

Voices in the Colonies

Trace why colonial representative institutions developed.

8.3.A "explain the reasons for the growth of representative government and institutions during the colonial period;"

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline each reason colonists needed representative government, and circle each institution or practice that gave colonists a voice. Use your marks to connect causes to results.

Why Colonists Wanted a Voice

- ① English colonies were far from London, and Atlantic crossings took weeks or months. Governors could not wait for royal officials to settle every local problem. Colonists needed decisions about roads, defense, land, taxes, and trade. In Virginia, elected burgesses first met in 1619 with the governor and council. The House of Burgesses gave qualified male property owners, through their elected representatives, a role in making local laws. Distance from England made this kind of local decision-making practical for colonists.
- ② Other colonies developed representative practices from agreements and local needs. Before settling at Plymouth in 1620, the Mayflower passengers signed an agreement to form a civil body politic and obey laws made for the colony's general good. In New England towns, eligible residents gathered in town meetings to vote on community matters. These practices grew partly because settlers expected to help govern communities they had built, and because local problems required quick, shared decisions.
- ③ Representative institutions also grew from English political traditions. Many colonists believed that taxes and laws should have the consent of representatives, an idea connected to Parliament. Colonial assemblies often controlled local taxes and spending, so governors had to work with them. However, participation was limited. Voting and officeholding usually belonged to white men who met property requirements, while women, enslaved people, Indigenous people, and many poor men were excluded. These institutions expanded colonial self-government without creating equal political rights for everyone.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 How did the distance between England and the colonies encourage representative government?

2 What was the House of Burgesses, and how did it give some Virginia colonists a voice in government?

3 What two reasons does the passage give for the growth of town meetings in New England?

4 How did the English idea about taxes and laws support the growth of colonial assemblies? Include one power assemblies held.

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Imagine settlers establish a distant English colony where local officials need money to repair a harbor. Write exactly three sentences proposing a representative institution, explaining why it would form and who would be able to participate based on the passage.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline each reason colonists needed representative government, and circle each institution or practice that gave colonists a voice. Use your marks to connect causes to results. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did the distance between England and the colonies encourage representative government?	Because travel and communication with England took a long time, colonists needed to make local decisions without waiting for royal officials.
2	What was the House of Burgesses, and how did it give some Virginia colonists a voice in government?	It was a group of elected burgesses that met with the governor and council. Qualified male property owners elected representatives who helped make local laws.
3	What two reasons does the passage give for the growth of town meetings in New England?	Settlers expected to help govern the communities they built, and local problems required quick, shared decisions.
4	How did the English idea about taxes and laws support the growth of colonial assemblies? Include one power assemblies held.	Many colonists believed taxes and laws needed the consent of representatives. Assemblies controlled local taxes and spending, which required governors to work with them.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Settlers could elect a harbor assembly to approve a local repair tax. Because messages to England take a long time, the assembly could make a quick decision about the harbor. Under common colonial limits, white men with enough property might vote, so many residents would not have political rights.

Accept equivalent cause-and-effect explanations that connect distance, local needs, settlers' expectations, English political traditions, or control of taxes to representative institutions. For the open response, accept a plausible institution, a supported reason for its development, and an accurate statement that participation was limited.