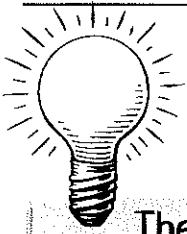


Colonial Influences

Name: _____

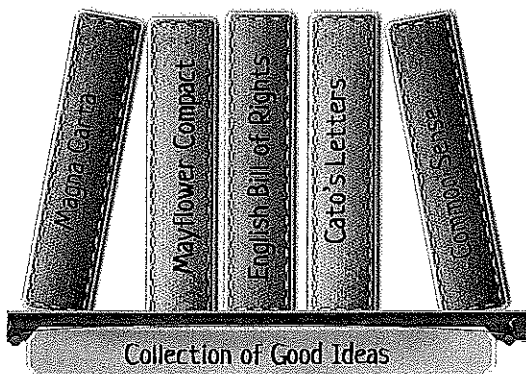


The U.S. Constitution is based on a handful of "big ideas". Brainstorm the meaning behind each big idea in the areas provided, then see what they mean in the American system of government.

The Big Idea	I think it means...	The Class Definition
Rule of Law		
Self-Government		
Due Process		
Limited Government		
Rights		

Colonial Influences

Name: _____



Hey! Anyone Have Any Good Ideas?

Our Founding Fathers did not invent the American system of government out of thin air. They, like the other colonists, were influenced by many different ideas and traditions. The biggest influence came from their British heritage. (Remember the colonists WERE British until the American Revolution!) Events in British history and things that were happening during their own time affected the way the Founders thought government should work.

The Founders didn't have the Internet, so they got their ideas from books and other printed materials. What would have been on the minds of American colonists on the verge of a revolution? Let's take a peek at what might have been on the shelf of a private colonial library ...


King v. Nobles: Round One

Way back in the Middle Ages, England was ruled by a king who shared some of his powers with the wealthy nobility. The nobility would carry out the king's wishes, and the king would allow the nobles to make some local decisions. But in the early 1200s, King John tried to take all the power for himself! The angry nobles fought back. In 1215, they created a document called the **Magna Carta** that limited the power of the king and protected certain rights for the nobles. The nobility was powerful enough to force King John to sign the Magna Carta. This was a big deal because it introduced the concepts of *limited government*, *rule of law*, and *due process*. It also helped create the nation's Parliament (kind of like Congress in the U.S.).

The Magna Carta

We, the nobles, demand:

- A limit on the king's powers
- Laws and punishments to be fair and equal
- Due process of the law and fair trials
- Property rights



Before After



The Mayflower Compact

When we land, we will:

- create our own government
- agree that the laws will be followed by everyone
- make sure that the new government will serve the common good

I Think We Took a Wrong Turn!

Fast forward over 400 years. The next document in the colonial library is the **Mayflower Compact**. It was written to solve a basic problem: Who is in charge? The Pilgrims left England in a ship called the Mayflower headed for the Virginia colony in 1620. A strong storm blew the ship off course, and they ended up in what is now Massachusetts. This area was not under the control of the company that sent them, so the Pilgrims were in independent territory. They needed a government—fast! The men agreed to create a new government and to follow its rules. In exchange, they would all protect each other. This is called *self-government*.

King v. Nobles: Round Two

Meanwhile, back in England, the Parliament had been battling it out with the king in a series of civil wars. Parliament eventually came out on top and passed the **English Bill of Rights** in 1689. Like the Magna Carta, this document expanded the rights of the Parliament and the people, while limiting the powers of the king even more. This document was well-known because it affected people living in Britain and the new British colonies in America.

The English Bill of Rights

As Englishmen, we demand:

- Free elections to Parliament
- The rights to bear arms, to petition the government, and to a fair trial
- No excessive bail or fines or cruel and unusual punishment



Ben Franklin and his newspaper



Breaking News... Colonist Style!

In addition to older documents, the colonists kept track of what was happening in Britain and around the colonies. They couldn't phone, blog, tweet, or watch tv-- so how did they keep up with the news of the day?

Hot Off the Press

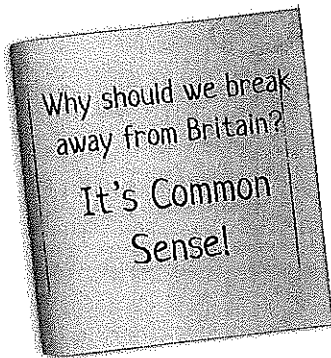
In the 1720s, authors using the fake names Cato the Elder and Cato the Younger published a series of newspaper editorials in Britain. The authors argued against the king's heavy-handed rule. These articles were titled **Cato's Letters**, and they were also published in colonial American newspapers. Cato's Letters became so popular that they were collected into a book. Half of the private libraries in colonial America owned a copy! Cato's Letters discussed many different ideas, such as *freedom of expression*, which became very influential in the colonies.

Daily Debate

Editorial

Without free speech and expression, you have no liberty.

-Cato & Cato

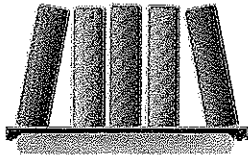


Calling for Independence

By the 1700s, King George III and Parliament were making more and more demands on the colonies. Many were getting fed up and began to meet and discuss breaking away from Britain. In the mid-1770s, representatives from most of the 13 colonies met in Philadelphia. Here, the Founders discussed the options for the future. While these meetings were happening, a journalist named Thomas Paine published a pamphlet called *Common Sense* in 1776. In *Common Sense*, Paine did not introduce any new ideas. Instead, he explained the arguments for independence in a way that was easy for everyday colonists to understand. He encouraged them to support the fight for independence from Britain. Just six months later, the Declaration of Independence was signed.

Colonial Influences

Name: _____



From Big Ideas to the Constitution. Now that you have taken a look at some of the big ideas in colonial America, let's see where they show up in our founding documents. Read each big idea on the top half of the page and match it with where it shows up in the U.S. Constitution below.

Self- Government: popular or representative system where the people create and run their own government

Rule of Law: the idea that all people must follow the laws, and that the laws are enforced fairly

Due Process: People have the right to fair and reasonable laws. Officials have to follow rules when enforcing the laws and treat all people in the same way.

Rights: A set of things that people believe they should be free to do without restrictions

Limited Government: the power of government is limited by the Constitution, and each branch is limited in what it can do



A "This Constitution and the laws of the United States ... shall be the supreme law of the land." All government officials "shall be bound by an oath to support this constitution."
U.S. Constitution, Article VI

C The U.S. Constitution created three branches of government. Each branch is given the power to check, or limit the power of the other two. The system of checks and balances keeps any one branch from getting too powerful.

B The first ten amendments in the Bill of Rights guarantee certain rights and freedoms that include:

- Freedom of speech, the press, and religion
- Right to petition the government and to bear arms
- Prohibition of excessive bail or fines, or cruel and unusual punishments for crimes

D "No person shall...be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law"
U.S. Constitution, 5th Amendment

E "WE THE PEOPLE of the United States...do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America."
Preamble to the Constitution, 1787

When was it written?

Who wrote it?

When was it written?

Who wrote it?

When was it written?

Who wrote it?

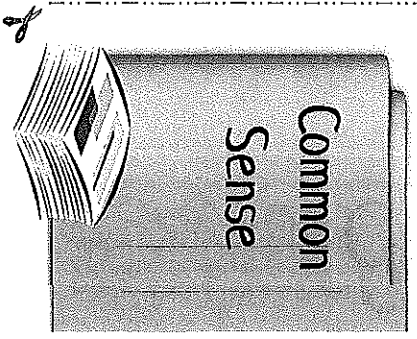
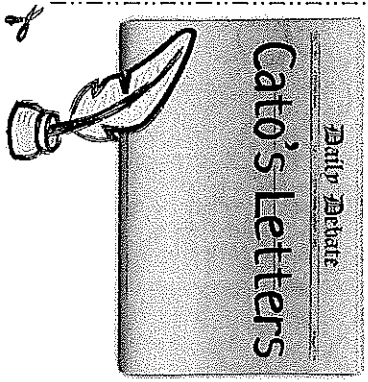
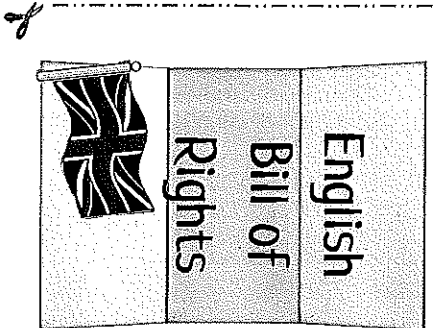
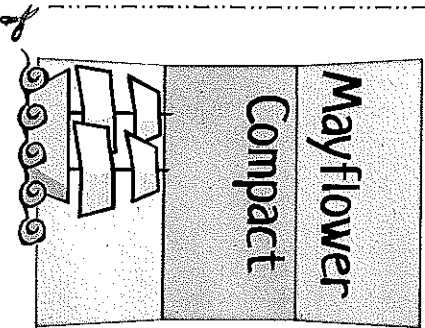
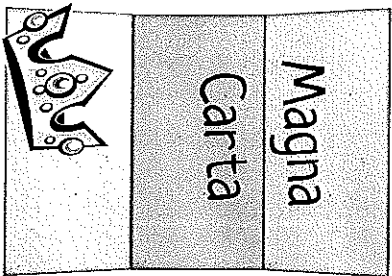
When was it written?

Who wrote it?

When was it written?

Who wrote it?

Name: _____



Colonial Influences

Name: _____

Colonial Comics. Comics are a great way to tell a story! Select one of the five documents that you have learned about in this lesson, and review the facts about it. Then use the comic strip below to tell that document's story. Each box has a job, so read the directions carefully.

<p>Frame One</p> <p>Who wrote the document?</p> <p>When did they write it?</p>	<p>Title: _____</p>	<p>Describe the <i>action</i> in your frame:</p>
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<p>Frame Two</p> <p>Why did they write this?</p> <p>What were they trying to accomplish?</p>		<p>Describe the <i>action</i> in your frame:</p>
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<p>Frame Three</p> <p>What did the document do?</p> <p>How did things change?</p>		<p>Describe the <i>action</i> in your frame:</p>
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