From Revolution to Rights

Trace how founding-era experiences shaped the Constitution and Bill of Rights.

SS24.USG.2 "Describe how the Declaration of Independence, the Articles of Confederation, and events of the American Revolution influenced the drafting and ratification of the United States Constitution and the Bill of Rights."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline three earlier problems or principles, circle the later constitutional choice each influenced, and give each linked pair the same number.

What the Founders Carried Forward

(1) In 1776, the Declaration of Independence argued that governments gain authority from the consent of the governed and exist to protect rights. Its list of grievances accused the king of interfering with colonial legislatures and keeping standing armies among civilians in peacetime. These claims did not supply a blueprint for a new government. They did, however, set tests for one: public power needed a legitimate source and limits. At the Constitutional Convention in 1787, delegates built a republic in which voters chose representatives, and they divided federal power among branches. Those choices reflected the Revolution's rejection of unchecked rule.

(2) Winning independence also exposed practical problems. During the Revolutionary War, Congress struggled to obtain money and supplies for soldiers because it depended largely on states for funds. Under the Articles of Confederation, which took effect in 1781, Congress could request state payments but could not levy national taxes. It also could not regulate commerce among the states, and changing the Articles required every state's consent. In 1786 and 1787, Shays' Rebellion, an uprising in Massachusetts over debts and taxes, heightened some leaders' fears that the national government could not respond effectively to unrest. Delegates proposed a Constitution granting Congress power to tax and regulate interstate commerce.

(3) The proposed Constitution still faced a vote in state ratifying conventions. Supporters argued that its stronger national government could address the failures of the Articles, while opponents warned that federal officials might threaten the liberties won in the Revolution. The original Constitution protected some liberties, but it contained no separate list of individual rights. In several states, demands for amendments shaped the ratification debate; Massachusetts, for example, ratified while recommending amendments. To answer these concerns, supporters promised to seek a bill of rights. Congress proposed amendments in 1789, and ten were ratified in 1791, including protections for speech and against unreasonable searches.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did principles and grievances in the Declaration influence two choices the delegates made about the new government?

2. How did a wartime supply problem and a weakness of the Articles influence a power granted to Congress?

3. Why did Shays' Rebellion strengthen the case for replacing the Articles with a new Constitution?

4. How did concerns during ratification influence the creation of the Bill of Rights?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine you are a delegate at a 1788 state ratifying convention. In one paragraph, take a position on ratification, weigh a benefit against a danger using two different historical influences from the passage, and propose one Bill of Rights protection that addresses the danger.

ANSWER KEY

From Revolution to Rights

GRADE 12 · SS24.USG.2

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline three earlier problems or principles, circle the later constitutional choice each influenced, and give each linked pair the same number. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did principles and grievances in the Declaration influence two choices the delegates made about the new government?	**The Declaration's emphasis on consent supported a republic with elected representatives. Its objections to unchecked rule supported limits on power, including dividing federal power among branches.**
2	How did a wartime supply problem and a weakness of the Articles influence a power granted to Congress?	**Congress struggled to obtain funds for soldiers and, under the Articles, could only request payments from states. The Constitution gave Congress the power to levy national taxes.**
3	Why did Shays' Rebellion strengthen the case for replacing the Articles with a new Constitution?	**The uprising heightened some leaders' fears that the national government could not respond effectively to unrest. It added to concerns about the weaknesses of the Articles.**
4	How did concerns during ratification influence the creation of the Bill of Rights?	**Opponents feared that stronger federal officials could threaten liberties. Demands for protections shaped ratification debates, and supporters promised amendments that led to the Bill of Rights.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I would ratify the Constitution if Congress promised amendments. The Articles left Congress unable to collect national taxes, a weakness that made it harder to supply troops during the war, so Congress needs taxing power. Yet the Declaration's protest against unchecked authority warns me that a stronger government might overstep. I would seek a protection for free speech in the Bill of Rights, so citizens can criticize federal decisions without fear. A government that can pay its debts and still hear criticism better serves the people who authorize it.

Accept either position on ratification if the response weighs a historically grounded benefit against a danger, uses two distinct influences, and proposes a relevant rights protection. For the marking job, accept any three accurate links between an earlier experience or principle and a later constitutional choice.