

COLONIAL AMERICA'S BASIC IDEAS OF CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNMENT AND RIGHTS

Time Allocated: Two 50-minute class periods

Correlation to the Alabama High School Graduation Exam:
Standard II, Objectives 1 & 2

Correlation to the Alabama Course of Study:

Citizenship – Seventh Grade Standards: 1 & 2

United States History to 1877 - Tenth Grade Standards: 2

United States Government - Twelfth Grade Standards: 1 & 5

Lesson Objectives:

The student will be able to:

1. Explain how the basic ideas of constitutional government and rights were developed and implemented in America prior to independence from Great Britain.
2. Analyze how the social and economic conditions in the American colonies differed from Great Britain.
3. Describe how the social and economic conditions in the American colonies affected the development of constitutional government.
4. List the basic constitutional principles and rights of colonial America, which are present in our country today.
5. Explain why more people in America had the right to vote than in Great Britain.

Materials Needed:

1. Vocabulary list
2. Primary sources such as the Mayflower Compact, Fundamental Orders of Connecticut, Massachusetts Body of Liberties, The Laws and Liberties of Massachusetts, and royal charters of different colonies (*Massachusetts, Rhode Island granted by Parliament and confirmed by the king, etc.*)
3. Short biographies of [Benjamin Franklin](#), [Thomas Paine](#), and [Alexander Hamilton](#)
4. [Time Line of Historical Events](#)
5. [Map of the colonies](#)

Introduction:

Brainstorming Activity: Imagine that you belong to a group that has been persecuted due to its religious beliefs. Consequently your group decides to move to a foreign land. Once there, the group must decide how it will govern itself. What basic principles of government and rights should the community establish?

Major Instructional Sequence:

1. Compare and contrast the social and economic conditions of America to those of Great Britain and explain how these conditions allowed the common man to rise to greatness. (Biographies may be used here.)

2. Explain how a colonial American might feel about laws that granted certain rights to people on the basis of their wealth or family background.
3. Show how royal charters and other instruments of government gave rise to written constitutions in the colonies. Small groups may examine royal charters and other instruments of government to determine the extent to which these documents established basic principles of government and rights.
4. List the basic ideas contained in the instruments of government—fundamental rights, rule of law, separation of powers, checks and balances, and representative government. Which instruments of government embodied these ideas?

Closure or Evaluation:

Questions: Which basic constitutional principles and rights of colonial America are present today? In your opinion, how did these principles and rights prepare Americans for independence? Do you think that the same degree of social and economic opportunity exists for immigrants in America today? Are any groups of Americans persecuted today because of their political or religious beliefs? (This discussion will allow a review of the major points covered in this lesson.)

Vocabulary List:

immigrant
primogeniture
social mobility
fundamental rights
rule of law
separation of powers
checks and balances
royal charter



Arguing a case before a royal magistrate