attendance at the Constitutional Convention, his acceptance of the presidency.
5. Lee meant that Washington was always a leader. Washington commanded the Continental Army during the Revolutionary War and was primarily responsible for the success of the cause. He also led Americans in peace, presiding at the Constitutional Convention and serving as the nation's first president. Washington was certainly "first in the hearts of his countrymen," beloved by nearly all Americans.

Handout B—Vocabulary and Context Questions

1. Vocabulary
 - a. purposefully designed
 - b. effective
 - c. freely made
 - d. passive compliance
 - e. tasked
 - f. required
 - g. assume beforehand
 - h. broad
 - i. strength
 - j. absolutely necessary

ANSWER KEY

2. Context

- a. This document was written in 1796, near the end of Washington's second term as President.
- b. George Washington wrote this document with Alexander Hamilton and James Madison.
- c. This is a speech—though it was never delivered aloud. Rather, it was printed in newspapers across the country.
- d. The purpose of this document was for Washington to advise the new country on how best to sustain its new government.

JAMES WILSON

Handout A—James Wilson (1742–1798)

1. James Wilson asserted that the Constitution was as close to perfection as such a document could be. He and other Federalists did not believe a separate bill of rights was needed. If only certain rights were spelled out in a bill of rights, it would be too easy to assume rights not listed were relinquished.
2. James Wilson is credited with the compromise of the Electoral College. This system of presidential election blended state authority with popular sovereignty and made sure that states did not have complete power over choosing the president.
3. President Washington appointed James Wilson as Associate Justice of the Supreme Court. Wilson had lobbied for the office of Chief Justice. Washington, however, felt Wilson's reputation was too tainted to serve in that high position.
4. Wilson's idea that, with the Declaration of Independence, states gave up their power to the people, was radical because it meant that the citizens of the various states were ultimately all citizens of the United States. Wilson's position that the new national government should be

seen as based on popular sovereignty and not state sovereignty represented a significant shift from the situation that existed under the Articles of Confederation. Some, such as Patrick Henry and Thomas Jefferson, disagreed with Wilson and continued to argue long after the Convention that substantial power should be reserved to the individual states.

5. Students should explain why they do or do not feel like citizens of their specific state. Some students will be interested in their state's chief industries, some students will enjoy the common pastimes of their state: going to the beach in Florida, going skiing in Colorado, and so on. Others will feel that the values that unite Americans outweigh the specific interests of their state.

Handout B—Vocabulary and Context Questions

1. Vocabulary
 - a. justice system
 - b. approve
 - c. deterrents
 - d. restraint
 - e. lessened
 - f. baseless
 - g. contrary
 - h. discovering
 - i. cowardly
 - j. hateful
 - k. well-being
2. Context
 - a. James Wilson wrote this document.
 - b. This document was written in 1791.
 - c. This is a set of instructions to a grand jury, explaining Wilson's views on punishment.
 - d. The purpose of this document was to explain Wilson's view on the importance of mild and moderate punishment.