

Chapter 2: Origins of American Government

Opener
Lecture Notes

AMERICAN GOVERNMENT

PEARSON

Why stand we here idle?... Is life so dear or peace so sweet as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God! I know not what course others may take, but as for me, give me liberty or give me death!

-Patrick Henry, Speech at the Virginia Convention
(March 1775)



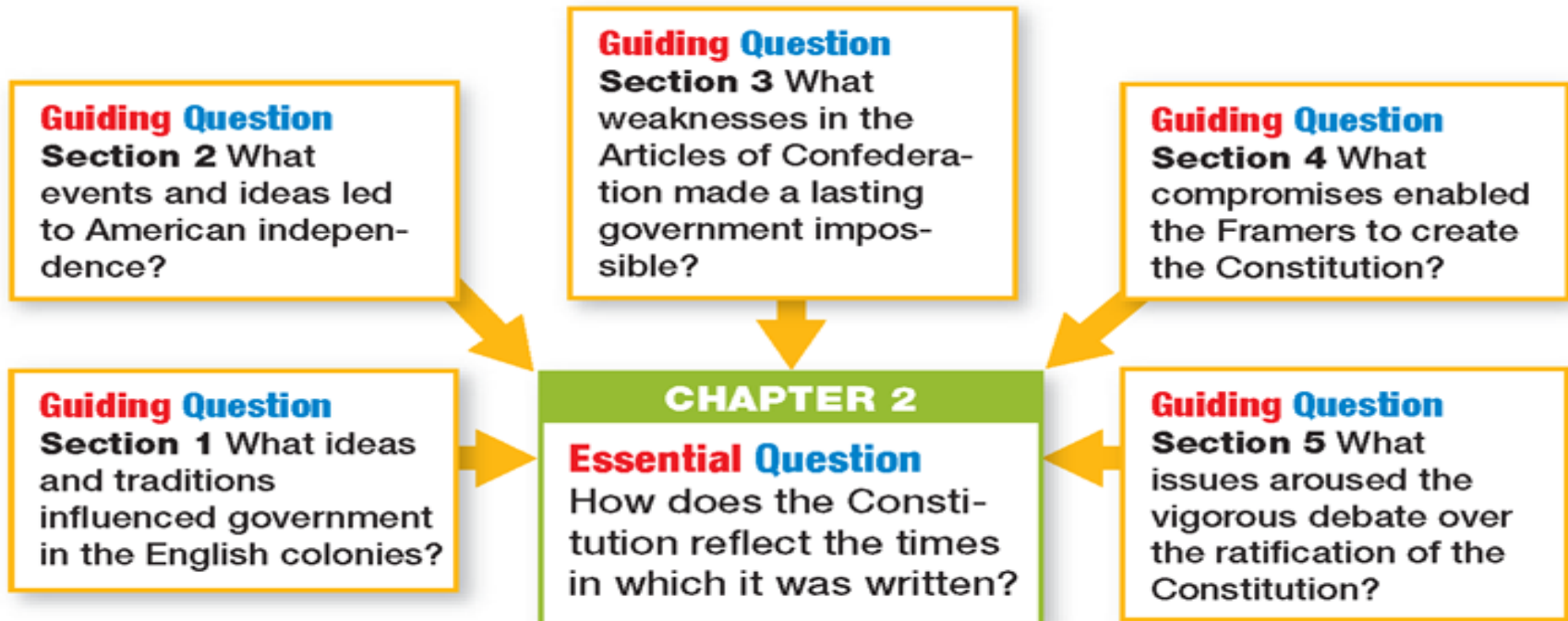
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▶ Painting: The colonists meet the British army at Lexington, Massachusetts.

▶ Essential Question

- How does the Constitution reflect the times in which it was written?



▶ Guiding Questions

- Section 1: Our Political Beginnings
 - What ideas and traditions influenced government in the English colonies?
 - The colonists were influenced by English political ideas such as limited and representative government, as well as by English historical documents like the Magna Carta.

▶ Guiding Questions

- Section 2: The Coming of Independence
 - What events and ideas led to American independence?
 - Growing colonial unity and protests of unpopular British policies led to fighting with Great Britain and the Declaration of Independence.

▶ Guiding Questions

- Section 3: The Critical Period
 - What weaknesses in the Articles of Confederation made a lasting government impossible?
 - The weak central government created under the Articles could not tax, regulate trade, settle disputes between the states, or enforce its own laws.

▶ Guiding Questions

- Section 4: Creating the Constitution
 - What compromises enabled the Framers to create the Constitution?
 - The Connecticut Compromise, Three-Fifths Compromise, and Commerce and Slave Trade Compromise each settled key disputes at the Constitutional Convention.

▶ Guiding Questions

- Section 5: Ratifying the Constitution
 - What issues aroused the vigorous debate over the ratification of the Constitution?
 - The key debates over ratification centered on whether the new national government was too powerful and whether the Constitution should include a bill of rights for citizens.