



We the People... **The Citizen and the Constitution**

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Simulated Congressional Hearing Questions Level II

Unit One - What is Government?

- 1. John Locke was an English philosopher who thought about why it was necessary to have a government.**
 - What did Locke think would happen without government?
 - What did John Locke believe to be the purpose of government?
 - Do you think government might have purposes that Locke did not mention? Explain your answer.

- 2. The Founders were concerned with how to preserve a republican form of government.**
 - According to the Founders, what was republican government?
 - What weaknesses did the Founders think would lead to the failure of republican government?
 - How did the Founders think these weaknesses could be prevented? Do you think the Founders' solutions were correct? Why or why not?

- 3. All nations have a constitution. However, all nations do not have constitutional governments.**
 - What is a constitutional government?
 - What parts of our Constitution indicate whether the United States is or is not a constitutional government?
 - Give an example of a nation in today's world that you think is not a constitutional government. Give reasons for your choice.

Unit Two - What experiences shaped the Founders' thinking about government?

1. The Declaration of Independence told the world why the Americans wanted to free themselves from British rule. It stated the ideas of good government that the Founders believed.

- Using the Declaration as your source, in your own words describe what these principles of good government are.
- Where did the Founders get these ideas?
- Do you think these principles are still valid today? Why or why not?

2. Americans had been colonists- of Great Britain for over one hundred and fifty years. During that time they had considerable experience with governing themselves.

- What were some of the important characteristics of the colonial governments?
- What ideas about government did Americans use when they formed their own state governments?
- What problems existed in most state governments?

3. By the late 1780s, many Founders believed that the Articles of Confederation were not working well.

- What were some of the achievements of the Congress under the Articles of Confederation?
- What shortcomings did many Founders see in the Articles of Confederation?
- What arguments could you have made in support of the Articles?

Unit Three - What happened at the Philadelphia Convention?

1. Because of different economic systems, Northern and Southern states had different interests. These conflicting interests led to disagreements at the Philadelphia Convention.

- Describe at least two disagreements between Northern and Southern states at the Convention.
- What parts of the Constitution are the result of compromises that settled the disagreements between the Northern and Southern states?
- Do you think the Framers should have made these compromises? Why or why not?

2. Article II of the Constitution lists the powers of the President of the United States.

- Describe some of the powers the Constitution gives to the President. Give examples of how presidents have actually used these powers.
- Some of the opponents of the Constitution feared the President would become a king and a tyrant. Why did they think this? Do you think their fears were justified?
- Are there any powers you would like to see added to the presidency? Are there any powers now granted to the presidency that you think should be omitted? Explain your answers.

3. Several Framers refused to sign the Constitution in September, 1787. They, along with others who opposed the ratification of the Constitution, were called Anti-Federalists.

- What reasons did they give for their opposition to the Constitution?
- To what extent do you agree with the Anti-Federalists' views? Why?
- Do you believe that American history since 1787 has justified the Anti-Federalists' fears? Why or why not?

Unit Four - How was the Constitution used to establish our government?

1. One of the enduring contributions of the Framers to government was the creation of the federal system.

- What is a federal system of government? Compare it with a unitary or a confederation system of government.
- How are powers distributed between the states and the national government under our federal system? Give examples.
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of the federal system? Give some current examples.

2. Judicial review is an important part of our constitutional system of government.

- How did the Supreme Court acquire the power of judicial review?
- Do you think the Supreme Court should have the power to declare an act of Congress unconstitutional? Why or why not?
- How does judicial review protect the rights of the minority?

3. Political parties are an important part of our political system today. Yet they are not mentioned in the Constitution.

- Why did the Framers fear political parties?
- Why and how did political parties develop?
- Do political parties play a useful role today? Why or why not?

Unit Five - How does the Constitution protect our basic rights?

1. The very first amendment added to the Constitution in 1791 contains guarantees of freedom of religion.

- Why did the Founders think freedom of religion was so important?
- Explain the difference between the establishment and free exercise clauses.
- Do you think limitations should ever be imposed on the free exercise of one's religious beliefs? Explain your answers.

2. There has been controversy as to whether young people should have all the rights to due process that adults have.

- What is the right to due process? Give examples of due process rights protected by the Constitution.
- Do you think persons under the age of 18 who are accused of crimes should have the same due process rights as adults? Why or why not?
- Should school officials have the right to open a student's locker without a search warrant? Why or why not?

3. The First Amendment states that laws shall not be passed which abridge freedom of speech.

- Why did the Founders think freedom of speech was so important?
- Do you believe there are times when freedom of expression should be limited? Explain your response.
- Should a public speaker who calls for violent action be protected by the First Amendment while an audience member who takes such an action is sent to prison? Why or why not?

Unit Six - What are the responsibilities of citizens?

1. **The United States has one of the lowest percentages of eligible voters who actually vote of any democratic country.**
 - Would you like to see more eligible people vote? Why or why not?
 - Why do you think so many people in the United States fail to vote?
 - Some countries fine a citizen who fails to vote. Would you favor such a law in the United States? Why or why not?
2. **Many people believe: that an- informed citizenry is essential if democracy is to work.**
 - Should people be required to pass periodic citizenship tests in order to maintain their citizenship? Why or why not?
 - Would you favor requiring literacy tests, fairly administered, before allowing citizens to vote? Why or why not?
3. **Voting is only one of the ways a citizen may participate in politics. Many other activities are available.**
 - What activities besides voting are available to citizens?
 - Which of these activities, if any, do you think is most useful? Explain your answer.
 - How should a citizen decide which of these various activities to participate in?