

Ideas Shape Government

Trace how four influential documents changed colonial political thinking.

SS.7.CG.1.3 “Trace the impact that the Magna Carta, Mayflower Compact, English Bill of Rights and Thomas Paine’s Common Sense had on colonists’ views of government.”

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline one phrase in each paragraph that tells how a document or pamphlet changed colonists’ ideas about government. Number your underlined phrases 1, 2, and 3 so you can trace the changes.

Four Influences on Colonial Views

- ① English colonists brought ideas from English history across the Atlantic. The Magna Carta, accepted by King John in 1215, said the king had to obey the law and could not take certain actions without following legal rules. Centuries later, the English Bill of Rights of 1689 limited monarchs further. It supported Parliament’s role, rejected certain royal abuses, and protected rights such as petitioning the monarch. Together, these documents helped colonists expect that government power should have limits and that laws should protect people from unfair rule.
- ② In 1620, passengers on the Mayflower faced a different problem. Before going ashore in New England, forty-one adult men signed the Mayflower Compact. They agreed to form a civil body politic and to make “just and equal laws” for the colony’s general good. The Compact did not create a democracy for everyone, since only the signers joined it. Still, it gave colonists an example of people agreeing to organize a government and make laws for their community.
- ③ In January 1776, Thomas Paine published Common Sense, a pamphlet that reached many colonists. Paine attacked rule by a king, especially hereditary monarchy, and argued that the colonies should separate from Britain. He wrote in direct, clear language and connected independence to the idea that people could create a better government. Common Sense did not set up a government plan. Its major impact was to move many readers from criticizing British policies toward supporting independence and popular government.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 How did the Magna Carta and the English Bill of Rights shape colonists' views about the power of government?

2 What did the Mayflower Compact show colonists about how a community could form a government?

3 How did Common Sense move some colonists from one political view to another?

4 Compare the impact of the English Bill of Rights with the impact of Common Sense. What different idea did each add to colonial views of government?

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Imagine you are a colonist in 1776 writing to a neighbor. Write exactly three sentences that use ideas from at least two of the documents or pamphlet to explain what a fair government should do and why you might support independence.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline one phrase in each paragraph that tells how a document or pamphlet changed colonists' ideas about government. Number your underlined phrases 1, 2, and 3 so you can trace the changes. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did the Magna Carta and the English Bill of Rights shape colonists' views about the power of government?	They taught colonists that rulers must obey the law, government power should be limited, and laws should protect people from unfair rule.
2	What did the Mayflower Compact show colonists about how a community could form a government?	It showed that people could agree to organize a government and make laws for their community.
3	How did Common Sense move some colonists from one political view to another?	It moved many readers from criticizing British policies to supporting independence and popular government.
4	Compare the impact of the English Bill of Rights with the impact of Common Sense. What different idea did each add to colonial views of government?	The English Bill of Rights supported limits on monarchs, Parliament's role, and protected rights. Common Sense argued for separation from Britain and support for independence and popular government.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

A fair government should follow laws and respect the rights of the people, as the Magna Carta and English Bill of Rights suggested. People should also take part in making rules they agree to, like the settlers who signed the Mayflower Compact. Because Britain ignored these ideas, I would support independence and a new government based on consent and limits on power.

Accept equivalent explanations that accurately connect each source to colonial beliefs about limited government, rights, consent, self-government, or independence. For the open response, verify that it has exactly three sentences and accurately uses ideas from at least two sources.