Sources of Power

Trace the ideas and institutions behind the American Founding

9-12.GOV.1 "Examine the influences of leading European thinkers such as Locke and Montesquieu, as well as the influence of historical institutions such as Greek democracy, Roman republicanism, and the English legal tradition on the American Founding."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB As you read, underline each idea or practice the founders drew on, and circle the thinker or historical institution connected to it. Number each underlined idea to match its circled source so you can trace the influence.

What Shaped the New Republic?

1. In 1787, delegates meeting in Philadelphia faced a question: who should hold power in a new republic, and who could stop its abuse? They knew that in ancient Athens, male citizens could vote directly on many public decisions. Athens offered a model of citizens governing themselves, but women, enslaved people, and foreigners could not participate. Ancient Rome provided another example. Its republic used elected officials and a senate rather than an assembly making every decision. American founders drew on Rome when designing representative government, yet they also worried that Roman leaders had sometimes gathered too much power.

2. European thinkers gave the founders ways to judge these older models. John Locke argued that people have natural rights, including life, liberty, and property. He held that a government gets its authority from the people's consent and can be changed when it fails to protect their rights. These ideas helped shape the Declaration of Independence. Montesquieu focused on a different danger: a single person or group controlling every part of government. He argued for separating legislative, executive, and judicial powers. His ideas helped shape the Constitution's three branches, which have ways to check one another.

3. English legal traditions offered another set of limits on power. Magna Carta, issued in 1215 after English barons challenged the king, required lawful process before a free man could be imprisoned. The English Bill of Rights of 1689 prevented a monarch from raising taxes without Parliament's approval. The founders adapted these limits rather than copying English government. Under the U.S. Constitution, Congress has the power to impose federal taxes. The Fifth Amendment, added in 1791, bars the federal government from taking a person's liberty without due process of law. Unlike Magna Carta's original protection for free men, that amendment applies to every person.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did Athens and Rome offer different ways for citizens to shape government? Which approach did the founders draw on for representative government?

2. Trace one of Locke's ideas to the Declaration of Independence. What connection does the passage make?

3. How did Montesquieu's idea address the danger of one person or group holding too much power, and where did that idea appear in the U.S. government?

4. Choose one English limit on power from the passage. Explain how the founders adapted it in the U.S. government.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine you are advising the delegates after a governor jails a critic without a hearing and demands a tax without elected lawmakers' approval. In 70 to 100 words, propose two safeguards, connect one to a European thinker and one to a historical institution in the passage, and explain how you would avoid an exclusion found in an ancient model.

ANSWER KEY

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HIGH SCHOOL · 9-12.GOV.1

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

As you read, underline each idea or practice the founders drew on, and circle the thinker or historical institution connected to it. Number each underlined idea to match its circled source so you can trace the influence. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did Athens and Rome offer different ways for citizens to shape government? Which approach did the founders draw on for representative government?	**Male citizens in Athens voted directly on many decisions. Rome used elected officials and a senate; the founders drew on Rome for representative government.**
2	Trace one of Locke's ideas to the Declaration of Independence. What connection does the passage make?	**Locke argued that people have natural rights and that government needs their consent. These ideas helped shape the Declaration of Independence.**
3	How did Montesquieu's idea address the danger of one person or group holding too much power, and where did that idea appear in the U.S. government?	**He argued for separating legislative, executive, and judicial powers. His ideas helped shape the Constitution's three branches and their checks on one another.**
4	Choose one English limit on power from the passage. Explain how the founders adapted it in the U.S. government.	**Magna Carta required lawful process before a free man could be imprisoned; the Fifth Amendment protects every person from a federal loss of liberty without due process. Alternatively, the English Bill of Rights required Parliament's approval for a monarch's taxes; the U.S. Constitution gives Congress the power to impose federal taxes.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I would require a hearing before any governor could jail a critic. Magna Carta's rule about lawful process for free men supports this safeguard, but I would extend it to everyone. I would also require approval from elected lawmakers before a new tax could take effect. Locke's view that government needs the people's consent supports that rule. Unlike ancient Athens, where women, enslaved people, and foreigners were excluded from governing, my system would let all adults vote for those lawmakers.

Accept accurate connections between a source and a founding-era practice, even when students use different wording. For the open task, look for two specific safeguards, one thinker, one historical institution, and a clear response to an ancient exclusion.