

Student Worksheet: GC.01

Examine the Influences of Leading European Thinkers and Other Roots of American Government

(C, E, G, P: Culture, Economics, Geography, Politics)

Part 1: Leading European Thinkers

John Locke (1632–1704)

- **Key Ideas:**
 - Natural rights: Life, liberty, and property.
 - Government's role is to protect these rights.
 - If a government fails, citizens have the right to overthrow it.

Question:

- How did John Locke's ideas influence the Declaration of Independence?
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Charles-Louis Montesquieu (1689–1755)

- **Key Ideas:**
 - Separation of powers into three branches: legislative, executive, judicial.
 - Checks and balances to prevent any one branch from becoming too powerful.

Question:

- How does Montesquieu's theory of separation of powers appear in the U.S. Constitution?
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Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679)

- **Key Ideas:**
 - Social contract: People give up some freedoms in exchange for order and protection.
 - Believed in a strong central authority to avoid chaos (absolute monarchy).

Question:

- Why do you think Hobbes's ideas were less influential than Locke's in the creation of the U.S. government?

Part 2: Other Roots of American Government

Greek Democracy

- **Key Features:**
 - Direct democracy in Athens: Citizens voted directly on laws.
 - Introduced the concept of civic participation.

Question:

- How does the idea of democracy in ancient Greece compare to the representative democracy of the United States?

Roman Republic

- **Key Features:**
 - Representative government with elected officials (Senate and consuls).
 - Rule of law applied equally to all citizens.

Question:

- What aspects of the Roman Republic can be seen in the structure of the U.S. government?

Magna Carta (1215)

- **Key Features:**
 - Limited the power of the king and established the principle of rule of law.
 - Introduced ideas like trial by jury and due process.

Question:

- How does the Magna Carta's concept of limiting government influence the U.S. Constitution?

Part 3: Comparative Activity

- **Directions:**

Fill in the chart below by comparing the influences of the thinkers and systems on the U.S. government.

Thinker/System **Key Ideas Impact on U.S. Government**

Class Discussion

John Locke

Charles-Louis Montesquieu

Thomas Hobbes

Greek Democracy

Roman Republic

Magna Carta

Part 4: Reflection Questions

Which thinker or system do you believe had the greatest influence on American government? Why?

1. How do cultural, economic, and political factors shape ideas about government?
2. Why is it important to study the historical roots of American democracy?