

Chapter 7 Section 3: Ideas Behind the Constitution (pages 211-214)

In this section, we will:

- Explain what American leaders learned from studying ancient Rome.
- Identify the traditions of freedom that Americans inherited from Great Britain and from their own colonial past.
- Explain how Enlightenment ideas shaped the development of the Constitution.



Vocabulary terms for this section

- Founding Fathers
- republic
- dictatorship
- Magna Carta
- English Bill of Rights
- habeas corpus
- separation of powers

The Lessons of Rome's Republic

- Delegates to the Constitutional Convention wanted to create a **republic- which is a government in which citizens rule themselves through elected representatives.**
- American leaders looked to the ancient examples of Greece and, especially, Rome.
- The "Founding Fathers" looked at the Roman virtues of independence and public service as good examples to follow.
- Founding Fathers is the term we use for those that laid the groundwork for our great nation. Madison, Jefferson, Washington and Adams are just a few.




Britain's Traditions of Freedom

- Despite their war with England, the leaders of the Revolution also valued British traditions of freedom.
- These traditions are contained in the "**Magna Carta**" which King John signed in 1215.
- You may recall that the Magna Carta contained two main ideas: 1) It made it clear that English monarchs had to obey the law, and 2) the Magna Carta stated that English nobles had certain rights (that were later extended to other groups).
- These rights included the right to private property and the right to trial by jury.
- In 1689, the **English Bill of Rights** further protected the rights of citizens.
- upheld right to trial by jury and allowed citizens to bear arms.
- also affirmed the right of habeas corpus- the idea that no person could be held in prison without first being charged with a specific crime.

Magna Carta video
6:10



The American Experience

- The Founding Fathers also relied on traditions of representative government in North America.
 - Virginians had set up the House of Burgesses in 1619.
 - Eventually, each British colony had its own legislature.
 - Americans were used to relying on written documents that clearly identified the powers and limits of government. Remember the Mayflower Compact of 1620??
 - also, each of the 13 colonies had a written charter granted by the monarch or by Parliament.
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- Framers of the Constitution also drew on their own experience.
 - In writing the Constitution, the Founding Fathers wanted to prevent abuses like the ones they endured under the King.
 - Framers were also familiar with the Second Continental Congress, Articles of Confederation and their own state governments.
 - In fact, much of what went into the Constitution was taken from the Articles or from state constitutions.

Teachings of the Enlightenment

- The Constitution was also based on the ideas of the European "Enlightenment."
- Enlightenment thinkers believed society could be improved by the use of reason.
- The works of Enlightenment thinkers were widely read by the Founding Fathers.

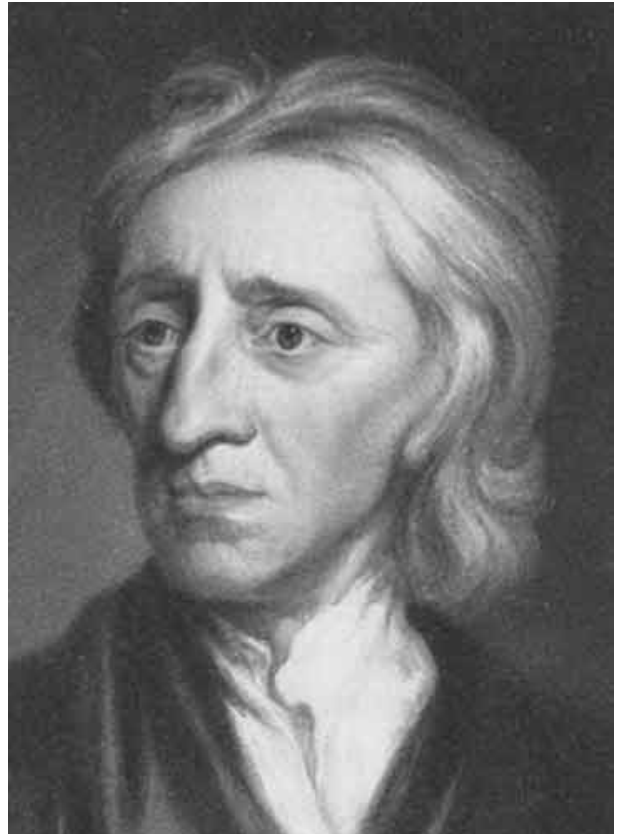
The
Enlightenment
7:00



John Locke and Natural Rights

- published *Two Treatises of Government* in 1690 and argued two important ideas. 1) All people had natural rights to life, liberty and property. 2) Government is an agreement between the ruler and the ruled.
- Locke wrote that if the ruler violates the people's natural rights, the people have the right to rebel.

**Locke &
Montesquieu
3:23**



Montesquieu and the Separation of Powers

- French philosopher Baron de Montesquieu suggested that when creating a government, powers should be divided up and clearly defined.
- He suggested three different branches be created: the judicial, the executive and the legislative.
- His idea is known as the **separation of powers** because it was designed to keep any person or group from gaining too much power.



- Let's finish our lesson with the reading of the last section on page 214, which discusses John Adams' views on the Constitution.

New York's two Senators that represent us in Washington D.C.



Senator Charles Schumer



Senator Kirsten Gillibrand