Building a Republic

Trace older ideas into American government

9-12.WC.49 "Explain how the American republic emerged from the traditions of the West."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB In each paragraph, underline a Western idea or practice and circle an American choice it helped shape. Draw a line between each connected pair.

Old Ideas, New Republic

1. Imagine a visitor entering the United States Capitol in the 1790s. The new nation had rejected a king, but its leaders did not invent government from nothing. They studied the Roman Republic, where citizens elected some officials and public offices were divided among different bodies. Rome also showed a danger: powerful leaders could weaken a republic by ignoring limits on power. Americans drew on elected government, though voting in the early United States was restricted.

2. English history offered another set of tools. Magna Carta, issued in 1215, established that the king had to obey the law, although it mainly protected nobles at first. Over time, Parliament gained a stronger role in making laws and approving taxes. In Britain's North American colonies, elected assemblies practiced voting on local laws and taxes. After independence, Americans rejected royal rule but retained representative lawmaking and the principle that taxes required the consent of the governed.

3. Enlightenment writers supplied ways to justify and organize the new government. John Locke argued that people possess natural rights and may replace a government that fails to protect them. This reasoning shaped the Declaration of Independence. Montesquieu argued that separating powers could prevent tyranny; the United States Constitution divided federal power among legislative, executive, and judicial branches. These ideas were adapted, not copied wholesale: the early republic proclaimed liberty while enslaved people remained in bondage and women lacked national voting rights.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did the Roman Republic influence American government, and what warning did Rome offer?

2. How did English history and colonial practice shape American ideas about laws and taxes?

3. How did Locke's and Montesquieu's ideas shape different American founding documents?

4. Why does the passage call the early republic an adaptation rather than a complete adoption of ideas about liberty?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write an 80 to 100 word museum label for an exhibit about the early American republic. Open with a question for visitors, trace two different Western traditions to American choices, and explain a gap between an ideal and reality.

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PART 1 · READ AND MARK

In each paragraph, underline a Western idea or practice and circle an American choice it helped shape. Draw a line between each connected pair. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did the Roman Republic influence American government, and what warning did Rome offer?	**Americans drew on Rome's elected offices. Rome warned that powerful leaders could weaken a republic by ignoring limits on power.**
2	How did English history and colonial practice shape American ideas about laws and taxes?	**Magna Carta supported limits on rulers, while Parliament and colonial assemblies provided examples of representative lawmaking and consent to taxes.**
3	How did Locke's and Montesquieu's ideas shape different American founding documents?	**Locke's ideas about rights and replacing governments shaped the Declaration of Independence. Montesquieu's separation of powers shaped the Constitution's three federal branches.**
4	Why does the passage call the early republic an adaptation rather than a complete adoption of ideas about liberty?	**The republic proclaimed liberty, but enslaved people remained in bondage and women lacked national voting rights.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Where did the new republic get its ideas? American leaders looked to Rome for elected offices and to English history for limits on rulers and representative lawmaking. They did not simply rebuild either system. After rejecting a king, they created a government with elected lawmakers and argued that taxes required consent. Yet the promise of liberty did not reach everyone. Enslaved people remained in bondage, and women lacked national voting rights. The republic joined older traditions to new institutions while leaving a sharp gap between its ideals and its practices.

Accept other accurate links between a Western tradition and an American choice stated in the passage. The museum label should explain two distinct links and identify a specific limit on early liberty.