

Instructions: Read each section and answer the multiple choice questions for each section. Each question may have multiple answers. Circle all letters that apply.

England

In 1204 CE, the unpopular King John of England lost the territory of Normandy to King Philip Augustus of France. King John heavily taxed the land owning barons of England to pay for the wars over the next ten years that ultimately failed to reclaim English territory. To further enrage the barons, John jailed those who could not pay their taxes. The unlimited power of the king finally drove the barons to organize an army and capture the city of London in 1215. With little choice, King John met at the neutral location of Runnymede where the barons presented King John with the *Articles of the Barons* listing a series of demands for government reform. The official document released several weeks later became known as *Magna Carta* (Great Charter). This document demanded that the law apply to all freemen, including the king, and granted rights to individuals. The most important part of the document stated:

“No freeman shall be seized or imprisoned, or stripped of his rights or possessions, or outlawed or exiled, or deprived of his standing in any other way, nor will we proceed with force against him, or send others to do so, except by the lawful judgement of his equals or by the law of the land. . . . To no one will we sell, to no one deny or delay right or justice.”

Although signed by both parties, neither side obeyed the document’s guidelines and civil war followed. King John died in 1216 and his successor, King Henry III, issued new versions in 1216 and 1217 that finally brought peace. King Henry III issued a final version of *Magna Carta* in 1225 that eventually became the basis for English common law.

Although monarchs continued to rule England, their power slowly drained away. After Henry VIII died in 1547, mostly Protestant monarchs ruled the country. However, in 1685, Catholic king James II came to the throne to the resentment of English Protestants. When James II wanted to pass a toleration act for Catholics, an uprising occurred that sent James II fleeing to France. The Parliament, England’s law-making body, in 1688 put

Protestants William and Mary on the throne of England with restrictions on their power. This became known as the Glorious Revolution. Parliament passed a Bill of Rights in 1689 that guaranteed certain political and civil rights including:

- excluding Catholics from the English throne
- making Parliament the supreme power of the land
- Parliament approval of all taxes
- freedom of speech for members of Parliament conducting business in Parliament
- elections of members of Parliament free from monarchical interference
- no cruel or unusual punishments
- no fines or confiscation of property without trial
- the right for Protestants to bear arms for self-defense

The English Bill of Rights of 1689 became the basis for civil rights in England and later America.

1. The Magna Carta...

- F. removed King John from the English throne.
- H. said the law must apply equally to the king and freemen.
- M. attempted to limit the power of government.
- O. gave the people of Scotland equal rights.

2. The English Bill of Rights guaranteed...

- B. no cruel or unusual punishments.
- H. freedom of speech for all Englishmen.
- R. no property would be taken without a trial.
- Y. the monarchy was the supreme power of the land.

America

Each British colony in America began with a charter issued by the King of England—a document that stated the obligations, rights, and privileges of its citizens. Unlike other societies, Americans from the beginning became used to having their rights written down. Once the colonies declared independence in 1776, they began writing state constitutions outlining the structure, responsibilities, and limits of government authority while also including a bill of rights for its citizens.

By 1787, delegates from twelve of the thirteen states met in Philadelphia and set about creating a new national government for the United States. Virginia delegate James Madison had the plan. He realized in forming a government “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.” First and most importantly the people must watch and maintain control of the government by voting in good representatives and voting out bad representatives. Secondly, there must be built-in checks on government power to keep any one branch of government from becoming too powerful.

After months of debate and borrowing heavily from state constitutions and the British model of government, the delegates created the first written constitution for a national government that encompassed all aspects of governing a modern nation. The United States started a trend that other countries imitated: using a written constitution to organize and limit government power to secure the rights of the people.

3. According to Madison, what are two problems with creating a government:

- F. democracies do not work in large societies
- H. limited government cannot work with a constitution
- M. government must be strong enough to control the governed
- O. government must be able to control itself

4. According to Madison, what must happen to control the government?

- B. People have to vote for good candidates.
- H. People must rebel against bad government.
- R. Automatic controls must allow each branch to restrain the others.
- Y. Government must pass laws to restrict its own power.

5. What makes the United States constitution unique?

- F. It was the first government ever created by former colonies.
- H. James Madison created the government.
- M. It was the first written constitution for a modern national government.
- O. For the first time, people could vote for representatives.

A selected bibliography of books based upon the topics discussed in this article that are available at the school library:

Collier, Christopher, and James Lincoln Collier. *Creating the Constitution*. New York: Benchmark Books, 1999.