

Ideas Become Government

Trace how historic documents shaped American government.

8.15.A “identify the influence of ideas from historic documents, including the Magna Carta, the English Bill of Rights, the Mayflower Compact, and the Federalist Papers, on the U.S. system of government;”

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Circle the name of each historic document. Underline the words that explain the idea it contributed to U.S. government, so you can connect each source to its influence.

Four Sources of American Government

- ① In 1215, English nobles forced King John to accept the Magna Carta. Its promise that the ruler must follow the law helped develop the principle of limited government. Centuries later, Parliament adopted the English Bill of Rights in 1689. It restricted the monarch’s power, protected certain rights, and said that the monarch could not suspend laws or raise taxes without Parliament’s consent. These documents helped Americans see government power as something that laws and representatives could limit, rather than a ruler’s personal wishes.
- ② In 1620, the Mayflower Compact was an agreement among English settlers traveling to New England. The signers promised to form a “civil body politic” and make fair laws for the colony’s common good. Although it did not create a modern democracy, it showed an early American example of people joining together to govern themselves. Its ideas supported later beliefs that government gains authority from the consent of the governed and that citizens can take part in making laws.
- ③ After the Constitution was proposed in 1787, Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay wrote the Federalist Papers to persuade Americans to ratify it. The essays explained why a stronger national government could still protect liberty. They defended dividing power among branches, using checks and balances, and sharing power between national and state governments. The Constitution created a system using these ideas. Together with earlier English and colonial examples, the papers shaped American arguments about representative government, rights, and limits on power.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 What principle from the Magna Carta helped shape the idea of limited government in the United States?

2 How did the English Bill of Rights show that a monarch's power could be limited?

3 What idea from the Mayflower Compact supported the belief that government receives authority from the people?

4 Name two features of the U.S. system that the Federalist Papers defended.

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Write a three-sentence proposal for a school council rule. Name two documents from the passage, and explain how one idea from each document would shape the rule.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Circle the name of each historic document. Underline the words that explain the idea it contributed to U.S. government, so you can connect each source to its influence. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What principle from the Magna Carta helped shape the idea of limited government in the United States?	The ruler, or government, must follow the law.
2	How did the English Bill of Rights show that a monarch's power could be limited?	It said the monarch could not suspend laws or raise taxes without Parliament's consent.
3	What idea from the Mayflower Compact supported the belief that government receives authority from the people?	People could join together to govern themselves and make laws, showing consent of the governed.
4	Name two features of the U.S. system that the Federalist Papers defended.	Any two: dividing power among branches, checks and balances, or sharing power between national and state governments.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Our school council should use written rules and allow students to vote on changes. The Magna Carta supports written rules because leaders should follow the law instead of personal wishes. The Mayflower Compact supports student voting because people can join in governing themselves.

Accept equivalent explanations that accurately connect each document to its stated influence. For the open response, accept any workable school rule that correctly applies an idea from two historic documents.