

Guided Reading Activity

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Origins of American Government

Lesson 1 *Government in Colonial America*

Review Questions

Directions: Read each main idea. Use your text to supply the details that support or explain each main idea.

A. Main Idea: English colonists' ideas about the role and shape of government influenced the growth of the colonies, the American Revolution, and the system of government we have today.

1. **Detail:** _____ values and ideas derived from biblical law made an important contribution to the founding principles and documents of the United States.

2. **Detail:** The concept that a government's power was not absolute came from the Magna Carta, which the English people came to regard as a guarantee of _____.

3. **Detail:** The English _____ set clear limits on the monarchy, and colonists believed this document applied to them and gave them the same rights as people living in Britain.

4. **Detail:** The English system of _____, especially as organized by Sir William Blackstone, was widely followed in the colonies.

5. **Detail:** Britain's Parliament, with delegates elected by the people, was a familiar example of _____ government for the colonists.

6. **Detail:** Thomas Hobbes developed the _____ theory, which suggested that people give up their individual sovereignty to the government in exchange for the government's provision of law and order.

7. **Detail:** John Locke reasoned that people have _____ as human beings and a government that failed to protect these rights was no longer legitimate.

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8. **Detail:** Swiss-born theorist _____ believed that
basic rights and freedoms developed as people in a community cooperatively created a social contract
to protect their rights while creating law and government.

9. **Detail:** Charles-Louis de Montesquieu suggested _____ the powers of government.

B. Main Idea: Each of the thirteen colonies had its own government consisting of a governor, a legislature,
and a court system, and these colonial governments established practices that later became a key part
of the nation's system of government.

1. **Detail:** A key feature of the colonial period was government established according to a
_____, or constitution.

2. **Detail:** Because the rapidly growing colonies constantly needed new laws to cope with new
circumstances, the colonial _____ became dominant in political life and
provided a training ground for colonial political leaders.

Summary and Reflection

Directions: Summarize the main ideas of this lesson by answering the question below.

Identify the key Enlightenment ideas that influenced the development of our governmental institutions and
explain their influence.

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Lesson 2 *Uniting for Independence*

Review Questions

Directions: Read the lesson and complete the outline below. Refer to your text to fill in the blanks.

I. The Colonies on Their Own

- A. In the eyes of the British crown, the American colonies existed for the _____ benefit of Great Britain.
- B. Fighting the _____ War was expensive, and Britain expected the colonies to help pay off the resulting debt.
- C. The Stamp Act of 1765 imposed the first _____ tax on the colonists.
- D. As Britain's _____, or money collected from taxing the colonies, increased, so did colonial resentment.
- E. British policies spurred colonial _____ as colonists began to work together to take political action against perceived British oppression.
- F. Committees of _____ formed a communication network to keep colonists in touch with each other and to urge resistance to the British.

II. Independence

- A. The _____ Continental Congress imposed an embargo to prohibit trade with Britain and agreed to boycott, or not buy, British goods.
- B. The British reaction was to clash with colonial minutemen at _____ in Massachusetts, the first battle of the Revolutionary War.

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- C. The _____ Continental Congress assumed the powers of a central government, organized an army and navy, made plans to issue money, and appointed George Washington as commander of the Continental Army.
- D. The final draft of the _____ was approved by Congress on July 4, 1776.
- E. The Declaration of Independence drew on such Enlightenment principles as _____ law, which is a system of moral principles regarded as the basis for all human conduct.
- F. Following the Declaration of Independence, states drafted and approved written _____ recognizing the people as the sole source of authority in a limited government.

Summary and Reflection

Directions: Summarize the main ideas of this lesson by answering the question below.

Describe the main events leading to the American Revolution. Which event do you think was the most crucial, and why?

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Lesson 3 *The Articles of Confederation*

Review Questions

Directions: Locate each heading below in your text. Then use the information under the correct heading and subheading to help you write each answer.

I. Government Under the Articles of Confederation

- A. How was the Second Continental Congress divided on the subject of a national government?

- B. In a general way, describe the national government under the Articles of Confederation.

- C. Under the Articles of Confederation, how were the states represented in Congress?

II. Problems in the Confederation Period

- A. What key financial issues faced both the national government and the state governments?

- B. What were three issues or difficulties among the states and between the states and the national government?

- C. What were the key weaknesses of the Confederation government?

- D. What two important laws did the Confederation Congress pass, and what was the significance of each?

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III. Need for a Stronger National Government

A. What led armed farmers to close down courts in Massachusetts?

B. How did Shays's Rebellion change the opinion of American leaders regarding the national government?

C. What was the purpose of the meeting of state delegates in Philadelphia in 1787?

Summary and Reflection

Directions: Summarize the main ideas of this lesson by answering the question below.

How did the weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation influence the development of a strong central government?

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Lesson 4 *Creating the Constitution*

Review Questions

Directions: Read each main idea. Use your text to supply the details that support or explain each main idea.

A. Main Idea: Although delegates to the Constitutional Convention agreed on fundamental issues, they had to work together to resolve a number of disagreements.

1. **Detail:** The delegates agreed that the new government would be limited and _____, the powers of the national government would be divided among _____ branches, and that state power should be limited.

2. **Detail:** In the _____ Plan, a strong legislature with representatives based on state population had the power to bar state laws it deemed unconstitutional, choose the executive, and appoint the judiciary.

3. **Detail:** Smaller, less populous states supported the _____ Plan, which proposed a unicameral legislature with one vote for each state, a weak executive elected by Congress, and a national judiciary appointed by the executive.

4. **Detail:** The Connecticut Compromise proposed a legislative branch with two parts, one with representation based on _____ and one giving all states _____ representation.

5. **Detail:** Debate over the presidency was settled by creating the _____ system in which each state selected electors who chose an executive to serve a four-year term.

B. Main Idea: Compromises temporarily settled, but did not solve, the divisive issue of slavery.

1. **Detail:** The Three-Fifths Compromise counted three-fifths of enslaved people for both _____ and _____.

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2. **Detail:** A compromise over commerce and the slave trade empowered Congress to regulate _____ and foreign commerce but not to ban the slave trade before 1808.

C. **Main Idea:** Once the delegates had completed and signed the Constitution, it had to be ratified by nine of the thirteen states before it could become law.

1. **Detail:** _____ favored the Constitution while _____ criticized it because it lacked a bill of rights.

2. **Detail:** Federalists promised a bill of rights, helping attitudes to shift in favor of the Constitution. Many small states _____ the Constitution because they were pleased with equal representation in the new Senate.

3. **Detail:** *The* _____, written largely by Alexander Hamilton and James Madison, answered the opposition's fears that a republic had to be a small government.

4. **Detail:** During the first session of the new Congress, James Madison introduced a set of amendments, ten of which became the _____.

Summary and Reflection

Directions: Summarize the main ideas of this lesson by answering the prompt below.

Describe how the debate over representation led to the creation of Congress.
