Limits on Kings

How two English documents shaped constitutional government

SS24.8.15b "Summarize how major provisions in the Petition of Right and the English Bill of Rights influenced early forms of constitutional government."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Number two limits on royal power in the Petition of Right and two in the English Bill of Rights. Then underline a sentence that explains how these limits changed government.

When Rulers Faced Rules

1 Imagine a king sending soldiers to sleep in your home, then collecting money without asking your elected representatives. In 1628, members of England's Parliament challenged King Charles I with the Petition of Right. It said the crown could not collect taxes without Parliament's consent or imprison people without stating a legal cause. It also opposed forcing people to house soldiers and using martial law in peacetime. Charles accepted the petition, but later ruled for years without calling Parliament. The conflict showed that written limits did not enforce themselves.

2 Decades later, England faced another struggle over royal power. In 1688, King James II fled, and Parliament offered the crown to William and Mary. In 1689, the English Bill of Rights set conditions for their rule. It barred a monarch from suspending laws or raising taxes without Parliament's consent. It also called for free elections to Parliament and protected speech during parliamentary debates. The monarch could not keep a standing army in peacetime without Parliament's consent. These rules gave lawmakers ways to check decisions that a ruler once claimed to make alone.

3 Neither document made England a modern democracy. Many people could not vote, and the ruler still held important powers. Yet the documents helped shape constitutional government, in which written rules limit those who govern. The Petition of Right challenged particular abuses, such as jailing a person without a legal cause. The English Bill of Rights made Parliament's consent necessary for key royal actions and protected elections and debate. Together, the documents strengthened the idea that a ruler must obey the law and share power with a representative body.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did both documents limit the ruler's power to collect taxes, and how did that change who controlled government money?

2. How would the Petition of Right limit a king who wanted to jail someone?

3. How would the English Bill of Rights limit a monarch who wanted to set aside a law?

4. How could free elections and protected debate in Parliament change the balance of power between the monarch and Parliament?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

A ruler orders families to house soldiers and cancels an election. In four sentences, advise a council how to respond using one provision from each document, and explain how each response would limit the ruler.

ANSWER KEY

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GRADE 8 · SS24.8.15b

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Number two limits on royal power in the Petition of Right and two in the English Bill of Rights. Then underline a sentence that explains how these limits changed government. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did both documents limit the ruler's power to collect taxes, and how did that change who controlled government money?	**Both required Parliament's consent for taxes. The ruler could no longer decide alone how to raise that money.**
2	How would the Petition of Right limit a king who wanted to jail someone?	**The king would have to state a legal cause rather than imprison the person without one.**
3	How would the English Bill of Rights limit a monarch who wanted to set aside a law?	**The monarch could not suspend the law without Parliament's consent.**
4	How could free elections and protected debate in Parliament change the balance of power between the monarch and Parliament?	**They helped Parliament choose its members freely and debate royal decisions, giving lawmakers more power to check the monarch.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The council should oppose the order to house soldiers because the Petition of Right rejected forced lodging in homes. This would stop the ruler from using families' homes for an army at will. The council should demand that the election be held freely because the English Bill of Rights called for free elections to Parliament. This would prevent the ruler from blocking voters' choice of lawmakers.

Accept answers that connect a specific provision to a limit on royal power. Do not require students to claim these documents created a modern democracy.