

The Journey to Freedom

Magna Carta Hall to Independence Hall

Educators Guide and Lesson Plan created by Stephanie Brownlee, *Early ISD*



Grade Level

6th Grade
Could be adapted for 5th – 12th Grade

Time Required

60- 75 minutes at museum
45-60 minute classroom extension

Supplies/Materials Needed

- Large Post – It poster or large piece of paper
- Gallery Walk worksheet: The Journey to Freedom
- Gallery Walk: The Journey to Freedom

Standards

6th Grade TEKS
6.9(A), 6.9(B), 6.10(A), 6.12(A), 6.12(B), 6.19(A), 6.19(E)

Key Vocabulary

Government:
government, democracy, monarchy, king, parliament, colony, independence, liberty, freedom, rights, responsibilities, citizen, representation, Constitution, law,

Essential Question(s)

How does one document signed in England in 1215 eventually influence the founding of the United States?

Lesson Objectives

Students will:

- Explain why the Magna Carta was important.
- Identify ideas carried into later democratic documents.
- Compare the Magna Carta and the Declaration of Independence.
- Use museum artifacts as historical evidence.

Pre-Visit

Create a simple anchor chart titled “What Makes a Fair Government?” “Let students brainstorm characteristics such as fairness, equal treatment, voting, laws, safety, and freedom. Leave the chart unfinished...students can add to it when they return from the field trip.

Governments have existed for thousands of years. Different civilizations had different governments. Kings once held enormous power. Laws protect people; rights are not automatic. America began as British colonies. The Declaration of Independence announced separation. The Constitution created the government. Democracy requires participation.

Big Ideas to discuss:

- Power should have limits.
- People deserve certain rights.
- Laws should apply to everyone.
- Governments can change over time.
- Ideas spread.

Museum Visit

justice, equality,
tyranny, taxation,
limited government,
rule of law, self-law

Historical Thinking:
primary source,
secondary source,
artifact, replica,
interpretation,
evidence, historical
document, timeline,
influence, cause, effect

Architecture:
column, arch,
chamber, assembly,
replica, symbol,
monument

Before student enter the museum, **say**: “Today we are not tourists of the museum, but historians. Your job will be to answer one question – where did America’s ideas about freedom begin?”

Station 1: Magna Carta Hall

Students will need a clipboard to record their findings.

Say: Your challenge today is to observe first, no reading, only looking. What materials do you notice? What symbols appear? Who would have been allowed inside? What does the room make you feel?”

Next, students are allowed to read exhibit labels and investigate the artifacts. **Ask**: “Who had the power? Who limited the king’s power? Why was the Magna Carta Revolutionary?”

Discuss: “If you were King John, would you sign willingly? Why or why not?”

As students leave the room, ask them to predict, “If this document limited the king...what ideas might future governments borrow?” Students write their predictions before entering Independence Hall.

Station 2: Independence Hall

Upon entrance, have students compare the two room: What looks similar? What feels different? How has the architecture changed? Why recreate Independence Hall?

Students should be able to examine:

- Replica of the assembly room
- Constitution references
- Declaration references
- Historic furnishings

Students search for evidence of these democratic ideas:

- Rule of law
- Limited government
- Individual rights
- Consent of the governed (beginning in Magna Carta and expanded Declaration of Independence.

- Equality (limited in Magna Carta and expanded but incomplete in Declaration of Independence and Constitution.

Discuss fair trials, taxes, representation, rights, and government accountability.

Activity 1: Gallery Walk

In the hallway between Magna Carta Hall and Independence Hall, there will be different stations of documents and visual aids for the students to analyze. At each station, students should complete their recording sheet featuring the following questions:

- What rights or principles are being discussed?
- What limits are placed on government?
- What similarities do you notice with earlier documents?
- What new ideas appear?
- Evidence from the source:

The stations are: 1. Magna Carta, 2. English Bill of Rights, 3. Declaration of Independence, 4. U.S. Constitution, and 5. U.S. Bill of Rights.

Activity 2: Freedom Timeline

Students receive event cards and arrange them:
Magna Carta → English Bill of Rights → Colonial governments → Declaration of Independence → U.S. Constitution → U.S. Bill of Rights

Post-Visit

Written Reflection: If the Magna Carta had never existed, would American democracy look different? Defend your answer using evidence from the museum.

Variations and Extensions

Students choose one:

- Design a modern Magna Carta for their school. Include 5 rights and 5 responsibilities.
- Become a delegate in Philadelphia. Write a journal entry describing the debates taking place in Independence Hall.

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- Create a comic relief titled: The 561-year Journey from Magna Carta to Independence Hall.



6th Grade	The Journey to Freedom				
	What rights or principles are being discussed?	What limits are placed on government?	What similarities do you notice with other documents?	What new ideas appear?	Give specific evidence from source.
Magna Carta, 1215					
English Bill of Rights, 1669					
Declaration of Independence, 1776					
U.S. Constitution, 1787					
Bill of Rights, 1791					

Final Gallery Walk Reflection

After visiting all five stations, answer the following questions:

1. Which document had the greatest influence on American democracy? Why?
 2. What ideas appear in more than one document?
 3. How did the idea of individual rights expand from 1215 to 1791?
 4. Which right or principle do you think is most important today?
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Location of Runnymede, where barons forced King John I to sign the *Magna Carta*



King John I meeting with the barons to sign the *Magna Carta*, 1215.

Primary Source Excerpt

"No free man shall be seized or imprisoned... except by the lawful judgment of his equals or by the law of the land." – *Magna Carta*, Clause 39, 1215.

Think About

- Read the excerpt again. Why do you think the barons would have forced King John I to sign this document? What do you think had the king been doing previously to warrant his barons to react in this manner?
- Is the king above the law?
- Who has rights in this document?
- How does this limit government power?

Complete your chart.



Map of England following the
Glorious Revolution

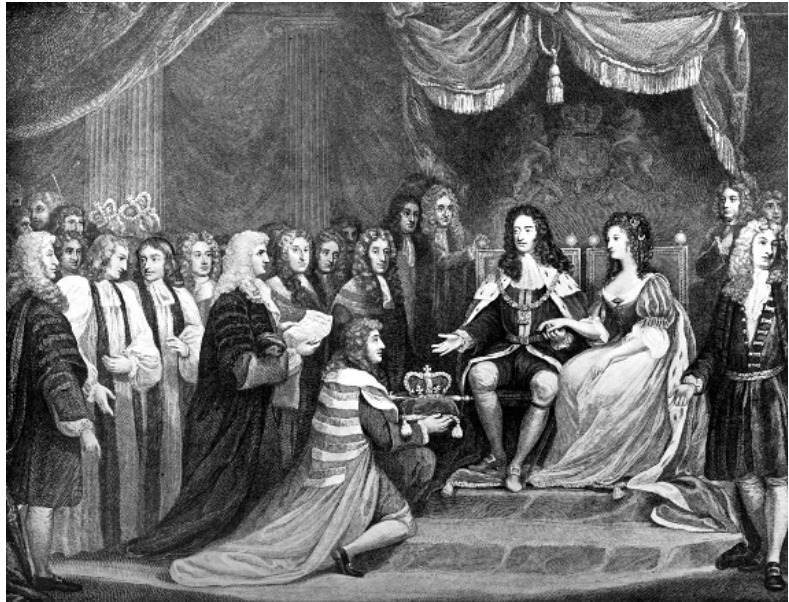


Image of William and Mary accepting the crown.

Primary Source Excerpt

"The pretended power of suspending laws... without consent of Parliament is illegal."

"Excessive bail ought not to be required, nor excessive fines imposed, nor cruel and unusual punishments inflicted."

Think About

- Who now has power besides the king?
- How are people's rights protected?
- Which ideas sound familiar from later U.S. documents?

Complete your chart.

Station 3

Declaration of Independence, 1776



Map of 13 Colonies



John Trumbull's *Declaration of Independence*, 1818.

Primary Source Excerpt

"All men are created equal."

"They are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."

Think About

- What does the phrase "all men are created equal" mean in the context of 1776?
- What rights do Jefferson and the colonists claim all people have?
- Do you think everyone living in the colonies was included in this idea of equality?
Why or why not?

Complete your chart.



Map of 13 States, 1787



Howard Chandler Christy, *The Signing of the U.S. Constitution*, 1787

Background

After the weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation became apparent, delegates met in Philadelphia in 1787 to create a stronger national government. The Constitution established a system of government based on separation of powers, checks and balances, and federalism.

Primary Source Excerpt

Article I

"All legislative Powers herein granted shall be vested in a Congress of the United States..."

Article II

"The executive Power shall be vested in a President of the United States of America."

Article III

"The judicial Power of the United States, shall be vested in one supreme Court..."

Preamble

"We the People of the United States... do ordain and establish this Constitution..."

Think About

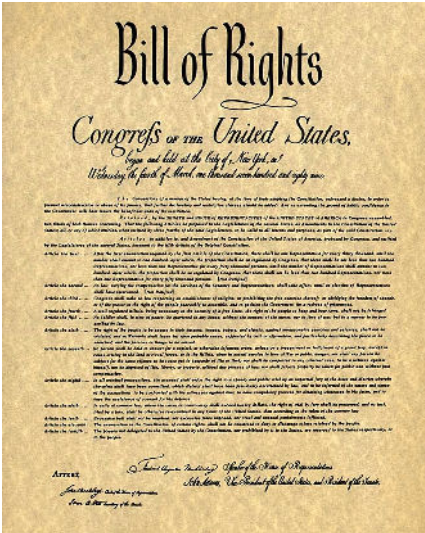
- Why does the Constitution begin with the words "We the People"?
- How does the Constitution prevent one person or group from becoming too powerful?
- What powers are given to each branch of government?
- How does the Constitution reflect ideas from the Magna Carta, English Bill of Rights, and Declaration of Independence?
- Why might the Founders have wanted a stronger government than the Articles of Confederation provided?

Complete your chart.



Station 5

U.S. Bill of Rights, 1791



James Madison, often called the "Father of the Bill of Rights"

★ THE BILL OF RIGHTS ★



1ST AMENDMENT

Freedom of religion, assembly, press, petition, and speech



2ND AMENDMENT

The right to bear arms



3RD AMENDMENT

The right NOT to quarter soldiers



4TH AMENDMENT

Freedom from unreasonable search and seizure



5TH AMENDMENT

Due Process of Law
Rights of the accused



6TH AMENDMENT

Right to a fair, impartial and speedy trial



7TH AMENDMENT

Right to a trial by jury



8TH AMENDMENT

No cruel or unusual punishment
No excessive fines



9TH AMENDMENT

Individual rights
Bill of Rights
10 Amendments



10TH AMENDMENT

States' Rights

Primary Source Excerpt

First Amendment

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press..."

Fourth Amendment

"The right of the people to be secure... against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated..."

Fifth Amendment

"No person shall... be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law..."

Eighth Amendment

"Excessive bail shall not be required, nor excessive fines imposed, nor cruel and unusual punishments inflicted."

Think About

- Which rights in the Bill of Rights seem most important today? Why?
- How do these amendments protect citizens from government power?
- Which rights sound similar to those found in the English Bill of Rights?

Complete your chart.
