



UNIT 1 What Were the Founders' Basic Ideas about Government?

1. **Governments and societies based on the natural rights philosophy guarantee certain rights to their citizens. How would you describe or define a right?**
 - What are the natural rights that philosopher John Locke said every person has? Why do you think these rights are important?
 - What are some civil rights you have under the U.S. Constitution? Are these rights important for protecting your natural rights, and if so, how?

2. **How does the idea of civic virtue, which focuses on doing what is best for the community, sometimes conflict with the belief in natural rights, which focuses on individual freedoms?**
 - How did James Madison envision the ideas of civic virtue as a foundation for the new American government? What parts of his ideas do we still see in our government today?
 - How important is it for people to work for the common good of society today? How important is it for people to focus on their own interests? Give examples to support your positions.



UNIT 2

What Shaped the Founders' Thinking about Government?

- 1. In the Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson said, "Governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed." Why do you think he believed a government can't be legitimate without the people's consent? Do you agree or disagree with Jefferson? Why?**
 - What does the term "social contract" mean? How does it relate to the idea that a government's authority comes from the consent of the people?
 - How do we, as Americans today, show that we agree to be governed? How can we express our dissent?

- 2. What basic ideas of constitutional government were developed and used in the American colonies before they gained their independence?**
 - Which ideas from England did the colonists decide not to use? Which ideas did they keep?
 - Why did the colonists think it was important to have written guarantees of rights and a government where people were represented?



UNIT 3

What Happened at the Philadelphia Convention?

- 1. During the Philadelphia Convention, the discussions and debates were not made public. Why do you think the delegates chose to keep their proceedings private? What might have been some advantages and disadvantages of this secrecy?**
 - Today, the Supreme Court holds private deliberations when deciding cases. Why might secrecy be important in these situations? What are the potential benefits and drawbacks of keeping these discussions private?
 - In what other areas of government might secrecy be necessary? How can the government balance the need for transparency with the need for confidentiality in certain situations?

- 2. "If the court doesn't retain its legitimate function of interpreting the Constitution, I'm not sure who would take up that mantle. You don't want the political branches telling you what the law is, and you don't want public opinion to be the guide about what the appropriate decision is," said Chief Justice Roberts in a 2022 interview.¹ Do you agree or disagree with Chief Justice Roberts's opinion? Why?**
 - How did the Framers describe the purpose of the Supreme Court?
 - How should the legislative and executive branches of government react when they disagree with decisions made by the courts?
 - Would you support term limits on federal judges? Why or why not?

¹ Chief Justice John Roberts defends the Supreme Court — as people's confidence wavers
<https://www.npr.org/2022/09/10/1122205320/chief-justice-john-roberts-defends-the-supreme-court-as-peoples-confidence-wavers> September 10, 2022



UNIT 4 How Was the Constitution Used to Establish Our Government?

- 1. How have political parties changed the way our government works over time? Should the Constitution be updated to include the roles of major political parties? Why or why not?**
 - How do new ways of sharing information, like social media, affect the importance of political parties?
 - Should it be easier for new political parties to start and get on the ballot? What might happen if we used more public money to help new parties run their campaigns?

- 2. The Framers of the Constitution created a new way of organizing the relationship between a national government and state governments. What are the main advantages and disadvantages of having a federal system where power is shared between national and state governments?**
 - Why do you think the Framers decided against a parliamentary system and invented a new system of separated but shared powers instead?
 - Why is federalism often linked to the idea of democracy?



UNIT 5

How Does the Constitution Protect Our Basic Rights?

- 1. What forms of expression does the First Amendment protect, and why is that protection important to both the individual and society?**
 - Should social media posts be protected as free speech under this amendment? Why or why not?
 - Should there be rules limiting students' First Amendment rights at school? Why or why not?

- 2. The First Amendment includes the Establishment Clause and the Free Exercise Clause. What do these clauses mean, and how do they protect religious freedom in the United States?**
 - How does the idea of separating church and state relate to the Establishment Clause? Why is it important for the government to avoid establishing or favoring a particular religion?
 - Should public schools be required to post the Ten Commandments in classrooms? Why or why not?
 - What are some situations where the protection of Free Exercise might be difficult to balance with other laws or rights?



UNIT 6

What Are the Responsibilities of Citizens?

- 1. According to an Ancient Greek proverb: “A society grows great when old men plant trees in whose shade they shall never sit.” How does this idea connect to being a good citizen and working for the common good?**
 - What are some differences between the rights and responsibilities of U.S. citizens and those of lawful permanent residents?
 - Do you think citizens should be able to choose not to fulfill some of their responsibilities? Why or why not?

- 2. It is often said: “United we stand, divided we fall.” How can citizens with differing political beliefs engage in respectful, civil conversations in a public setting or online?**
 - Should the government have the responsibility to promote civil dialogue?
 - Does social media make us a stronger or weaker democracy? Explain your decision.