

Document Based Essay

Grade 7

“The Constitution”

Directions:

The following question is based on the accompanying documents (1-5). This question is designed to test your ability to work with historic documents. As you analyze the documents, take into account both the sources of the document and the author’s point of view.

Historical Context:

For a time, America was governed as a Confederation. In 1787, a group of individuals met in Philadelphia to discuss modifying that Confederation. This Convention finally produced the system of government we use today.

Task:

Using information from the documents and your knowledge of social studies, answer the questions that follow each document in Part A. Your answers to the questions will help you write the Part B essay in which you will be asked to.

- ✓ Describe the circumstances and events that caused the “founding fathers” to write the Constitution.
- ✓ Explain the nature of a Federal Government and Republican Representation and their benefits.
- ✓ Explain the opposition to the Constitution and why some people wanted to keep a confederation.

Part A Short Answer:

Examine the documents that follow closely and then answer the questions that follow. Carefully read and analyze each document. Answer each question on the separate answer sheet using evidence from the document and your knowledge of Social Studies.

Part B Essay Answer:

Answer the question in a well-organized essay that uses your answers from Part A. Use evidence from the Documents and your knowledge of Social Studies to support the ideas in your essay. You should use definitions, examples, evidence, and other specific examples to fully develop the Topic.

Document #1

Article II. Each state retains its sovereignty, freedom, and independence, and every power, jurisdiction, and right, which is not by this Confederation expressly delegated to the United States, in Congress assembled.

Article III. The said States hereby severally enter into a firm league of friendship with each other, for their common defense, the security of their liberties, and their mutual and general welfare, binding themselves to assist each other, against all force offered to, or attacks made upon them, or any of them, on account of religion, sovereignty, trade, or any other pretense whatever.

The Continental Congress, The Articles of Confederation, November 15, 1777

- 1 A) What is the role of the States in the Articles of Confederation?
- 1B) Explain one of the successes of the Articles of Confederation

Document #2

“no sooner were the State Governments formed than their jealousy and ambition began to display themselves. Each endeavored to cut a slice from the common loaf, to add to its own morsel, till at length the confederation became frittered down to the impotent condition in which it now stands.”

James Wilson (Governor of Pennsylvania), 1787

- 2A) What is this quote saying about the conditions under the Articles of Confederation?
- 2B) How did the Articles of Confederation affect trade and commerce?

Document #3

PREAMBLE. : *We the People* of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America. ...
ARTICLE VI : This Constitution, and the Laws of the United States which shall be made in Pursuance thereof; and all Treaties made, or which shall be made, under the Authority of the United States, shall be the supreme Law of the Land; and the Judges in every State shall be bound thereby, any Thing in the Constitution or Laws of any State to the Contrary notwithstanding.

Adopted by convention of States, The Constitution of the United States, Sept. 17, 1787

- 3A) Explain the purpose of a good government as described in the Preamble.
- 3B) Describe the relationship between the State and Federal Government as established in the Constitution.

Document #4

“The two great points of difference between a democracy and a republic are: first, the delegation of the government, in the latter, to a small number of citizens elected by the rest; secondly, the greater number of citizens, and greater sphere of country, over which the latter may be extended.

“The effect of the first difference is, on the one hand, to refine and enlarge the public views, by passing them through the medium of a chosen body of citizens, whose wisdom may best discern the true interest of their country...”

James Madison, The Federalist #10, Friday, November 23, 1787.

- 4 A) What are the benefits of a Republic?
- 4 B) Explain two ways the Constitution establish a Republic?

Document #5

“I have the highest veneration for those gentlemen [who attended the Philadelphia Constitutional Convention]; but, sir, give me leave to demand, What right they had to say, We, the people ?

Who authorized them to speak the language of, We the people, instead of We, the States ?... The people gave them no power to use their name.... I wish to hear the real, actual, existing danger, which should lead us to take those steps, so dangerous in my conception...

The federal Convention ought to have amended the old system; for this purpose they were solely delegated....

The principles of this system [the Constitution] are extremely pernicious, impolitic, and dangerous.... It is not a democracy, wherein the people retain all their rights securely.... The rights of conscience, trial by jury, liberty of the press, all your immunities and franchises, all pretensions to human rights and privileges, are rendered insecure, if not lost, by the change [of government].... Is this tame relinquishment of rights worthy of freemen? Is it worthy of that manly fortitude that ought to characterize republicans?"

Patrick Henry, 1788.

- 5 A) What does the authors of this quote feel toward the Constitution?
- 5 B) What is the role of the Federal Government in the United States Constitution?