

## INFLUENCES ON THE DECLARATION AND CONSTITUTION

**SS.912.CG.1.1** Examine how intellectual influences in primary documents contributed to the ideas in the Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights.

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### 2023 BENCHMARK UPDATES

- Updated from SS.912.C.1.1
  - Changed from “Evaluate, take, and defend positions on the founding ideals and principles in American constitutional government.” to “Examine how intellectual influences in primary documents contributed to the ideas in the Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights.”
- Depth of Knowledge Changes within Benchmark
  - Changed from “Evaluate, take, and defend” to “Examine”
- Addition of Benchmark Clarifications
  - Benchmark clarifications are an addition to the 2023-2024 high school civics and government benchmarks. Benchmark clarifications are listed in the lesson summary below.

# Essential Teacher Content Background Information

[Teacher Content Notes Not Appropriate For Student Use]

## This section addresses the following topics:

1. Influential Documents on American Ideals and Principles
2. Document Analysis and Impact
3. The Influence of Judeo-Christian Tradition, Republicanism, English Common Law, and the Enlightenment

## 1. Influential Documents on American Ideals and Principles

Several core documents influenced the writing of the Declaration of Independence, U.S. Constitution and/or the Bill of Rights. These documents include: Magna Carta, Mayflower Compact, English Bill of Rights, Thomas Paine's *Common Sense*, 1780 Constitution of Massachusetts, Articles of Confederation, and the Northwest Ordinance. These documents reflected practices of republican government and common law that the Framers attempted to emulate and transform as they created a uniquely American form of government. Elements from the English Constitution along with intellectual ideas that arose from the European Enlightenment provided the Framers a foundational start when crafting the Declaration of Independence and then later, the U.S. Constitution.

## 2. Document Analysis and Impact

Document Name	Date	Document Country of Origin	Purpose of Document	Impact on Declaration and/or Constitution
Magna Carta (The Great Charter of Freedoms)	1215	England	This document limited the power of the King of England and protected the rights of the nobility.	<b>due process of law, limitation of government power, right to justice, right to fair trial</b> Writ of <i>habeas corpus</i> Rule of constitutional law Development of common law
Mayflower Compact	1620	American colonies	Creating a “civil body politic”, the Mayflower Compact was signed by the majority of passengers on the Mayflower. The group agreed to set up a government while remaining loyal to the King.	<b>consent of the governed, self-government</b> Fair and equal laws for the general good of the settlement, will of the majority, social contract where the settlers consented to follow the Compact's rules for the sake of the survival of the new colony, John Adams and others have referred to it as the foundation of the U.S. Constitution
English Bill of Rights	1689	England	This expanded the powers of the English Parliament and expanded the rights of the people, as well as further limited the rights of the King.	<b>right to life, liberty and property; no taxation without representation; right to a speedy and fair jury trial; no excessive punishments; habeas corpus</b> Lists rights for citizens and

				permanent residents of a constitutional monarchy, included the right to petition the monarch, included the right to bear arms in defense, emphasizes the importance of the consent of the people, influenced the U.S. Bill of Rights (1791)
<i>Common Sense</i> by Thomas Paine	1776	American colonies	Published anonymously, the document advocated that the colonists declare their independence from the British crown.	<b>representative self-government</b> Advocated a movement for sovereignty of the people, a written constitution, and effective governmental checks and balances
Constitution of Massachusetts	1780	Massachusetts colony	During the American Revolution, the Constitution of Massachusetts provided a model for other colonies. The Massachusetts Constitution created a framework for separation of powers and checks and balances between three branches of government.	<b>representative self-government; separation of powers; checks and balances; written constitution</b> Established a powerful executive branch that was elected directly by the people. The Governor was granted veto power. Created a bicameral legislature with a democratic lower house and upper Senate chamber. Included an independent judiciary.
Articles of Confederation	1781	United States of America	Serving as the first constitution of the United States, this document established a “league of friendship” among the new 13 states. Creating a weak national government, the Articles of Confederation gave most of the power to the states.	<b>limited government; consent of the governed; self-government; separation of powers; checks and balances; federalism</b> Learned the need to establish a better balance between the powers of the national government and state governments. Contained the principles of limited government.
Northwest Ordinance	1787	United States of America	A document that established a government for the Northwest Territory explained the steps for admitting a new state to the Union and listed a bill of rights for the territory.	<b>bill of rights</b> The Northwest Ordinance’s provisions included a bill of rights for individuals living in the territory. It included the right to religious freedom, writ of habeas corpus, and trial by jury. The Ordinance also encouraged education of individuals in the territory and outlawed slavery.

### 3. The Influence of Judeo-Christian Tradition, Republicanism, English Common Law, and the Enlightenment

The intellectual influences that inspired numerous historical documents as well as the authors of the

Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution have deep historical roots. The Founders and Framers were well-read, and had carefully studied civilizations and governments of the past. They also brought with them lessons, both good and bad, from their experiences with the British government, as well as the successes and failures of both colonial governments and the nation's first experiment with a national government under the Articles of Confederation. The following served as some of the more predominant influences:

- A. **Judeo-Christian Tradition:** The Judeo-Christian ethical ideas such as justice, fairness, equality, and the value of individuals 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.
- B. **Republicanism:** When deciding on a form of government for the United States, the Framers often cited the ancient governments of Greece and Rome. While slightly different in their approach, Greece more a democracy and Rome more a republic, the concept of people's right and ability to govern themselves was evident in both.
- C. **English Constitution/Common Law:** With no formal written constitution, the English rely heavily on common law: tradition and past precedent to serve as a guiding hand in governing. While choosing to deviate from this influence in the sense that the United States established a written constitution and complex legal system, the principle carries over in the American concept of judicial review. The protection of rights and the ability of a judicial body to declare acts and legislation unconstitutional draws a striking parallel to English principles.
- D. **European Enlightenments:** The Framers were deeply influenced by the social and political ideas of the Enlightenment. Enlightenment thinkers stressed the ideas of liberty and equality being natural rights. Jefferson drew on many Enlightenment ideas regarding abuse of authority when drafting the Declaration. As the authority of kings weakened around Europe in the late 1600s, Enlightenment philosophers wrote about the best ways to govern a nation. It would be these writings of Hobbes, Locke, Montesquieu, Rousseau and others that would eventually make their way into the debates at the Constitutional Convention in 1787.

## Lesson Summary

BENCHMARK		
<b>SS.912.CG.1.1</b> Examine how intellectual influences in primary documents contributed to the ideas in the Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights.		
BENCHMARK CLARIFICATIONS		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students will recognize the influence of the Judeo-Christian tradition, republicanism, the English Constitution and common Law, and the European Enlightenment in establishing the organic laws of the United States in primary documents (e.g., Magna Carta (1215); the Mayflower Compact (1620); the English Bill of Rights (1689); Common Sense (1776); Declaration of Independence (1776); the Constitution of Massachusetts (1780); the Articles of Confederation (1781); the Northwest Ordinance (1787); U.S. Constitution (1789).</li> </ul>		
FLORIDA CIVIC LITERACY EXAM COMPETENCY CONNECTION		
<b>Competency 1:</b> Understanding of the basic principles and practices of American democracy and how they are applied in our republican form of government <b>Competency 3:</b> Knowledge of the founding documents and how they have shaped the nature and functions of our institutions of self-government		
OVERVIEW		
In this lesson, students will recognize the influential ideas found in primary documents that later contributed to the ideas in the Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights.		
ESSENTIAL QUESTION		
What ideas and documents influenced the principles in the Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution, and the Bill of Rights?		
GOVERNMENT CONTENT VOCABULARY		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Articles of Confederation, checks and balances, <i>Common Sense</i>, common law, compact, consent of the governed, Constitution of Massachusetts (1780), Declaration of Independence, due process, English Bill of Rights, Enlightenment, fair trial, Judeo-Christian tradition, justice, limited government, Magna Carta, Mayflower Compact, Northwest Ordinance, republicanism, rights, rule of law, self-government, separation of powers, U.S. Constitution</li> </ul>		
INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES		
Brainstorm	Gallery walk	Group discussion
MATERIALS		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Document Excerpts and Big Ideas Placards</li> <li>Big Ideas Brainstorming Web</li> <li>Historical Influences slide</li> <li>Influential Documents Organizer</li> </ul>		

<b>B.E.S.T. STANDARDS</b>
<p>The grade in which this lesson is taught will determine the specific B.E.S.T. standards correlation. Thematically, this lesson aligns to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• ELA.R.2.1 Structure</li><li>• ELA.R.2.2 Central Idea</li></ul>

## Suggested Student Activity Sequence & Pace

DAY	ACTIVITY SEQUENCE
DAY 1	<p><b>Planning Note:</b> Prior to class, you will need to print out the “Document Excerpts and Big Ideas Placards” and post them around the room in stations. Each station should consist of the document excerpt and corresponding big ideas. If you feel students may need additional vocabulary scaffolding, you could also place a copy of the government vocabulary from this lesson at each station.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Pass out the “Big Ideas Brainstorming Web” handout.</li> <li>2. Ask the class to add lines to the different bubbles, writing some of the big ideas that are found in these documents.</li> <li>3. Ask for responses. As students share, make a large version together on the board or projector. Encourage students to add to theirs throughout the activity.</li> <li>4. Lead students to an understanding of some of the big ideas contained in these documents. Ensure at a minimum they at least have the following: due process of law; limited government; justice; right to a fair trial; consent of the governed; self government; right to life, liberty and property; no taxation without representation; no excessive punishments; republicanism; checks and balances; separation of powers; federalism, rule of law, and natural rights.  <b>Teacher Note:</b> Students may be able to describe the concepts, and you may need to provide them with the terms.</li> <li>5. Ask students to discuss with a partner where these ideas came from, giving them a few minutes to talk.</li> <li>6. Ask for responses, guiding students to the understanding that the Founders/Framers were inspired by historical events, historical people, and the success and failures of other governments. Many of these influences also appeared in important historical documents.</li> <li>7. Project the “Historical Influences” slide. Review with students how these intellectual influences from history, translated into important primary documents, that would then go on to influence the writings of the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution.  <b>Teacher Note:</b> Use the Essential Teacher Background Information to help guide discussion.</li> <li>8. Tell students that today, they will complete a gallery walk to learn more about some of the ideas contained in these historical documents.</li> <li>9. Pass out the “Influential Documents Organizer.”</li> <li>10. Split the class into 7 equal-sized collaborative groups.</li> <li>11. Assign each group to one of the “Document Excerpts and Big Ideas Placards” to begin.</li> <li>12. In their groups, students should read the placards and work to fill in the information on their organizer.  <b>Teacher Note:</b> It is suggested that you give them a set amount of time at each station and give them appropriate warnings (e.g. ‘2 minutes remaining’) as work time elapses.</li> <li>13. As students work, continually circulate the classroom, monitoring for engagement and understanding, checking in with each group to answer their questions, and redirecting them if necessary.</li> <li>14. After a set amount of time, have student groups rotate to the next set of placards and repeat steps 12 and 13.  <b>Teacher Note:</b> This lesson is written to have students complete all 7 placards in one class period but you could split between two days if the needs of your class required.</li> <li>15. At the end of the class, bring all students back together. Going one document at a time, ask</li> </ol>

	students to raise their hand to vote for the <u>one</u> they felt was <u>most</u> influential. Call on a few students for each document to share why.
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## Government Content Vocabulary

Word/Term	Definition
<b>Articles of Confederation</b>	the first constitution of the colonies, in effect from 1781 until 1787
<b>checks and balances</b>	the ability of one area of government to change or veto acts of another area of government for the purpose of not allowing one branch to become too powerful
<b><i>Common Sense</i></b>	a pamphlet published by Thomas Paine in 1776 to convince the American colonists to support becoming independent from England
<b>common law</b>	law that comes from customs, traditions, and precedents
<b>compact</b>	an official agreement made by two or more parties
<b>consent of the governed</b>	idea that states that the government's power is derived from its citizens
<b>Constitution of Massachusetts (1780)</b>	the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, world's oldest functioning written constitution, which served as a model for the United States Constitution
<b>Declaration of Independence</b>	document that provided a justification for independence, including a list the grievances of the colonies against the King of England
<b>due process</b>	the right of people accused of crimes to have laws that treat them fairly, so that they cannot lose their life or freedom without having their legal rights protected
<b>English Bill of Rights</b>	a government document that expanded the powers of the English Parliament and expanded the rights of the people, as well as further limited the rights of the king; written by the members of the English Parliament in 1689
<b>Enlightenment</b>	an intellectual and philosophical movement in the 17th and 18th centuries that focused on reason, ideas on government, and the value of happiness
<b>fair trial</b>	a process that is equitable to all people that have been accused
<b>Judeo-Christian tradition</b>	the beliefs and practices of those following the Jewish and Christian religions
<b>justice</b>	the right of being equitable or fair
<b>limited government</b>	a government that has been limited in power by a constitution, or written agreement
<b>Magna Carta</b>	a government document that limited the power of the king of England and protected the rights of the nobility; written by the English nobles in 1215
<b>Mayflower Compact</b>	an agreement between individuals that created a government that would provide order and protect the rights of the colonists; written by a group of English Puritans in Massachusetts in 1620
<b>Northwest Ordinance</b>	a document that established a government for the Northwest Territory, explained

	the steps for admitting a new state to the Union, and listed a bill of rights for the territory
<b>republicanism</b>	the belief that the best form of government is one in which citizens choose their representatives and leaders through elections; emphasis on self-rule
<b>rights</b>	a set of things that people believe they should be free to do
<b>rule of law</b>	a principle under which all persons, institutions, and entities are accountable to laws
<b>self- government</b>	popular or representative system where the people create and run their own government
<b>separation of powers</b>	dividing governmental power into separate bodies (executive, legislative, judicial)
<b>U.S. Constitution</b>	a document that set up the government for the United States, establishing it as a republic, with three branches

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[Florida Department of Education: Florida Civic Literacy Exam Homepage](#)

Florida Department of Education's Civic Literacy Reading List

- *Common Sense* by Thomas Paine
- Magna Carta by King John of England and Archbishop of Canterbury Stephen Langton
- Mayflower Compact by William Bradford
- *English Declaration of Rights* by Parliament of England
- *Commentaries on the Laws of England* by William Blackstone

### ANSWER KEYS

Sample Answers: Big Ideas Brainstorming Web

Sample Answers: Influential Documents Organizer

### SOURCES

The Constitution of the United States from the National Archives:

<https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/constitution>

Primary Sources/Images from the Library of Congress: <https://www.loc.gov/>

Primary Sources from the National Archives: <https://www.archives.gov/>