

SS.7.C.1.2

Trace the impact that the Magna Carta, English Bill of Rights, Mayflower Compact, and Thomas Paine's Common Sense had on colonists' views of government.

SS.7.C.1.2 Benchmark Clarification 1: Students will identify the important ideas contained in the Magna Carta, English Bill of Rights, Mayflower Compact, and *Common Sense*.

The **Magna Carta** was written by English noblemen to force King John of England to protect certain rights of the people and to limit the king's powers. The document said that the king must follow the laws of the land. It also allowed the people there to have liberties they did not have before.

One important idea of the Magna Carta was **limited monarchy**. This meant that the king must share power with Parliament and must follow the constitution and the laws passed by Parliament. Three other ideas came from the Magna Carta: writ of **habeas corpus**, rule by a constitutional, and **common law**. The Magna Carta, although not totally successful, became a symbol of the idea that even a king was not above the law.

The **English Bill of Rights** stated that every person possesses individual rights that must be protected. The rights in the document were *enumerated*, or listed, and included the right to bear arms and the right to *petition* the king (to ask the king to solve problems). This document was also important because it sent the message that the consent of the people in government was necessary.

The **Mayflower Compact** set up a government with the first written set of laws for the English settlers who arrived in Plymouth, Massachusetts. This document introduced the idea of **self-government** in the colonies. The Plymouth colonists wanted a government based on the consent of the governed and on fair laws that applied equally to everyone. They also believed in the importance of a social contract, which means that people give their consent to being governed as long as the government protects the people's rights and liberties.

Common Sense is a pamphlet (booklet) written in 1776 by Thomas Paine, who encouraged colonists to seek independence from England. The pamphlet accused King George III of England of tyranny, challenged his right to power over the colonists, and blamed him for treating the colonists unfairly. Paine also wrote that the colonies needed a written constitution with a set of rules that everyone would have to follow and a government that could not abuse its power.

common law - law based on customs and prior legal decisions; used in civil cases

Common Sense - a pamphlet published by Thomas Paine in 1776 to convince the American colonists to support becoming independent from England

English Bill of Rights - a government document that expanded the powers of the English Parliament and expanded the rights of the people, as well as further limited the rights of the king; written by the members of the English Parliament in 1689

habeas corpus - the principle that the government has to provide a cause or reason for holding a person in jail

limited monarchy - a system of government in which the king or queen shares authority with an elected legislature and agrees to be bound by a constitution or a set of laws, also known as a constitutional monarchy

Magna Carta - a government document that limited the power of the king of England and protected the rights of the nobility; written by the English nobles in 1215

Mayflower Compact - an agreement between individuals that created a government that would provide order and protect the rights of the colonists; written by a group of English Puritans in Massachusetts in 1620

self-government - popular or representative system where the people create and run their own government

