

Faith, Virtue, Voice

How colonial ideas supported representative government

8.3.C “describe how religion and virtue contributed to the growth of representative government in the American colonies.”

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two details that show how religious beliefs or practices supported representative government. Circle two details that show how virtue shaped what colonists expected from voters or representatives.

Ideas Behind Colonial Representation

- ① In many English colonies, settlers believed that political power should serve a moral purpose. In Massachusetts Bay, Puritan leaders taught that their community had a covenant, or agreement, with God. Adult male church members could help choose town leaders and vote in town meetings. These meetings let eligible residents debate local taxes, roads, and rules. Participation was limited, since women, servants, Indigenous people, and many men without church membership could not vote. Still, the practice gave some colonists experience in making local decisions.
- ② Religion also shaped arguments about rights and authority. Many colonists knew the idea that people had duties to God and to one another. Some Protestant groups, including Quakers in Pennsylvania, stressed conscience and the spiritual equality of people before God. Pennsylvania's government allowed many Christian men to vote and elected an assembly. Its policies did not create equal political rights for everyone, yet religious beliefs helped colonists question rule by a distant authority and support laws made with the consent of the governed.
- ③ Colonists also used the word virtue to mean putting the public good ahead of private gain. They feared that a ruler who sought wealth or power for himself could become corrupt. Elected assemblies, such as Virginia's House of Burgesses, gave representatives a place to discuss taxes and local laws. Colonists expected voters to choose men they considered independent, honest, and concerned about the community. They also expected representatives to listen to constituents. These ideals did not erase unfair limits on voting, but they supported the belief that government should answer to its people.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 How did Puritan religious beliefs connect to participation in Massachusetts Bay town meetings?

2 How did Quaker beliefs and Pennsylvania's government support the idea of representation?

3 According to the passage, what did virtue mean, and what problem did it help colonists guard against?

4 How did elected assemblies, including Virginia's House of Burgesses, help make government answer to colonists?

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Write a four-sentence museum label titled "Why Representation Grew." Use one religious idea and one virtue ideal from the passage, and explain how each could lead colonists to support representative government.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline two details that show how religious beliefs or practices supported representative government. Circle two details that show how virtue shaped what colonists expected from voters or representatives. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did Puritan religious beliefs connect to participation in Massachusetts Bay town meetings?	Puritans believed their community had a covenant with God, and adult male church members could choose town leaders and vote in town meetings.
2	How did Quaker beliefs and Pennsylvania's government support the idea of representation?	Quakers stressed conscience and spiritual equality. In Pennsylvania, many Christian men could vote and elect an assembly, while religious beliefs helped colonists support government by the consent of the governed.
3	According to the passage, what did virtue mean, and what problem did it help colonists guard against?	Virtue meant putting the public good before private gain. It helped colonists guard against corrupt rulers seeking wealth or power for themselves.
4	How did elected assemblies, including Virginia's House of Burgesses, help make government answer to colonists?	Assemblies gave representatives a place to discuss taxes and local laws. Colonists expected representatives to listen to their constituents.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Religious beliefs encouraged some colonists to think government should follow moral duties and gain the consent of the governed. In Massachusetts Bay, church members practiced choosing local leaders at town meetings. Virtue taught that officials should serve the public good instead of seeking personal power. Together, these ideas made elected assemblies seem like a way to hold government responsible to the community.

Accept answers that accurately connect religious beliefs or practices to participation, consent, or elected bodies and connect virtue to public-minded, accountable government. Students should recognize that colonial representation was limited to certain groups.