

ROOTS OF THE CONSTITUTION

Time Allocated: One to two 55-minute class period(s)

Correlation to the Alabama High School Graduation Exam:

Standard II — Objectives 1 & 3

Correlation to the Alabama Course of Study:

Citizenship – Seventh Grade Standards: 1

United States Government — Twelfth Grade Standards: 1

Lesson Objectives:

The student will be able to:

1. To use research to develop an understanding of the English roots of the American Constitution.

Materials Needed:

1. Magna Carta — <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/medieval/magframe.htm>
2. Petition of Rights — This may be found in *Magruder's American Government*
3. Mayflower Compact, 1620 — <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/amerdoc/mayflower.htm>
4. English Bill of Rights, 1689 — <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/england.htm>
5. Virginia Declaration of Rights, 1776 — <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/virginia.htm>
6. [The Constitution of the United States, 1787](#)
7. Internet access

Introduction:

Briefly introduce the students to the documents they will be working with and a general outline of English history during the period being studied. Have the class work in groups on each of the documents.

Major Instructional Sequence:

After having divided the class into groups, have them research the following questions:

1. What, in general, was the nature of your document?
2. What effect did it have on English history?
3. What elements of your document are found in the U.S. Constitution?

Closure or Evaluation:

Have the groups meet as a whole class to consider and discuss the following:

Analyze the U.S. Constitution in terms of its roots in English and British history and in the history of American colonial government. Have students compose a list or an essay describing how the English system of government influenced the provisions of the United States Constitution.