

## **The ideas and principles that influenced the Constitution**

Define each of the following terms:

democracy:

republican government:

common welfare:

civic virtue:

dictator:

Magna Carta: a document signed by the English king and lords in 1215 which limited royal powers

Answer the following questions thoughtfully and thoroughly:

1. Explain how a republic differs from a true *democracy*.
2. The idea for a *republican government* was based on which ancient civilization?
3. Explain how Cincinnatus was a model of *civic virtue*. What American city is named after this old Roman soldier-farmer?
4. Describe a situation in which people might disagree about what is best for the *common welfare*. Explain what should be done when there are such disagreements?
5. Why did Montesquieu believe that the powers of a *republican government* should be separated among different branches or groups in the government? Why should each group be given ways to check – or control - the power of the other groups?
6. Explain why it impossible for a *republican government* to exist if the citizens of that nation do not have *civic virtue*.

On the back of this sheet is a list of the five guiding principles of our government. For each principle, identify the ancient civilization, group, or individual that influenced the inclusion of that principle in our Constitution. Choose from the following: **Greece, Rome, Magna Carta, John Locke, or Montesquieu.**

# The Five Principles of the American Constitution & Government:

## Where did these ideas come from?

### • **POPULAR SOVEREIGNTY** (influenced by: \_\_\_\_\_, because \_\_\_\_\_)

- “We the people...” means that citizens are the source of the government’s power.
- The social contract states that the people “allow” the government to rule.
- The peoples elect their leaders and give their representatives the power to govern – and they can take the power away by electing someone else!

### • **LIMITED GOVERNMENT** (influenced by: \_\_\_\_\_, because \_\_\_\_\_)

- The government CANNOT do everything – only what is written in the Constitution.
- The government must follow the same laws as the people.
- No one branch or person in the government has all the power.

### • **SEPERATION OF POWERS** (influenced by: \_\_\_\_\_, because \_\_\_\_\_)

- The Power of the government is divided among three branches.  
LEGISLATIVE, EXECUTIVE, JUDICIAL
- All three branches have separate responsibilities that only they can perform.
- The branches share power and are *equal*. No branch has more power than the others.

### • **CHECKS AND BALANCES** (influenced by: \_\_\_\_\_, because \_\_\_\_\_)

- Each branch has some control and responsibility to check the work of the other two.  
Example A: Making a Law  
The *Legislative* passes laws, but the *Executive* must approve them. If there are questions about a specific law, the *Judicial* makes the final decision about the meaning or intent of the law (this is called Judicial Review).  
Example B: Who’s the Judge?  
The *Executive* appoints, or chooses, who will serve as the top judges in the *Judicial* branch, but the *Legislative* must approve each appointment and can reject the President’s selections.

### • **FEDERALISM** (influenced by: \_\_\_\_\_, because \_\_\_\_\_)

- The national, or federal, government is superior to the states and citizens
- The power of the government is divided and shared among different *levels*  
Federal or National, State, County, City or Town (think about a pyramid...)
- Federal government is responsible for laws that impact the country or most Americans.
- States and local governments are responsible for the majority of laws that impact our daily lives.  
For example, school days, hours, make-ups, absences, start times, etc.
- The responsibilities shared among the different levels of government are described in the Constitution, which is the “Supreme Law of the Land”, and is above all the levels.