

We the People Hearing Questions Senior High School

Lesson/Chapter 2: What ideas about civic life informed the Founding Generation?

- What ideas about government and society did the Founders learn from the study of ancient history? Which of these ideas seems to be the most important in the constitutional government they created? Which seem to be most important today?
- What was Thomas Hobbs' key idea about human nature? In what ways did the government created by the Founders include his ideas? Agree or disagree with Hobbs using examples from modern history.
- Describe John Locke's ideas about the nature of people and the concept of inalienable rights. How did he believe that government related to rights?
- Which idea of natural rights fit well with America during the period of the founding? Why? Agree or disagree with whether this is still true today and why you think so?

Lesson/Chapter 3 – What Historical Developments Influenced Modern Ideas of Individual Rights?

- What is the major difference between the view toward the individual in Greco-Roman society and Judeo-Christian thinking? How did this influence the idea of morality or virtue?
- What were the essential ideas of medieval feudalism? How were these ideas similar to Greek and Roman ideas of classical republicanism? How might that have influenced people's thinking about good government?
- How did changed thinking during the Renaissance, capitalism, and the Reformation support the ideals of individual or natural rights? How might that have impacted people's thinking about good government?
- How did ideas of science influence political thinking in the Enlightenment? How does this connection help us understand and apply current efforts to spread democracy to other parts of the world?

Lesson/Chapter 27: What are bills of rights and what kinds of rights does the U.S. Bill of Rights protect?

- How was the Virginia Declaration of Rights a bridge between the idea of natural rights and classical republicanism (Chapter 2)? Which is the more important section? Why?

- How did the bills of rights in America's early state constitutions differ from the earlier English Bill of Rights? Why would that difference be important to government and individuals in America?
- What are the common categories of rights in the various bills of right around the world? Give examples of each category.
- How has the attitude toward the U.S. Bill of Rights changed since 1791? Some have said that “the less Americans know about freedoms, the more they are likely to erode without our notice.” Agree or disagree and give reasons.

Lesson/Chapter 28: How does the First Amendment affect the establishment and free exercise of religion?

- Why did the Founders support and implement a system for separation of church and state? What events in Europe related to religion influenced their thinking?
- The First Amendment provides that “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion.” What does the prohibition against “establishment” mean? How does it relate to state and local government?
- What rights does the free exercise clause of the First Amendment protect? What aspect of those rights can government limit?
- What criteria should courts use to determine whether prayer in public schools or public displays of religious symbols such as crèches, menorahs, or the Ten Commandments violate the Establishment Clause?

Lesson/Chapter 29: How does the First Amendment protect freedom of expression?

- Explain at least three reasons why freedom of expression is important to democratic government. Give examples if possible.
- Describe examples from history about times that freedom of expression has been suppressed. Describe any consequences of this suppression that you know about.
- Under what circumstances, if any, should freedom of speech or the press be limited? Why? Describe any recent controversies related to this.
- What considerations has the Supreme Court used to limit freedom of expression? Give an example of a recent case.