

Ideas Into Government

Trace how founding principles shaped American law and government.

SS.7.CG.1.2 "Trace the principles underlying America's founding ideas on law and government."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline phrases that name a founding principle, and circle phrases that show a principle being used in a founding document or system.

From Ideas to Institutions

- ① Before the American Revolution, colonists argued that government should protect rights people possess simply because they are human. English philosopher John Locke called these natural rights, including life, liberty, and property. Locke also wrote that governments receive their just power from the consent of the governed. His ideas drew on an older tradition of English law, including the Magna Carta, which said that a ruler must obey the law. These ideas gave colonists language for criticizing unfair rule.
- ② In 1776, the Declaration of Independence used these principles to explain why the colonies could separate from Britain. It stated that people have unalienable rights and that governments gain their powers from the consent of the governed. The Declaration said people may alter or abolish a government that destroys their rights. This claim reflects the social contract, the idea that people form governments to secure rights. A government that breaks this agreement loses its rightful authority over them.
- ③ When delegates wrote the Constitution in 1787, they designed a government limited by written rules. The Constitution divides power among legislative, executive, and judicial branches so that no one branch controls everything. It also allows each branch to check parts of the others' power. Later, the Bill of Rights protected freedoms such as speech, religion, and fair legal procedures. Together, these features put rule of law, limited government, and protected rights into the new national system.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 What older English document is named in the passage, and what rule-of-law principle did it support?

2 Which two of Locke's ideas did the Declaration of Independence state in 1776?

3 How does the social contract support the Declaration's claim that people may change a government?

4 How did the Constitution's division of power help create limited government?

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Imagine that a mayor wants to jail people who criticize the mayor without a court hearing. Write three sentences that use two founding principles from the passage to explain why this proposal should be rejected.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline phrases that name a founding principle, and circle phrases that show a principle being used in a founding document or system. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What older English document is named in the passage, and what rule-of-law principle did it support?	The Magna Carta is named. It supported the principle that a ruler must obey the law.
2	Which two of Locke's ideas did the Declaration of Independence state in 1776?	It stated that people have unalienable rights and that governments receive power from the consent of the governed.
3	How does the social contract support the Declaration's claim that people may change a government?	People form governments to secure their rights. If a government destroys those rights and breaks the agreement, it loses rightful authority and people may alter or abolish it.
4	How did the Constitution's division of power help create limited government?	It divided power among the legislative, executive, and judicial branches. Each branch could check parts of the others' power, so no branch controlled everything.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The proposal violates rule of law because officials must follow fair legal procedures. It also threatens the natural right to liberty and the protected freedom of speech. Limited government should not allow one leader to control arrests without checks from courts or lawmakers.

Accept accurate explanations that connect the proposal to at least two principles, such as rule of law, natural rights, protected rights, limited government, or checks among branches. Students may use different valid wording from the sample.