

DBQ

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“The Constitution represents the subversion of the Revolution.” Assess the validity of the statement.

Directions: The prompt is based on the accompanying documents. The documents have been edited for the purpose of this exercise.

In your response you should do the following:

- State a relevant thesis that directly addresses all parts of the question.
- Support the thesis or a relevant argument with evidence from all, or all but one, of the documents.
- Incorporate analysis of all, or all but one, of the documents into your argument.
- Focus your analysis of each document on at least one of the following: intended audience, purpose, historical content, and/or point of view.
- Support your argument with analysis of historical examples outside the documents.
- Connect historical phenomena relevant to your argument to broader events or processes.
- Synthesize the elements above into a persuasive essay.

Document A → Source: *Amos Singletree*, 1788.

These lawyers, and men of learning, and moneyed men, that talk so finely, and gloss over matters so smoothly, to make us poor illiterate people swallow down the pill, expect to get into Congress themselves...and then they will swallow up all us little folks, like the great Leviathan.

Comment [PO1]: anti-federalist, date = during debate about ratification - he's warning about elite driven constitution -- could be used to support claim that Constitution favored elite/strong central gov. -- and that is subverting - OK - whole anti-federalist argument about how the const. is what we were fighting against

Document B → Source: Richard Henry Lee, 1787

It cannot be denied with truth, that this new constitution is, in its first principles, most highly and dangerously, oligarchic.

Comment [PO2]: same as Doc. A - can be used as further support of claim - but only to point out that we can look back at some of the commentary during the ratification debate to ascertain the extent to which the const. may have subverted the Revolution == NEED MORE CONCRETE EVIDENCE -- WHAT IS THE EVIDENCE THEY POINTED TO? (SEE OUTSIDE KNOWLEDGE ABOVE)

Document C → Source: *Chart: Composition of State Assemblies in the 1780's*, Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History.

Politics and Society in Post-Revolutionary America

Comment [PO3]: US was becoming more democratic during the Articles of Confederation - SUPPORTS THE CLAIM THAT THE CONSTITUTION MOVED US IN THE DIRECTION OF BECOMING LESS DEMOCRATIC (WHEN BROUGHT UP IN CONJUNCTION WITH ARGUMENTS FROM DOC A & B -- THE ELITE ARGUMENT

Composition of State Assemblies in the 1780s					
State	Farmers	Large Landowners	Artisan	Professional	Merchant
Massachusetts	47	1	12	13	20
New York	37	8	10	18	19
Pennsylvania	37	2	22	15	20
South Carolina	14	32	3	15	13
Virginia	20	36	3	21	10

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Document D → Source: *Speech on the Constitutional Convention on a Plan of Government*, Alexander Hamilton, 1787

All communities divide themselves into the few and the many. The first are the rich and well born, the other the mass of the people.... The people are turbulent and changing; they seldom judge or determine right. Give therefore to the first class a distinct, permanent share in the government. They will check the unsteadiness of the second, and as they cannot receive any advantage by change, they therefore will ever maintain good government.

Comment [PO4]: more about elitism of Constitution from HAMILTON HIMSELF!!!! strong piece of evidence (BETTER THAN DOCS A/B) because it is from one of the authors of the Federalist Papers - (O.K. - Hamilton was closer to being a monarchist than ALL of the other Federalists -- can mention this as a nuance in this line of thought - can also add nuance by using Hamilton's argument that the elite make better reps -- from Fed. Papers -- you used it in white paper)

Document E → Source: *Democracy in America*, Alexis de Tocqueville, 1835.

The doctrine of self-interest properly understood does not inspire great sacrifices, but every day it prompts some small ones; by itself it cannot make a man virtuous, but its discipline shapes a lot of orderly, temperate, moderate, careful, and self-controlled citizens. If it does not lead the will directly to virtue, it established habits which unconsciously turn it that way.

Comment [PO5]: POV - a visitor to US after the fact (many years after the Const. - during the Market Revolution) - the classical liberal argument - can be used in my section that points out things about the const. that DO NOT subvert the Revolution

Document F → Source: *Interpreting the Founding, 2nd Edition*, Alan Gibson, 2009.

“... the moderns [founders] developed a “new science of politics” that was predicated on radically different beliefs than classical republicanism and sought to achieve radically different ends. Whereas the ancients [Greeks, Romans] had believed with Aristotle that man is a political animal... the moderns envisioned a ...”state of nature” in which man in his essence was free, equal, independent and dominated by a concern for self-preservation and material comfort. Instead of trying to foster common belief among the citizenry and suppress their passions and interests, the ... [founders] ... concentrated on “what men do,” and accepted them “as they are.”

Comment [PO6]: Gibson describes the classical liberal argument as found in Hamilton's Fed. Papers that you analyzed and wrote about for your white papers --- (HE'S QUOTING HAMILTON, AND THE "FOUNDERS" REFERRED TO ARE THE WRITERS OF THE CONSTITUTION) -- can use this to support the claim that the supporters of the Constitution were trying to save liberty from our self-interested human nature -- the old giving up a little liberty to save liberty line of reasoning -- I CAN FRAME THIS AS "ON THE SURFACE IT APPEARS THAT THE CONSTITUTION, WITH ITS FOCUS ON SELF-INTEREST AND DE-EMPHASIS OF PERSONAL VIRTUE, DOES, ON ONE LEVEL, STRAY FROM REVOLUTIONARY ERA PRINCIPLES, BUT ON ANOTHER LEVEL IT WAS, IN THE EYES OF MANY, A MORE REALISTIC WAY TO WORK TOWARD THE COMMON GOOD."

Document G → Source: *Antiquity Surpassed*, Paul Rahe, 1994.

[In two letters to Mercy Otis Warren in January and April 1776, John Adams writes]

There must be a positive Passion for the public good, the public Interest, Honour, Power, and Glory, established in the Minds of the People, or there can be no Republican Government, nor any real Liberty. And this public Passion must be Superiour to all private Passions. Men must be ready, they must pride themselves, and be happy to sacrifice their private Pleasures, Passions, and Interests, nay their private Friendships and dearest Connections, when they stand in Competition with the Rights of society.

Comment [PO7]: classical republican argument - since I need a paragraph that describes the revolutionary principles that were the impetus behind the rebellion, I can use this to argue that there was a great emphasis on virtue (i.e. classical republicanism) -- this is a usable doc. because ADAMS was a major rebel

[Rahe adds of Adams] He was afraid that the “rage for Profit and Commerce” so evident “among all ranks and Degrees of men even in America” would be fatal to liberty’s cause for he had learned from studying the ancients that “the spirit of Commerce... is incompatible with that purity of Heart, and Greatness of should which is necessary for an happy Republic.” If the Revolution was to succeed, “every Man must seriously set himself to root out his Passions, Prejudices, and Attachments, and to get the better of his private Interest. The only reputable Principle and Doctrine must be that all Things must give Way to the public.”

BUT - I can add nuance to my argument by pointing out that since ADAMS was afraid of the “rage for Profit and Commerce” of the people of 1776, that the self-interested quest for profit was present back then -- enough so that Adams was afraid of it -- were the writers of the Constitution on to something? were they correct that they were being more realistic when arguing that we are self-interested by nature? THIS SUGGESTS THAT MAYBE THEY WERE

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SAMPLE THESIS STATEMENT:

The rebels were motivated, on a concrete level, by issues of taxation and a desire for self-government through local self-representation. On an abstract philosophical or intellectual level, the patriots were primarily motivated by ideas that can be characterized as "classical republicanism. In the final analysis, the Constitution does subvert many of those ideals and values, while at the same time, and in modified form, serving to protect the liberties for which the rebels fought."

******That is a thesis (and a sentence before it) that structures the entire essay by allowing you to elaborate on all of that is mentioned.*

NOTE:

The Anti-Federalist argument (classical republican) will help because their arguments against the Constitution were wrapped around what they argued were their motivations to fight the war and how the Constitution was going against that (i.e. their fear of elitism, a distant and shadowy strong central government).

The Federalist argument (classical liberal) will help because they argued that they now learned more about human nature and have thought up a system (checks and balances, large republic) that will save liberty from what they thought was a mess. In other words, because our human nature was self-interested we cannot have too much democracy (i.e. local self-government) because our self-interestedness will lead to collapse.

SUGGESTED OUTLINE:

1. INTRODUCTION
 - a. (thesis, intro of topic sentences, talk about importance of issue)
2. BODY PARAGRAPH 1 -outline the values and principles for which the rebels fought
 - a. consent of the governed; no taxation w/o representation
 - i. parliament was distant and overbearing -- far away strong central government, wanted local self-government, believed that democracy was served best by local independent farmers who governed themselves
 - b. classical republicanism: people are virtuous; England is corrupt; gov't doesn't need to be strong and centralized
 - c. all men are created equal (equality of opportunity)
 - d. unalienable rights: life, liberty, property
 - e. protect economic interests
3. BODY PARAGRAPH 2 - the ways the const. did subvert, or undermine, or go against, the Revolution and its values and ideals as discussed in BODY PARAGRAPH 1
 - a. reliance on institutions demonstrates loss of faith in the virtue of the people— demonstrates that Const is anti-republican
 - b. possible oligarchic nature of a consolidated gov't (e.g. Senate, power of judiciary, large voting districts for house)
 - c. representation is distant in an extended republic

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- d. good of the whole (Const. is individualistic)
 - e. A of C should be seen as a representation of the values of the Rev: gov't doesn't need to be strong and centralized, b/c people are virtuous; Const. obviously subverts the spirit of the A of C.
4. BODY PARAGRAPH 3 - ways the Const. did NOT subvert (rely heavily on things said by the Federalists/classical liberals about saving liberty from the mess that was the Articles of Confederation (which they argued, was too democratic)
- a. liberty won in Rev can only be protected by a strong central gov't (i.e. Articles have/will fail: regional conflicts will be irreconcilable; foreign trade languishes; geopolitical threats will overwhelm)
 - b. reduces impact of factions (i.e. promotes stability)
 - c. Const wasn't subversion, it was evidence of having learned from experience...classical republicanism didn't work that well in practice, needed to be replaced by liberal worldview—so Const. was actually saving liberty
5. CONCLUSION - talk about how you demonstrated and supported your thesis