

Power Has Limits

Trace how constitutional ideas organize and restrain government power.

CE.1 “The student will apply history and social science skills to explain the foundations of the American constitutional democracy by explaining the fundamental principles of limited government, republicanism, federalism, checks and balances...”

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline three statements that show an older document or debate shaping the Constitution. Circle every term that names a constitutional principle or a way government power is organized.

Ideas That Built a Constitution

- ① Long before the U.S. Constitution, English ideas limited rulers. The 1215 Magna Carta said the king must obey the law. English common law used court decisions as guides. Virginia Company charters of 1606, 1609, and 1612 created and expanded the colony under English authority. In 1776, Virginia's Declaration of Rights stated that people have inherent rights to life, liberty, and property. These ideas later influenced constitutional protections in Virginia and the United States.
- ② The Declaration of Independence argued that government gets its just powers from the consent of the governed. The weak Articles of Confederation could not easily raise money or regulate trade. At the 1787 Convention, the Virginia Plan favored representation by population, while the New Jersey Plan gave states equal votes. The Great Compromise created two houses, one based on population and one with equal state representation.
- ③ The Constitution begins, “We the People,” showing popular sovereignty. Its Preamble lists goals such as justice, domestic tranquility, and the common defense. Federalism divides power between national and state governments. Separation of powers gives lawmaking, executive, and judicial duties to different branches, while checks and balances let each restrain the others. Federalists supported ratification; Anti-Federalists wanted protections. The first ten amendments, the Bill of Rights, helped answer those concerns.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 How did the Magna Carta and English common law limit government power?

2 What weakness of the Articles of Confederation led delegates to seek a stronger national government?

3 How did the Great Compromise respond to the Virginia Plan and the New Jersey Plan?

4 Why did adding the Bill of Rights help win support for ratification?

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

A state law says the governor may make rules, enforce them, and decide whether people broke them. Write exactly three sentences that identify two constitutional principles this law violates and explain how to revise the law.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline three statements that show an older document or debate shaping the Constitution. Circle every term that names a constitutional principle or a way government power is organized. 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 English common law limit government power?	The Magna Carta said the king must obey the law. English common law used court decisions as guides.
2	What weakness of the Articles of Confederation led delegates to seek a stronger national government?	The Articles could not easily raise money or regulate trade.
3	How did the Great Compromise respond to the Virginia Plan and the New Jersey Plan?	It created two houses of Congress. One house has representation based on population, and the other gives equal representation to each state.
4	Why did adding the Bill of Rights help win support for ratification?	Anti-Federalists wanted protections for rights. The first ten amendments provided those protections.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

This law violates separation of powers because one executive officer makes, enforces, and judges rules. It also lacks checks and balances because no other branch can restrain the governor. The legislature should write the rules, the governor should enforce them, and courts should decide cases.

Accept equivalent explanations using the passage's language. For the open response, accept any accurate three-sentence revision that identifies two relevant principles and assigns powers to separate branches.