

INFLUENCES ON AMERICA’S CONSTITUTIONAL REPUBLIC
<p>SS.7.CG.1.1 Analyze the influences of ancient Greece, ancient Rome and the Judeo- Christian tradition on America’s constitutional republic.</p>

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2023 BENCHMARK UPDATES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New benchmark added to the 2023-2024 middle school civics and government standards

Essential Teacher Content Background Information

[Teacher Content Notes Not Appropriate For Student Use]

This section addresses the following topics:

1. The Influence of Ancient Greece and Ancient Rome on America's Constitutional Republic
2. Comparing the Democratic Principles of Ancient Greece and Ancient Rome to the United States
3. The Influence of the Judeo-Christian Ethical Ideas of Justice, Individual Worth, Personal Responsibility and the Rule of Law on America's Constitutional Republic

1. The Influence of Ancient Greece and Ancient Rome on America's Constitutional Republic

America's constitutional republic was developed around various democratic principles including civic (citizen) participation, legislative bodies, city-state (polis, government close to the people), voting rights, and a written constitution. These principles reinforce that the government is formed by the people and answers to the people. It is notable that not all those who were governed in ancient Greece and ancient Rome were reflected in these principles because they were children, slaves, or women, who were not granted the full rights of citizenship in these societies. America's constitutional republic reflected these same approaches, where U.S. governing documents, including the U.S. Constitution, were developed around democracy and republicanism, yet these documents were written by those seeking to exclude most people being governed from having a say in how they were governed (children, women, slaves).

"Democracy" is a Greek concept focusing on a system of government in which political power is held by the people. Democracy contrasts with "aristocracy", the governing approach first taken by the ancient Greeks, which grants political power to aristocrats (nobles) because they were considered most qualified to govern because of their intelligence.

Yet cities were geographically separated in ancient Greece, which fostered the formation of small independent governments (polis or city-state). Eventually, Athens developed into a direct democracy (the power to govern is directly in the hands of the people rather than elected representatives) after beginning as an oligarchy (total power is held by a small group of wealthy elites, often characterized by a few corrupt persons).

Like ancient Greece, ancient Rome was first controlled by elites (a tyrannical king) after which ancient Rome transitioned to a republican (representative) form of government where the people (excluding children, slaves and women) elected representatives to make laws for them. The Roman Republic divided the government into three separate and distinct branches (separation of powers), with the ability to check and balance, or limit the powers of the other branches. Both ancient Rome and ancient Greece had written constitutions that established the rule of law.

2. Comparing the Democratic Principles of Ancient Greece and Ancient Rome to the United States

The democratic contributions from ancient Greece (direct democracy, republicanism) and ancient Rome (checks and balances, separation of powers, rule of law) were infused by the United States into many of its founding principles and documents. The United States, like Rome, has a republican form of government, with aspects of direct democracy like that which was practiced in Athens. The U.S. Constitution outlines how the government will be structured by using separation of powers to create three branches of government, the legislative branch to create laws, the executive branch to enforce laws, and the judicial branch to interpret laws; and within each branch of government, a system of checks and balances to limit their power and prevent them

from becoming too powerful.

3. The Influence of the Judeo-Christian Ethical Ideas of Justice, Individual Worth, Personal Responsibility and the Rule of Law on America's Constitutional Republic

The influence of Judeo-Christian ethical ideas on America's constitutional republic is rooted in the principles, ideas, and concepts outlined in founding documents such as the Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution, and the American legal system. These ethical ideas include justice, fairness, equality, and the value of individuals. These ideas are found within the founding documents such as the Preamble of the Declaration of Independence, which highlights a belief in individual worth by stating that all people have certain natural rights that cannot be taken away by government.

The idea of personal responsibility in both Jewish and Christian religious traditions holds individuals accountable for their actions. This same principle is reflected in the U.S. legal system as individuals are held legally responsible and accountable for their actions.

The rule of law is reflected in both Jewish and Christian religious traditions, such as in the Ten Commandments. Many of the Ten Commandments are reflected in U.S. law such as laws against murder, theft, and deception, such as by lying in court.

Lesson Summary

ESSENTIAL QUESTION		
How did ancient Greece, ancient Rome and the Judeo-Christian tradition influence America's constitutional republic?		
BENCHMARK		
SS.7.CG.1.1 Analyze the influences of ancient Greece, ancient Rome and the Judeo-Christian tradition on America's constitutional republic.		
CIVICS EOC REPORTING CATEGORY		
N/A		
OVERVIEW		
In this lesson, students will understand how ancient Greece, ancient Rome, and the Judeo-Christian tradition influenced the framing of America's constitutional republic.		
BENCHMARK CLARIFICATIONS		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students will explain the influence of ancient Greece on America's constitutional republic (e.g., civic participation, legislative bodies, polis, voting rights, written constitution). Students will explain the influence of ancient Rome on America's constitutional republic (e.g., civic participation, republicanism, representative government, rule of law, separation of powers). Students will compare and contrast the democratic principles of ancient Greece and ancient Rome with those of the United States. Students will explain how the Judeo-Christian ethical ideas of justice, individual worth, personal responsibility and the rule of law influenced America's constitutional republic. 		
BENCHMARK CONTENT LIMITS		
N/A		
CIVICS CONTENT VOCABULARY		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> checks and balances, civic participation, civic virtue, constitutional republic, democracy, Framers, individual worth, justice, legislative bodies, personal responsibility, polis, representative government, republicanism, rule of law, separation of powers, voting rights, written constitution 		
INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES		
Reading complex text	Group discussion	Act-it-out
MATERIALS		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highlighters Timer (optional) Constitutional Convention image 		

- Stepping Into History Scripts
- Historical Influences Activity Packet
- Historical Influences on America's Constitutional Republic reading

B.E.S.T. STANDARDS

- ELA.7.R.2.2- Compare two or more central ideas and their development throughout a text.
- ELA.7.R.3.2- Paraphrase content from grade-level texts.
- ELA.7.V.1.1- Integrate academic vocabulary appropriate to grade level in speaking and writing.

Suggested Student Activity Sequence & Pace

DAY	ACTIVITY SEQUENCE
DAY 1	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Begin the lesson by asking students to brainstorm what they know about our system/form of government, writing their responses on loose paper or in their notebooks. Teacher Note: This question was left intentionally vague, assuming this benchmark is taught earlier in the school year. If your scope and sequence treats this benchmark differently, you may want to adjust the rigor and specificity of your questioning. 2. While the students write their responses, circulate the room to monitor for engagement. 3. Begin a discussion by asking for responses. Responses may vary, but lead students to the understanding that the United States is a republic based on the Constitution. Our national government power is separated into three branches and power is shared between the national government and the states. Eligible citizens vote for leaders to represent them in government and citizenship comes with both rights and responsibilities. 4. Continue the discussion by asking students: Who founded our country and decided on this system/form of government? Teacher Note: Responses may vary as students may share general statements/terms or share specific names. 5. Project the “Constitutional Convention” image and ask for 3 student volunteers to portray a character and read a speaking part. Teacher Note: When choosing student volunteers, ensure you choose students comfortable speaking in front of the class and who will engage their classmates. Print and cut-out the speaking parts ahead of time. 6. Have the volunteers stand in front of the class next to the projected image. 7. Hand each student a speaking part from the “Stepping Into History Scripts”. 8. Explain to students that they are about to travel back in time to 1787. Their location is Philadelphia. It is a hot summer day. A group of men, who today we call ‘The Framers’ are meeting to discuss what type of government to establish in America after the failed Articles of Confederation. Let’s listen in! 9. Instruct the student volunteers to read their part out loud in the order indicated on the paper. Encourage them to really get into character! 10. Once the students have finished the historical act out (with appropriate applause), ask students the following questions: Did it sound like the Framers came up with all of the ideas for America’s form/system of government by themselves? Who/What did you hear them mention in terms of influences? 11. Explain to students that with the rest of the time today, they will be learning more about the influences on the Framers as they established our constitutional republic. 12. Divide students into pairs or small groups. 13. Pass out the “Historical Influences Activity Packet” to each student. 14. Review the top graphic organizer portion with the whole class, explaining that as each pair/group reads, they should record notes/questions on the influences in the boxes. They should wait on completing any other portions of the activity packet. 15. Pass out the “Historical Influences on America's Constitutional Republic” reading. 16. Have the pairs/small groups complete the reading together. Encourage text-marking strategies. 17. While students complete their reading and fill out the organizer portion only, circulate the classroom to monitor for engagement, stopping to check in with pairs/groups to evaluate understanding.

	<p>Teacher Note: It is recommended you set a timer for this portion of the lesson.</p> <p>18. Once groups are finished, or a set amount of time has elapsed, bring the class back together.</p> <p>19. Lead a brief review of the content by asking students to share some of the concepts that stood out to them. Allow students to add to their answers based on any growing understanding from the discussion.</p> <p>Teacher Note: Use the answer key provided to guide the discussion.</p>
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DAY 2	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Have students take back out their “Historical Influences Activity Packet” and “Historical Influences on America’s Constitutional Republic” reading from yesterday. 2. Call on a few students to share some of the questions they wrote down for each section yesterday in the second row of the graphic organizer. If applicable, try to answer their questions. <p>Teacher Note: Do not be afraid to tell students if you don’t know an answer and either research and get back to them, or model good research and sourcing skills by looking it up together as a class.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Have students return to their pairs/small groups from yesterday. 4. Explain to students that they are going to read through the text a second time. During this reading, when they get to one of the bolded vocabulary words (influences), they are going to add a definition for that word in the margins. To do this, they should use both context clues and the definitions provided in the activity packet. However, the definitions they write in the margins must be in their own words. 5. Provide time for the pairs/small groups to complete the second reading and adding of vocabulary definitions. 6. While students complete their reading, circulate the classroom to monitor for engagement, stopping to check in with pairs/groups to evaluate understanding. <p>Teacher Note: It is recommended you set a timer for this portion of the lesson.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Once groups are finished, lead a brief review as a class. Allow students to change or alter any definitions based on new understandings. 8. Next, instruct the pairs/groups to work together to complete the questions and matching sections of the “Historical Influences Activity Packet”. 9. While students work, circulate the classroom to monitor for engagement, stopping to check in with pairs/groups to evaluate understanding. <p>Teacher Note: It is recommended you set a timer for this portion of the lesson.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 10. Once groups are finished, or a set amount of time has elapsed, bring the class back together. 11. Lead a review of the content. Allow students to add to their answers based on any growing understanding from the discussion. <p>Teacher Note: Use the answer key provided to guide discussion.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 12. Checking for Understanding (Formative Assessment): Instruct students to write a well-crafted informative response using the following prompt: <u>Prompt</u> Using what you have learned during this lesson and citing specific examples from the reading, explain how <u>one</u> of the following influenced America’s constitutional republic: ancient Greece, ancient Rome, the Judeo-Christian tradition.
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Civics Content Vocabulary

Word/Term	Definition
checks and balances	a principle of the federal government, according to the U.S. Constitution, that allows each branch of government to limit the power of the other branches
civic participation	being involved in government processes to voice your opinion or help others
civic virtue	the good characteristics, attitudes, practices, and activities of participants in a political system. Examples of civic virtues include: civility, cooperation, volunteerism, courage, self-discipline, tolerance, wisdom, contributions, humility, integrity, justice, perseverance, respect, responsibility, etc.
constitutional republic	a form of government in which there is democratic voting, but governmental power is limited by the existence of a constitution that protects the rights of citizens
democracy	a system of government in which political power is held by the people; can be direct (each individual person makes decisions) or indirect (people elect representatives to make decisions)
Framers	the individuals at the Constitutional Convention who developed the U.S. Constitution and the framework for America's government
individual worth	a sense of value in one's life
justice	the condition of being morally correct or fair
legislative bodies	persons responsible for making or amending laws
personal responsibility	the act of taking full accountability for one's actions, decisions, and thoughts
polis	a city-state in ancient Greece
representative government	a type of government that allows people to vote and elect government officials to represent their beliefs and make decisions on their behalf
republicanism	the political belief that the best form of government is one where citizens choose their representatives and leaders and actively participate in civic life for the common good of the nation/community
rule of law	the idea that those who govern must follow the laws; no one is above the law
separation of powers	a structure of government that sets up different branches with their own distinct powers and responsibilities
voting rights	legal and constitutional protections designed to ensure the opportunity to vote in elections
written constitution	the principles and laws of a nation that determine the structure and powers of government; written out for all to see

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[Civics 360 Resources](#)

Florida Department of Education's Civic Literacy Reading List

- *Democracy* by Sue Hurwitz

ANSWER KEYS

Sample Answers: Historical Influences Activity Packet

Written Response: Sample Scoring Rubric

SOURCES

Constitutional Convention image from the National Archives:

<https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/constitution/how-did-it-happen>

Florida Department of Education Civic Seal of Excellence Course: <https://www.civicsexcellence.org/>

What the Founders Learned From The Greeks and Romans from the National Constitution Center:

<https://constitutioncenter.org/news-debate/podcasts/what-the-founders-learned-from-the-greeks-and-romans>