

CHAPTER 7

Forging a National Republic, 1776–1789

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After you have studied Chapter 7 in your textbook and worked through this study guide chapter, you should be able to:

1. Examine the varieties of republicanism that emerged in the new American republic.
2. Examine the impact of revolutionary ideology on:
 - a. literature and the fine arts.
 - b. educational practice.
 - c. gender roles and the family.
 - d. African Americans.
 - e. the development of racist theory.
3. Discuss the growth of the free African American population and the reaction of black Americans to life in a racist society.
4. Examine the evolution of constitutional theories of government at the state level during the republic's early years.
5. Discuss the problems faced by the Confederation Congress, and assess its handling of those problems.
6. Examine the forces that led to the calling of the Constitutional Convention.
7. Discuss the characteristics of the delegates to the Constitutional Convention, and examine the role played by James Madison.
8. Discuss the major disagreements that emerged in the drafting of the Constitution, and indicate how those disagreements were resolved.
9. Explain the basic provisions and the underlying principles of the Constitution of the United States.
10. Discuss the debate over ratification of the Constitution, and explain why the Federalist forces prevailed.

THEMATIC GUIDE

After the Revolutionary War, the Americans began shaping their society to the ideals and principles of the Revolution itself. These ideals were intellectual notions, not tangible realities. They provided a visionary basis for a more nearly perfect society, but they did not automatically make such a society a reality. Therefore, the ideals had to be defined, and such definitions are born out of the frame of reference—the perceptions and prejudices—of a people existing at a particular historical time and place. In Chapter 7, we focus on the theme of ideal versus reality and examine the defining and shaping process that occurred in postrevolutionary American society.

The first section, “Creating a Virtuous Republic,” presents the ideal of building a republican society and the reality of disagreement over how to define republicanism; the ideal of a “virtuous” republic and the reality of disagreement over what virtue means; the ideal of literature, painting, and architecture instilling virtue and the reality that some perceive those arts as luxuries to be avoided. Then, after dealing with educational reform, we turn to the role of women in postrevolutionary America and the interaction of the ideal of equality with the reality of sexism. From this interaction there emerged a perception that denied women a legitimate power-sharing role and stressed the differences between men and women. According to this view, men and women contributed to a republican society equally but in different ways. Moreover, it was through this perception that Americans were able “to resolve the conflict between the two most influential strands of republican thought.” ()

The theme of the ideal versus the reality recurs in the next section, “The First Emancipation and the Growth of Racism.” Concurrent with the abolition of slavery and the dramatic growth of the free black population in the North, economic, political, and societal realities were imposed on the revolutionary ideal of equality. Consequently, a “formal racist theory developed in the United States,” (see pages 115–116 in the textbook) with race replacing enslavement as the determinant of the status of blacks.

In designing republican governments, the ideal called for written constitutions designed to prevent tyranny by properly distributing and limiting governmental power. At first, it seemed that the ideal could be achieved by concentrating power in the hands of the legislature, but this led to the reality of weak political units. From this reality new ideas emerged, such as the concept of a balance of power among three coequal branches of government.

In the Confederation Congress, the ideal of weak central government was juxtaposed against the reality of monetary and diplomatic problems. The interaction of the two produced political impotence against which even the one “accomplishment” of the Congress, the Northwest Ordinances, must be judged.

This impotence, further emphasized symbolically by Shays’s Rebellion, led to the Constitutional Convention and the writing of the Constitution. A new realism, evident in the debates among the delegates and in the compromises they reached, was present at this convention. But idealism was not dead. The delegates retained the ideal of the sovereignty of the people and embodied that ideal in the opening words of the document they wrote: “We the people of the United States.” They also accepted new ideals that had emerged from experience, and these became the “key to the Constitution.” However, a new realism tempered these ideals, and that, too, is apparent in the first sentence of the Constitution: “in order to form a more perfect union.” This phrase suggests the delegates’ realization that they had *not* created the perfect society—a realism also seen in the ratification debates.

IDENTIFICATION AND SIGNIFICANCE

After studying Chapter 7 of *A People and a Nation*, you should be able to identify *and* explain fully the historical significance of each item listed below.

- Identify each item in the space provided. Give an explanation or description of the item. Answer the questions *who*, *what*, *where*, and *when*.
- Explain the historical significance of each item in the space provided. Establish the historical context in which the item exists. Establish the item as the result of, or as the cause of, other factors existing in the society under study. Answer this question: *What were the political, social, economic, and/or cultural consequences of this item?*

1. self-sacrificing (“Adamsian”)republicanism
2. economic (“Hamiltonian”) republicanism
3. democratic (“Painean”) republicanism
4. *Life of Washington*
5. Gilbert Stuart, Charles Wilson Peale, and John Trumbull
6. the Society of the Cincinnati
7. Abigail Adams
8. revolutionary ideology vs. slavery
9. “the first emancipation”

10. post-revolutionary racist theory
11. Benjamin Banneker
12. post-revolutionary state constitutions
13. the Articles of Confederation
14. the Northwest Ordinances
15. Shays's Rebellion
16. the Constitutional Convention
17. James Madison
18. the principle of checks and balances

19. the Virginia Plan
20. the New Jersey Plan
21. the three-fifths compromise
22. the Constitution's slave-trade clause and fugitive-slave clause
23. the electoral college
24. the separation of powers
25. Federalists and Antifederalists
15. *The Federalist Papers*

IDEAS AND DETAILS

Objective 1

1. Which of the following is a characteristic of the type of republicanism based directly on ancient history?
 - a. It was based on the belief that republics should be large in size and diverse in population.
 - b. Its adherents questioned the ability of the upper classes to speak for all people.
 - c. It was based on the belief that individuals acting selfishly in their own best interest would benefit the nation.
 - d. Its supporters held that in a republic individual interests should be subordinated to the good of the whole community.

Objective 2

2. Which of the following is true of the cherry tree story told by Mason Weems in his biography of George Washington?
 - a. Having heard Washington tell the story in his 1792 re-election campaign, Weems assumed it to be true.
 - b. Weems invented the story in an attempt to create a virtuous example for America's youth.
 - c. Weems obtained the story while conducting extensive research on Washington's life.
 - d. Weems originally used the story to discredit Alexander Hamilton, Washington's political rival.

Objective 2

3. Schooling for girls improved during the early republican period primarily because of the belief that
 - a. girls had to be taught independence.
 - b. girls should be prepared for jobs in the same way boys were prepared.
 - c. men and women had equal intellectual abilities.
 - d. would-be mothers should be properly educated so that, in turn, they could adequately instruct their children.

Objective 2

4. The fact that qualified women regularly voted in New Jersey in the 1780s and 1790s supports which of the following conclusions?
 - a. Married women began to demand more of a voice in the making of laws.
 - b. Most women actively pursued the right to vote in the early republican period.
 - c. New ideas about the role of women in a republic had their greatest impact in the political arena.
 - d. Some women believed they had a place in the political life of the state.

Objectives 1 and 2

5. Which of the following was true of the “ideal” republican woman during the early republican period?
- She was free to pursue her own economic self-interest.
 - She was to pursue a public life as she aided the community.
 - She was to subordinate private interests to the good of the community.
 - She was to pursue higher education for the purpose of self-fulfillment.

Objective 3

6. The formation of the Brown Fellowship Society provides evidence that
- in some cases slaves worked covertly to organize abolitionist societies.
 - free blacks often responded to life in a racist society by developing their own separate institutions.
 - free northern blacks organized lobbying efforts to gain repeal of discriminatory laws.
 - in the early republic some people worked to further the ideal of racial equality.

Objective 2

7. The new racist theories that developed in the postrevolutionary years
- emerged as a result of over ten thousand blacks having fought on the British side.
 - were a reaction to the increasing number of slave rebellions.
 - were an attempt to defend slavery against the revolutionary idea of equality.
 - were an attempt to refute new scientific evidence proving blacks to be genetically equal to whites.

Objective 4

8. The first state constitutions
- broadened the base of government by extending the right to vote to more people.
 - embodied the principle of checks and balances.
 - seldom contained a written guarantee of rights.
 - placed more power in the hands of the governor than in the legislature.

Objective 5

9. The Northwest Ordinance of 1787
- allowed slaveowners to reclaim runaway slaves seeking refuge in the Northwest Territory.
 - provided a means by which settlers could immediately apply for statehood.
 - established the Anglican church as the favored church in the region.
 - provided for the free distribution of land to settlers.

Objective 6

10. Which of the following is true of Shays’s Rebellion?
- For the only time in the history of the republic, a state government was overthrown.
 - Poor whites and blacks successfully forged an alliance against the property-owning elite in Massachusetts.
 - The rebels attempted to associate their struggle with the earlier struggle against the British.
 - It represented an antidemocratic counterrevolution by the elite of Massachusetts.

Objective 7

11. James Madison is considered the most important delegate to the Constitutional Convention because
- he consistently argued in favor of limiting the size of the republic.
 - he provided the delegates with a conceptual framework for the Constitution, based on his analysis of past confederacies and republics.
 - he refused to compromise on the idea of proportional representation in the Senate.
 - he consistently argued in favor of a written guarantee of the basic rights of the American people.

Objective 8

12. A breakdown at the Constitutional Convention over the issue of apportionment of representation in the Senate was prevented by the recommendation that
- states be equally represented in the Senate.
 - senators be appointed by the state legislatures.
 - a state's representation in the Senate be based on population.
 - a state's two senators vote individually rather than as a unit.

Objective 9

13. Which of the following is considered the “key” to the Constitution?
- The three-fifths compromise
 - The distribution of political authority among the three branches of government and between the state governments and the national government
 - The inclusion of the concept of direct democracy at all levels of the new government
 - The establishment of an elected judiciary

Objective 10

14. The Antifederalists
- believed that individual rights could best be protected at the state level.
 - believed that the national government should be more powerful.
 - were generally much younger than their opponents.
 - were led by Thomas Jefferson.

Objective 10

15. Which of the following became the most important issue in the debate over ratification of the Constitution?
- The powers of the chief executive
 - The absence of a bill of rights
 - The extension of the vote to women
 - The absence of any prohibitions on the powers of Congress

ESSAY QUESTIONS

Objectives 1 and 2

1. Discuss the similarities and differences between the notions concerning the “ideal” republican woman and those concerning the “ideal” republican man.

Objective 3

2. Identify the factors responsible for the dramatic growth of the free African American population during the postrevolutionary years, and discuss the response of blacks to emancipation.

Objective 2

3. Examine the growth of racist theory in the late eighteenth century.

Objective 7

4. Discuss James Madison’s role at the Constitutional Convention.

Objectives 8 and 9

5. Discuss the debate within the Constitutional Convention about the functions and structure of Congress, and explain the resolution of the disagreements that arose among the delegates on this issue.

ANSWERS

Multiple-Choice Questions

1.
 - d. Correct. The definition of republicanism based on ancient history and political theory, also called self-sacrificing republicanism, stressed the idea that individuals within a republic should be willing to sacrifice their private interest for the good of the whole. Notice that this is similar to the Puritan notion of the godly commonwealth.
 - a. No. None of the three definitions of *republicanism* specifically held that republics should be large and have a diverse population. In fact, the definition of republicanism based on ancient history and political theory specifically held that republics had to be small and have a homogeneous population.
 - b. No. Democratic republicanism, rather than “Adamsian” republicanism, tended to be egalitarian in its approach. Therefore, it advocated widespread political participation and questioned the notion that the upper classes could speak for all people.
 - c. No. Economic republicanism, rather than “Adamsian” republicanism, emphasized the idea that individuals actively pursuing their own economic self-interest would enrich not only themselves but the nation as well.
2.
 - b. Correct. Weems was not a historian in the modern sense of the word and did not feel bound to base his conclusions on fact. The cherry tree story indicates that he was less interested in the truth than in imparting certain moral principles to his readers.
 - a. No. As far as is known, Washington never told such a story.
 - c. No. Weems was not a historian in the modern sense of the word, and did not engage in extensive research in the writing of his biography of Washington.
 - d. No. Washington and Hamilton were not rivals, and Weems did not try to discredit Hamilton.
3.
 - d. Correct. Eighteenth-century Americans believed that women were primarily responsible for teaching the virtues necessary for the new republic’s survival. As a result, more emphasis was placed on properly educating future mothers.
 - a. No. Judith Sargent Murray’s belief that girls should be taught to be economically independent was not a belief held by most Americans and cannot be said to have been the primary reason that schooling for girls improved during the early republic.
 - b. No. Most Americans of the late eighteenth century did not believe that girls should receive the same education as boys. Nor did they believe that young women should be prepared for jobs in the same way that young men were prepared.
 - c. No. Judith Sargent Murray’s belief that men and women had equal intellectual abilities was held by few Americans and cannot be said to have been the primary reason that schooling for girls improved during the early republic.

4. d. Correct. Although most women believed they could best serve the republic in their roles as wives and mothers, some women actively sought a more public role. The fact that some New Jersey women successfully claimed the right to vote in the 1780s and 1790s is evidence of this.
- a. No. The New Jersey law that allowed some women to claim the right to vote applied only to unmarried white women who met certain property qualifications.
- b. No. The information about voting rights for women in New Jersey in the 1780s and 1790s does not provide evidence that most women actively pursued the right to vote.
- c. No. The reevaluation of the role of women in American society that occurred during the early republican period had more of an impact on women’s private lives than on their political role in society.
5. c. Correct. The “ideal republican woman” was to be the perfect embodiment of self-sacrificing republicanism. In other words, she was to sacrifice her individual will to the common good.
- a. No. The “republican man,” rather than the “republican woman,” was free to pursue his own economic self-interest.
- b. No. Although the “republican woman” was supposed to aid the community, she was also supposed to remain primarily a private being, bound to home and family.
- d. No. This would be seen as far too selfish a notion for the “ideal republican woman.”
6. b. Correct. Free blacks continued to face the political, social, and economic discrimination that accompanied white racism. To help themselves, they often formed separate institutions such as the Brown Fellowship Society.
- a. No. This society was not formed by slaves and was not an abolitionist society.
- c. No. Although there were instances of free northern blacks working to gain repeal of discriminatory laws, the Brown Fellowship Society is not an example of such efforts.
- d. No. Although some people did work to advance racial equality during the years of the early republic, most notably the Quakers, the Brown Fellowship Society is not an example of such efforts.
7. c. Correct. The questioning of slavery that accompanied the American Revolution led to the gradual abolition of slavery in the North. However, southern slaveholders, in order to defend the practice of holding blacks in bondage, developed new racist notions that made the concept that “all men are created equal” inapplicable to blacks.
- a. No. The exact number of slaves who left their masters to fight for the British is not known, but it was considerably less than ten thousand. Furthermore, British recruitment of slaves led to acceptance of blacks in the Continental Army and in most state militias (Georgia and South Carolina were exceptions).
- b. No. There is no evidence in the text to suggest that the number of slave rebellions increased in the period immediately after the Revolutionary War.
- d. No. Although such evidence is available today, the scientific community of the late eighteenth century presented no such evidence and had little knowledge of genetic theory.
8. a. Correct. Most states lowered property qualifications for voting and, as a result, broadened the base of American government.
- b. No. The first state constitutions did not attempt to control governmental power through a system of checks and balances. Such an idea developed in response to the failures of the first

constitutions, was included in some revised constitutions during the 1780s, and was finally included in the national constitution drafted in 1787.

- c. No. As is stated in the text: “Seven of the constitutions contained formal bills of rights, and the others had similar clauses.”
 - d. No. During the colonial period Americans had learned to fear colonial governors as agents of the king. This fear led them to put little power in the hands of governors in the first state constitutions.
- 9.
- a. Correct. Although the Northwest Ordinance of 1787 discouraged the future importation of slaves into the region, it provided that slaveowners could reclaim runaway slaves who sought refuge in the territory.
 - b. No. A process was established by which settlers in the Northwest Territory could eventually apply for statehood, but first they had to go through successive stages of territorial government.
 - c. No. The Northwest Ordinance of 1787 guaranteed freedom of religion to settlers in the Northwest Territory and did not create an established church.
 - d. No. The Ordinance of 1785 established that each township would be divided into thirty-six sections of 640 acres each. Price per acre was one dollar, and the minimum sale was 640 acres.
- 10.
- c. Correct. The rebels asserted that since they did not have adequate representation in the Massachusetts legislature they had not been afforded the “right of consent to taxation.” Therefore, since the rebels viewed the Massachusetts government as tyrannical, they claimed the right to “disturb government.” This was essentially the claim that Jefferson made in the Declaration of Independence in his justification of the American Revolution. In that document, Jefferson said that if government becomes destructive of the rights of the people, the people have the right to rise in rebellion against that government, overthrow that government, and institute a new government.
 - a. No. The rebels involved in Shays’s Rebellion were able to halt court proceedings briefly, but they never seriously threatened the Massachusetts government and were dispersed by militiamen in 1787.
 - b. No. Shays’s Rebellion did not involve an alliance between poor whites and blacks.
 - d. No. The rebellion was undertaken by farmers in Massachusetts angered by the state’s fiscal policies and was not a counterrevolutionary movement by the Massachusetts elite.
- 11.
- b. Correct. Madison’s thorough analysis of past confederacies and republics led him to advance the principle of checks and balances as the route to political stability. This principle, to a great extent, was the conceptual framework from which the delegates to the Constitutional Convention worked.
 - a. No. Madison rejected the prevailing idea that republics had to be small to survive. Instead, he contended that in a large republic there would be so many interest groups vying for power that no one group would be able to control the government.
 - c. No. Madison agreed to the compromise by which each state had equal representation in the Senate, and he was one of the 42 delegates to sign the Constitution.
 - d. No. Madison did not insist on a bill of rights during the Constitutional Convention. It was only during the ratification campaign in New York that he promised in the Federalist Papers that a bill of rights would be added.
- 12.
- d. Correct. Even though a partial compromise over the issue of representation in the Senate had been worked out in committee, the key to breaking the deadlock was Roger Sherman’s suggestion that a state’s two senators be allowed to vote individually and not as a unit.

- a. No. Even after a committee created to work out a compromise suggested equal representation of the states in the Senate, the deadlock continued.
 - b. No. It was generally agreed that members of the House would be popularly elected and senators would be elected by the state legislatures. Therefore, this suggestion did not break a deadlock at the convention.
 - c. No. The committee appointed to work out a compromise concerning the question of whether the states would be equally represented or proportionately represented in the Senate recommended equal representation.
13. b. Correct. This distribution of political power, with its elaborate system of checks and balances, is considered the key to the Constitution. What are the strengths and weaknesses of this system?
- a. No. The three-fifths compromise was important in resolving a potentially divisive issue, but it is not considered the “key” to the Constitution.
 - c. No. The Constitution did not embody the concept of direct democracy at all levels of government. The only part of government to be elected directly by the people was the House of Representatives. Why do you think the founding fathers made this decision?
 - d. No. The Constitution does not provide for an elected federal judiciary. Federal judges are appointed by the president with the advice and consent of the Senate. What was the rationale for this?
14. a. Correct. The Antifederalists believed that constant vigilance by the people was necessary to prevent oppression by the government. They believed that such vigilance was possible at the state level but that it was considerably more difficult at the national level.
- b. No. The Antifederalists were fearful of a powerful central government.
 - c. No. The Antifederalists tended to be older Americans whose political ideas had been shaped during the earlier period of the resistance movement against Great Britain.
 - d. No. Thomas Jefferson favored ratification of the Constitution and was not the leader of the Antifederalists.
15. b. Correct. The absence of a bill of rights became the most important issue in the debate over ratification of the Constitution. Why did the founding fathers not include a bill of rights in the original document?
- a. No. The powers of the chief executive were not the most important issue in the debate over ratification of the Constitution.
 - c. No. The Constitution did not extend the vote to women, and those wanting such an extension were a decided minority. Why do you think they were a minority?
 - d. No. By enumerating the powers of Congress, the Constitution did place restrictions on Congress’s powers. How does such an enumeration of powers place restrictions? In what way was the “necessary and proper” clause important?