Who Gives Power?

Trace ideas about consent and limits on government.

USG.C.2.1 "Evaluate the extent to which historical ideas and principles of human nature and authority have shaped the United States of America as a constitutional republic..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB In each paragraph, underline one example of a limit on authority and one example of consent to government. Circle the document or idea connected to each example.

Rules for Rulers

1. Imagine a town facing a new tax. Who may impose it, and who may object? In 1215, English nobles compelled King John to accept the Magna Carta, which placed some limits on royal power and promised certain legal protections to free men, not everyone. Centuries later, the Mayflower Compact of 1620 bound its signers to form a government and enact laws for the colony's general good. The compact did not create democracy for all residents. Still, these documents offered different models: rulers could face legal limits, and a community could establish a government through agreement.

2. In colonial Massachusetts, the 1641 Body of Liberties listed protections against arbitrary punishment and affirmed certain legal procedures, though it did not grant equal liberty to all. The 1639 Fundamental Orders of Connecticut set rules for choosing officials and holding assemblies, putting local self-government into written form. Religious ideas were also present. The Body of Liberties drew on biblical law, while the Orders described government as serving a people gathered under God. Later Americans could draw on these practices without adopting every colonial restriction. The Constitution's elected lawmakers and written limits on authority resemble these earlier experiments, but no single colonial text produced the Constitution by itself.

3. Enlightenment thinkers argued that legitimate government rests on a social contract and protects natural rights. The Declaration of Independence named "Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness" as rights and said governments gain "their just powers from the consent of the governed." Its grievances included the king's dissolving representative houses and imposing taxes without colonists' consent. These charges supported self-rule through representatives, not simply a change of ruler. The Declaration also referred to a Creator, language consistent with religious views of human equality; it did not quote a specific Bible verse. Under the later Constitution, voters choose representatives, while written rules limit federal power.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did the Magna Carta and the Mayflower Compact offer different ways to check a ruler's power?

2. How did the Body of Liberties and the Fundamental Orders combine religious ideas with rules for government?

3. How does the passage distinguish Enlightenment influence on the Declaration from religious influence?

4. Why did the Declaration's complaints about dissolved representative houses and taxes without consent support self-rule?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine a new community writing a charter for its council. In five sentences, propose two rules based on two different historical sources in the passage, explain how one gives people a say and the other limits officials, and identify one restriction in an earlier source that your charter should not repeat.

ANSWER KEY

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HIGH SCHOOL · USG.C.2.1

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

In each paragraph, underline one example of a limit on authority and one example of consent to government. Circle the document or idea connected to each example. 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 Mayflower Compact offer different ways to check a ruler's power?	**The Magna Carta placed legal limits on a king. The Mayflower Compact established government through the signers' agreement to make laws for their community.**
2	How did the Body of Liberties and the Fundamental Orders combine religious ideas with rules for government?	**The Body of Liberties drew on biblical law and listed legal protections. The Fundamental Orders described government as serving a people gathered under God and set rules for choosing officials and holding assemblies.**
3	How does the passage distinguish Enlightenment influence on the Declaration from religious influence?	**The passage links the social contract and natural rights to Enlightenment thought. It says the Declaration's reference to a Creator is consistent with religious views of equality, but does not quote a specific Bible verse.**
4	Why did the Declaration's complaints about dissolved representative houses and taxes without consent support self-rule?	**The complaints showed that colonists lacked a voice in decisions affecting them. They supported the claim that government needs the governed people's consent, exercised through representatives.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Our community should elect council members each year, a rule modeled on the Fundamental Orders of Connecticut. Elections give residents a say in who governs them. The charter should also require a hearing before officials can punish someone, reflecting the legal protections in the Massachusetts Body of Liberties. A hearing limits officials by requiring them to follow a fair process. Because the Body of Liberties did not grant equal liberty to all, our charter should apply its protections to everyone.

Accept other accurate connections between a named source and consent or limited authority. For the open task, look for two distinct sources, two workable rules, and a historically accurate restriction the student rejects.