In California, the Modern World History curriculum begins with a study of the intellectual foundations of Western political thought. The standards require students to understand "selections from Plato's *Republic* and Aristotle's *Politics*" and the role that these ideas have on the making of our political system. By starting the academic year with this emphasis on Western liberal thought, the standards set up a narrative that will allow students to explore the development of liberal democracies, the growing inclusion of these political systems, and a comparison between these and other dominant political philosophies of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Teachers often find this standard challenging to integrate into a course that is otherwise very chronological. Given the drive of the standards to privilege the model of Western liberal democracies this lesson allows teachers to begin the course by asking students to first define and then consider the significance of tyranny and the rule of law.

In this 10th grade lesson, students will define tyranny by examining a variety of primary sources. They will then consider how early American leaders' fear of tyranny and preference for the rule of law influenced the development of our own system of government.

This lesson includes a number of strategies designed to improve student reading comprehension, writing ability, and critical thinking, such as the ability to cite specific textual evidence in support of a thesis, defining vocabulary within context, and writing arguments. It also supports the development of collaborative, interpretative, and productive English Language development.
Western Political Thought

California History-Social Science Standard 10.1 asks students to “...trace the development of Western political thought” from ancient times. “Western political thought” is abstract and students are likely unfamiliar with the phrase. This lesson addresses one of the tenets of Western philosophy, liberal representative government, whose development is considered to be one of the turning points of world history.

During the period of the Enlightenment, men and women in kingdoms and colonies spanning the Atlantic world engaged in discussions about what constituted the ideal state. Many of these people believed that the absolute authority of the Crown in places like France and Spain and their colonies was tyrannical and this institution, along with the Catholic Church, needed to be reformed. Other thinkers, particularly in the American colonies, saw the liberties of the freedom of the press and (very) limited representative government in Britain as something that should be expanded. With these conversations and eventual political action came the development of Western political thought.

Western political thought encompasses an emphasis on liberty of the individual to engage in public life for the improvement of himself (all citizens were male in the eighteenth and nineteenth century) and society. In order for these independent individuals to participate in public life, they needed to be governed by laws that affected everyone equally. This concern with the rule of law, a system of laws that extends to everyone in the state equally regardless of class, is a direct response to the absolute authority of the king. Enlightenment thinkers were very critical of the ability of the Crown to:

1. create laws for certain groups of people and exclude himself and other aristocrats from obeying the law,
2. not be responsible to an independent group of judges who made legal decisions based on the law.

This arbitrary use of power was seen as tyranny, an illegitimate form of government, which could only be addressed with the rule of law. Historian Gordon Woods argues that in the 1760’s and 1770’s American colonial leaders imagined the British king as a corrupt tyrant who subverted people’s liberty. He suggests that this led to a flourishing of texts defining examples of tyranny. Americans spread ideas about this illegitimate authority and argued for resistance to the British Crown. These American intellectuals, like other Enlightenment thinkers, referred to texts from philosophers in previous centuries and decades to learn more about tyranny and ways to create a more just government. Two of the most important thinkers on the topic of tyranny and the rule of law were the Greek philosophers, Plato and Aristotle. Like the Enlightenment thinkers and American revolutionaries, we will read excerpts from these two philosophers to better develop our understanding of tyranny and how to best govern. By reading the texts that the Enlightenment thinkers read, we will have a deeper understanding of the ideas that are the foundations of Western political thought.
Teacher Background

Determining Significance

The Big Six Historical Thinking Concepts initiates the exploration into historical thinking with a consideration of significance. Authors Peter Seixas and Tom Morton suggest that teachers and students should discuss what is important, or significant, when studying history. Part of deciding what is significant highlights how we make choices about what we should study in the history classroom. The authors argue that, “Significance depends upon one’s perspective and purpose. A historical person or event can acquire significance if we, the historians, can link it to larger trends and stories that reveal something important for us today.”1 The consideration of whether something is revealing is largely based on contemporary concerns and priorities. Therefore, focusing on the significance of Plato and Aristotle’s writings allows us to consider how these ideas have been employed by political thinkers in modern political systems. This requires students to examine the sources themselves to consider how the ideas of rule of law and illegitimacy of tyranny have been used by political thinkers in the founding of our nation.

The Lesson

The lesson begins with a brief overview and definition of Western political thought and the role of laws in the development of our constitutional system. Teachers may want to provide this information through direct instruction or have students read it independently and follow up questions through whole group discussion. For more information on this topic and secondary source articles aimed at students, teachers may want to visit Constitutional Rights Foundation, Bill of Rights in Action, Fall 2010 (Volume 26, No. 1) found at: http://www.crf-usa.org/bill-of-rights-in-action/

The lesson will then engage students in primary source readings and require them to use this as evidence to respond to the guiding question. Through a written response students will articulate their evidence-based understandings of the significance of the concepts of rule of law and tyranny for Western political thought.

1 Historical Thinking Project, “Historical Significance,” http://historicalthinking.ca/historical-significance
Standards

California History-Science Content Standards

10.1 Students relate the moral and ethical principles in ancient Greek and Roman philosophy, in Judaism, and in Christianity to the development of Western political thought.

2. Trace the development of the Western political ideas of the rule of law and illegitimacy of tyranny, using selections from Plato's Republic and Aristotle's Politics.

Common Core State Standards

RH 9-10.1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information.

RH 9-10.2 Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.

RH 9-10.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary describing political, social, or economic aspects of history/social science.

RH 9-10.6 Compare the point of view of two or more authors for how they treat the same or similar topics, including which details they include and emphasize in their respective accounts.

RH 9-10.9 Compare and contrast treatments of the same topic in several primary and secondary sources.

WHST 9-10.2 - Write informative/explanatory texts, including the narration of historical events, scientific procedures/experiments, or technical processes.

a. Introduce a topic and organize ideas, concepts, and information to make important connections and distinctions; include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., figures, tables), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.

b. Develop the topic with well-chosen, relevant, and sufficient facts, extended definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples appropriate to the audience's knowledge of the topic.

c. Use varied transitions and sentence structures to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships among ideas and concepts.

d. Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to manage the complexity of the topic and convey a style appropriate to the discipline and context as well as to the expertise of likely readers.

e. Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing.

f. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented (e.g., articulating implications or the significance of the topic).

WHST 9-10.9 - Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

ELD Standards for Grades 9-10

A. Collaborative

1: Exchanging information and ideas with others through collaborative discussions on a range of social and academic topics.

B. Interprative

6: Reading closely literary and informational texts and viewing multimedia to determine how meaning is conveyed explicitly and implicitly through language.

C. Productive

10: Writing literary and informational texts to present, describe, and explain ideas and information using appropriate technology.
Sources


Procedures

Step 1
Distribute Student Handout 1, Defining Tyranny and the Rule of Law. Explain to students that they will now consider how Enlightenment thinkers, including Jefferson and Adams, were influenced by ancient philosophers' writings on government. Introduce the focus question: How did the concepts of tyranny and rule of law influence American revolutionaries? Tell students that they will use this chart to help them provide detailed answers to this question, referring to the writing task at the bottom of the page.

Step 2
Distribute Student Handout 2, Creating a Seal for the United States. With students, read background paragraph, stopping to clarify any unfamiliar words and to make sure students have a good understanding of when these sources were produced, the story of Exodus, and the context of the time in which these sources were produced. Finally, introduce the focus question for the first part of this lesson: What is tyranny?

Step 3
Distribute Student Handout 2, Jefferson’s Handwritten Proposal for the Seal. In groups, have students examine Jefferson’s handwritten proposal. Ask them to transcribe Jefferson’s handwritten note, to the best of the ability. Discuss their interpretations. Distribute Student Handout 3, Transcription of Jefferson’s Proposal for the Seal. Have students compare their transcriptions to the draft prepared by the Library of Congress. Discuss first the literal meaning of the quote. Then ask students to discuss the following in their groups: Based upon this quote, what relationship did Jefferson envision between religion and the new republic? Circulate during these discussions to make sure students understand that Jefferson’s message suggests a close relationship between religion and government. Have students complete the first row (Seal) of Student Handout 1.

Step 4
Distribute Student Handout 4, Excerpt from the Declaration of Independence. Follow the directions listed in the handout to deconstruct the text and ensure comprehension. Once students are clear on the text’s meaning, have them discuss and then answer the following using this source and Jefferson’s Proposal for the Seal (Student Handout 2): a) In the Proposal for the Seal for the United States, Jefferson argues that “...Rebellion to Tyrants is Obedience to God.” The Declaration of Independence refers to an “...absolute tyranny.” Who or what was the tyrant? b) Based upon these documents, why did Jefferson believe that revolution against Great Britain was justified? Circulate during these discussions and in review of their written responses to make sure students understand that the British King was the tyrant and that Jefferson argued that it was a moral responsibility to rebel against tyrants in order to secure popular support for the revolution. Have students complete the second row (Declaration) of Student Handout 1.
Procedures

Step 5 Distribute Student Handout 6, Excerpt from The Republic by Plato. Follow the directions listed in the handout to deconstruct the text and ensure comprehension. Once students are clear on the text’s meaning, have them discuss the following using this source: a) Why does Plato believe that a tyranny is “...the most wretchedest form of government?” b) Why would rule by a king be preferable to a tyrant?” As a class, complete the third row (Plato) on Student Handout 1. This will require some inference from students, as Plato does not specifically define tyranny. Encourage them to review the entire excerpt again in order to come up with their best interpretation.

Step 6 Distribute Student Handout 7, Excerpt from Politics by Aristotle. Follow the directions listed in the handout to read the text closely and ensure comprehension. Circulate during their first reading to make sure students can identify quotes that describe tyranny and the rule of law. When students begin their discussion of the questions in the third column of the handout, circulate to make sure students understand Aristotle’s distinction between common and private interest and that laws, not men, should govern society. As a class, complete the fourth row (Aristotle) on Student Handout 1.

Step 7 Distribute Student Handout 8, Ancient Philosophers and the American Revolution. Following the directions on the student handout, have students read and then discuss this secondary source which summarizes the influence of ancient writers on the Founders. Have students complete the final row on Student Handout 1.

Step 8 Return to Student Handout 1, Defining Tyranny and the Rule of Law. Have students use this chart to provide specific evidence to support their written response to the writing task listed at the bottom of the page. Provide additional support or scaffolding as needed for struggling writers.
Defining Tyranny and the Rule of Law (Page 1 of 2)

Directions: As you analyze the primary and secondary sources in this lesson, take note of any quotes or ideas that explain the terms “tyranny” and “rule of law” using the first two columns of the chart below. (Please note – some sources don’t define both terms - they are marked N.A.). In the final column, labeled “Analysis,” explain how these quotes define the terms tyranny and rule of law, in your own words.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quotes that define tyranny</th>
<th>Quotes that define rule of law</th>
<th>Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proposed Seal of the United States</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Declaration of Independence</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plato</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Defining Tyranny and the Rule of Law (Page 2 of 2)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quotes that define tyranny</th>
<th>Quotes that define rule of law</th>
<th>Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aristotle</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Ancient Philosophers and the American Revolution**

**Writing Task:** After completing this chart, answer the focus question -- *How did the concepts of tyranny and rule of law influence American revolutionaries?*

- In the first part of your essay, define the concept of tyranny using quotes and examples from the Greek thinkers.
- In the second part of your essay, explain how the founders of the U.S. used the concept of tyranny as a basis for revolution and as a frame of reference for the establishment of a new political structure, using evidence from our sources.
Creating a Seal for the United States

Background: On July 4, 1776, Congress appointed Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, and John Adams “to bring in a device for a seal for the United States of America.” Although Franklin and Jefferson both often argued for the separation of religion from the state, they proposed a seal that included imagery from the Bible. This included a description of a scene from the biblical story of Exodus where the Jewish people escaped from the Pharaoh, the king of Egypt. The image includes the parting of the Red Sea, where the people confronted the tyrant in order to gain their freedom. Jefferson’s revision of Franklin’s proposal was presented by the committee to Congress on August 20. Although not accepted, these drafts reveal the Founders’ perspective on tyranny during the Revolutionary period.

Discuss: Artist Benson Lossing used the Founder’s description to create an image of the proposed seal (above), published in Harper’s in July, 1856.

1. Content: What is pictured or represented in the image? How does the text surrounding the image relate to that image?
2. Connection: The artist uses biblical imagery, following the ideas proposed by Jefferson and Franklin. Why is this important?
3. Communication: Taken together, what is the message of image and text?
4. The Source: Franklin, Jefferson, and Adams pitched their seal in 1776. The artist painted this picture in 1856. What can this source tell us, if anything, about the Founders?
Jefferson’s Handwritten Proposal for the Seal of the United States

Directions: This is a handwritten proposal for a seal of the United States, written by Thomas Jefferson. In your groups, transcribe Jefferson’s note to the best of your ability on a separate sheet of paper. What, specifically, did Jefferson write?
Transcription of Jefferson’s Proposal for the Seal of the United States

"Moses standing on the Shore, and extending his Hand over the Sea, thereby causing the same to overwhelm Pharaoh who is sitting in an open Chariot, a Crown on his Head and a Sword in his Hand. Rays from a Pillar of Fire in the Clouds reaching to Moses, to express that he acts by Command of the Deity. **Motto, Rebellion to Tyrants is Obedience to God.**"

Discuss:

1. Now that you can read the official transcription of Jefferson’s handwritten proposal, how has your understanding of the text changed?
2. Consider the last sentence – “Motto, Rebellion to Tyrants is Obedience to God.” Why would you believe Jefferson would choose this sentiment as the one sentence to describe our democracy?
Excerpt from the Declaration of Independence (Page 1 of 2)

Directions: The Declaration of Independence outlined the Colonists' complaints against King George of England, explained the political philosophy of the Founders, and formally declared the United States' independence from Great Britain. The following excerpt provides a justification for rebellion against tyranny. Because the language is dense, the text has also been organized in a table to help clarify meaning. Read these two sentences carefully, using the tables provided, and in your groups, discuss the bolded questions listed in the right hand column. Finally, answer questions A, B, and C on a separate sheet of paper.

Excerpt #1: But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security.....

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Circumstance / Connection</th>
<th>Noun / Noun Phrase</th>
<th>Verb / Verb Phrase</th>
<th>Who, What, Where</th>
<th>Definitions and Questions for Discussion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism,</td>
<td>it</td>
<td>is</td>
<td>their right</td>
<td>Usurpation (n) = taking away someone's power illegally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To Evince (v) = to make evident or apparent</td>
<td>Absolute Despotism (n) = a form of government where the leader has unlimited power</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who does “their” refer to?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>it</td>
<td>is</td>
<td>their duty</td>
<td>What is the difference between “right” and “duty”? Why are both included?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to throw off</td>
<td>such Government,</td>
<td></td>
<td>The word “such” refers to what type of government?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and</td>
<td>to provide</td>
<td>new Guards for their future security</td>
<td></td>
<td>Who or what are the “new Guards?”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Excerpt from the Declaration of Independence (Page 2 of 2)

Excerpt #2: The history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Circumstance / Connection</th>
<th>Noun / Noun Phrase</th>
<th>Verb / Verb Phrase</th>
<th>Who, What, Where</th>
<th>Definitions and Questions for Discussion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The history of the present King of Great Britain</td>
<td>is</td>
<td>a history of repeated usurpations,</td>
<td>Usurpation (n) = taking away someone's power illegally</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
|                           | all | having | in direct object the establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States. | | **How do the Founders describe King George’s rule?**
|                           |                                |                |                           | **What do the Founders see as the ultimate goal of King George?** |

Questions:

a) In the *Proposal for the Seal for the United States*, Jefferson argues that “...Rebellion to Tyrants is Obedience to God.” *The Declaration of Independence* refers to an “...absolute tyranny.” Who or what was the tyrant?

b) Based upon these documents, why did Jefferson believe that revolution against Great Britain was justified?

c) In your own words, but based upon what you have read, explain the Founders’ definition of tyranny.
Excerpt from The Republic by Plato

Background: Plato was born in Athens to a wealthy family in 427 B.C.E. He was a teacher and wrote his most important work, The Republic, in 260 B.C.E. as a way to envision an ideal society. He concluded that a truly just society was ruled by a philosopher king – someone who was wise, loved to learn and sought truth.

Directions: This excerpt from The Republic is in a dialogue format between two characters (I and He) who are interested in describing justice and tyranny. Your class will be divided in two parts, with one part assigned “I” (highlighted in yellow) and the other half “He” (highlighted in green). Following your teachers’ direction, read the excerpt out loud. See the glossary section for definitions. As you read, circle or underline terms or phrases in the text that define or describe tyranny or tyrannical behavior.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Glossary</th>
<th>Excerpt from Politics by Aristotle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wretchedest:</td>
<td>...I see, as every one must, that a tyranny is the wretchedest form of government, and the rule of a king the happiest...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>enslaved:</td>
<td>I replied, would you say that a city which is governed by a tyrant is free or enslaved?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No city, he said, can be more completely enslaved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>degraded:</td>
<td>And yet, as you see, there are freemen as well as masters in such a State?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes, he said, I see that there are -- a few; but the people, speaking generally, and the best of them, are miserably degraded and enslaved...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>incapable:</td>
<td>And the State which is enslaved under a tyrant is utterly incapable of acting voluntarily?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Utterly incapable...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>voluntarily:</td>
<td>And is the city which is under a tyrant rich or poor?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Poor...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>And must not such a State and such a man be always full of fear?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes, indeed...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tyrannical:</td>
<td>[Y]ou held the tyrannical State to be the most miserable of States?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>And I was right, he said.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Certainly, I said. And when you see the same evils in the tyrannical man, what do you say of him?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I say that he is by far the most miserable of all men....</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Excerpt from *Politics* by Aristotle

*Background:* Aristotle was a Greek philosopher and scientist born in 384 BCE. Aristotle was a student of Plato. He wrote extensively about ethics. Aristotle also wrote about the rule of law, which is a term that describes the belief that laws should govern society.

Directions: *Politics* is a collection of essays on government that Aristotle hoped would provide direction for rulers, statesmen, and politicians. Read through the following short excerpt, using the glossary for definitions, as needed. As you read, circle any words that define or describe tyranny and underline any words that define or describe the role of laws in government. Finally, in your groups, discuss the questions in the third column.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Glossary</th>
<th>Excerpt from <em>Politics</em> by Aristotle</th>
<th>Discussion Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>common interest: the best for all people</td>
<td>... The true forms of government, therefore, are those in which the one, or the few, or the many, govern with a view to the common interest; but governments which rule with a view to the private interest, whether of the one or of the few, or of the many, are perversions. ... when the citizens at large administer the state for the common interest, the government is called a polity.</td>
<td>1. According to Aristotle, what is the “true form” of government?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>perversions: corruptions or turning away from the right</td>
<td>... tyranny is a kind of monarchy which has in view the interest of the monarch only; ... Tyranny, as I was saying, is monarchy exercising the rule of a master over the political society....</td>
<td>2. What is the difference between a common and private interest?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>monarchy: form of government in which one person (the monarch) rules, such as a king.</td>
<td>... laws, when good, should be supreme; and that the magistrate ...should regulate those matters only on which the laws are unable to speak with precision....</td>
<td>3. Give an example of what Aristotle would describe as a perversion of a true form of government.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>magistrate: a person in charge of enforcing the laws, such as a judge</td>
<td></td>
<td>4. Aristotle describes tyranny as &quot;a kind of monarchy...&quot; Are there monarchs who are not tyrants, in Aristotle’s view? If so, how are they different from tyrants?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5. Aristotle argues that laws &quot;...should be supreme...&quot; except in what cases?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Student Handout 8

Ancient Philosophers and the American Revolution

Directions: This secondary source provides an overview of the impact of the writing of ancient philosophers upon the founders of the American government. Specifically, it outlines some of the criticisms of the Colonists against the British Monarch (King or Queen) and how the ideas of writers like Plato and Aristotle resonated with American leaders like Thomas Jefferson. In the left margin of this page, put a check where you find an explanation of the criticism of monarchs and tyranny, and in the right margin, put an x where you see an explanation of the rule of law. In your groups, discuss where you placed check marks and Xs, and explain how these sections help define tyranny and the rule of law. After sharing with your tablemates, review your choices again; make changes as necessary.

Problems with the Monarch
In the years leading up to the American Revolution (in the 1760s and 1770s), some intellectuals began to criticize the British monarch (or king) as tyrannical and instead called for a rule of law, which would be based on natural rights (a theory that everyone has certain rights that could not be taken away, such as the freedom of speech). Those that criticized the king argued that the monarchy did not – and that it never could – properly serve most people and protect their natural rights. Critics also argued that the king or queen could create laws that applied to only some people and not others, and that unelected officials could make decisions that negatively affected citizens. For example, officials appointed by the monarch could raise taxes or take away private property, without citizens ever having the right to vote on the law or the leader who wrote it.

Influence of Ancient Philosophers
Critics of the monarch read and discussed what tyranny meant in order to argue for their notion of the rule of law. Two of the most important people who wrote about tyranny were the ancient Greek philosophers, Plato and Aristotle. At the time of the American Revolution, critics of tyranny discussed and circulated many of Plato and Aristotle’s writings to explain their opposition to tyranny and to promote their own ideas about independence from Great Britain and to support their notion of laws. In other words, many of their ideas about the problems of tyrannical rule (which is what the founding fathers accused the British monarch of committing) and the merits of individual liberty and the rule of law (which is what the founding fathers promoted) were based upon these ancient Greek philosophers.

Representative Government
Instead of supporting a system of government led by a king or queen, leaders of the American Revolution called for a representative government in which some people (a group called citizens, who were primarily white men who owned land) have the right to vote for another smaller group of people who will rule them. This smaller group of elected officials would ensure that laws would apply to everyone equally. Only when there were laws that applied to everyone could people be truly free and be able to vote for their representatives.