

**Document Based Question Essay:**  
**Compare and contrast the influences and ideas of the Founding Fathers in creating a democratic government.**

Use the nine documents below to construct a multi-paragraph essay answering the question above. You must use each document, and be sure to reference the document according to its number, author, or artist. Keep in mind the acronym "SOAP" when analyzing each document:

S - Speaker  
O - Occasion  
A - Audience  
P - Purpose

The "SOAP" acronym is generally useful, but there are documents where you may not know all of the information. Remember to think of the document in the time period and try to assess the point of view (or perspective) of the author/artist. Be sure to also include the limitations the documents might have toward comparing and contrasting the influences on and the ideas of the Founding Fathers.

To get started, there is a question after each document. These questions are designed to help you understand how the document could fit into the framework of the DBQ essay. Click on the links below some of the documents for additional information! Be sure to ask your instructor for additional help with the DBQ process.

Step 1: Read the documents thoroughly, and record notes about each one.

Step 2: Answer the questions after each document.

Step 3: Create a thesis statement that answers the question posed - for an eloquent essay, consider placing your thesis statement as the last sentence of the first paragraph (introductory paragraph).

Step 4: Write your essay (minimum 5 paragraphs) using the documents and necessary outside information. Reference the documents by using the document #, author, artist, or title.

## Document 1

George Mason, Virginia Declaration of Rights, 1776

**A DECLARATION OF RIGHTS** made by the representatives of the good people of Virginia, assembled in full and free convention which rights do pertain to them and their posterity, as the basis and foundation of government.

**Section 1.** That all men are by nature equally free and independent and have certain inherent rights, of which, when they enter into a state of society, they cannot, by any compact, deprive or divest their posterity; namely, the enjoyment of life and liberty, with the means of acquiring and possessing property, and pursuing and obtaining happiness and safety.

**Section 2.** That all power is vested in, and consequently derived from, the people; that magistrates are their trustees and servants and at all times amenable to them.

**Section 3.** That government is, or ought to be, instituted for the common benefit, protection, and security of the people, nation, or community; of all the various modes and forms of government, that is best which is capable of producing the greatest degree of happiness and safety and is most effectually secured against the danger of maladministration. And that, when any government shall be found inadequate or contrary to these purposes, a majority of the community has an indubitable, inalienable, and infeasible right to reform, alter, or abolish it, in such manner as shall be judged most conducive to the public wealth.

According to Mason, what should the role of government be?

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## Document 2

John Locke, *Two Treatises on Government*, 1690

Sec. 87. Man being born, as has been proved, with a title to perfect freedom, and an uncontrolled enjoyment of all the rights and privileges of the law of nature, equally with any other man, or number of men in the world, hath by nature a power, not only to preserve his property, that is, his life, liberty and estate, against the injuries and attempts of other men; but to judge of, and punish the breaches of that law in others, as he is persuaded the offence deserves, even with death itself, in crimes where the heinousness of the fact, in his opinion, requires it. But because no political society can be, nor subsist, without having in itself the power to preserve the property, and in order thereunto, punish the offences of all those of that society; there, and there only is political society, where every one of the members hath quitted this natural power, resigned it up into the hands of the community in all cases that exclude him not from appealing for protection to the law established by it. And thus all private judgment of every particular member being excluded, the community comes to be umpire, by settled standing rules, indifferent, and the same to all parties; and by men having authority from the community, for the execution of those rules, decides all the differences that may happen between any members of that society concerning any matter of right; and punishes those offences which any member hath committed against the society, with such penalties as the law has established: whereby it is easy to discern, who are, and who are not, in political society together. Those who are united into one body, and have a common established law and judicature to appeal to, with authority to decide controversies between them, and punish offenders, are in civil society one with another: but those who have no such common appeal, I mean on earth, are still in the state of nature, each being, where there is no other, judge for himself, and executioner; which is, as I have before showed it, the perfect state of nature.

What does Locke believe to be the natural rights of man?

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### Document 3

Thomas Jefferson, Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom, 1786

II. Be it enacted by the General Assembly, that no man shall be compelled to frequent or support any religious worship, place, or ministry whatsoever, nor shall be enforced, restrained, molested, or burdened in his body or goods, nor shall otherwise suffer on account of his religious opinions or belief; but that all men shall be free to profess, and by argument to maintain, their opinion in matters of religion, and that the same shall in no wise diminish, enlarge, or affect their civil capacities.

Please see <http://www.vahistorical.org/sva2003/vsrf.htm> for more detailed information and analysis guidance.

What right does Thomas Jefferson wish to safeguard? How?

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## Document 4

Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, 1748

When the legislative and executive powers are united in the same person, or in the same body of magistrates, there can be no liberty; because apprehensions may arise, lest the same monarch or senate should enact tyrannical laws, to execute them in a tyrannical manner.

Again, there is no liberty, if the power of judging be not separated from the legislative and executive powers. Were it joined with the legislative, the life and liberty of the subject would be exposed to arbitrary control, for the judge would then be the legislator. Were it joined to the executive power, the judge might behave with all the violence of an oppressor.

There would be an end of every thing were the same man, or the same body, whether of the nobles or of the people to exercise those three powers that of enacting laws, that of executing the public resolutions, and that of judging the crimes or differences of individuals.

Please see <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/montesquieu-spirit.html> for the full document and more information.

What is the warning in Montesquieu's message? Why?

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### Document 5

Abigail Adams, in a letter to husband John Adams during the Constitutional Convention, 1776

Remember the Ladies, and be more generous and favorable to them than your ancestors. Do not put such unlimited power into the hands of the Husbands. Remember all Men would be tyrants if they could. If particular care and attention is not paid to the Ladies we are determined to foment a Rebellion and will not hold ourselves bound by any Laws in which we have no voice or Representation.

What type of influence did Abigail Adams wish to exert on her husband, Founding Father John Adams?

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## Document 6

Thomas Jefferson, Declaration of Independence, July 4, 1776

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.--That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, --That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness.

Please see <http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/declaration.html> for the full transcript and analysis guidance.

According to Jefferson, what are the unalienable rights of man? Do you think he was influenced by other political philosophers? Why or why not?

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## Document 7

Thomas Hobbes, *The Leviathan*, 1660

On this law dependeth another: that at the entrance into conditions of peace, no man require to reserve to himself any right which he is not content should be reserved to every one of the rest. As it is necessary for all men that seek peace to lay down certain rights of nature; that is to say, not to have liberty to do all they list, so is it necessary for man's life to retain some: as right to govern their own bodies; enjoy air, water, motion, ways to go from place to place; and all things else without which a man cannot live, or not live well. If in this case, at the making of peace, men require for themselves that which they would not have to be granted to others, they do contrary to the precedent law that commandeth the acknowledgement of natural equality, and therefore also against the law of nature.

Do you think the ideas of Hobbes were influential to the Founding Fathers? Why or why not?

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## Document 8

James Madison, *The Federalist Number 51*, 1788

In order to lay a due foundation for that separate and distinct exercise of the different powers of government, which to a certain extent is admitted on all hands to be essential to the preservation of liberty, it is evident that each department should have a will of its own; and consequently should be so constituted that the members of each should have as little agency as possible in the appointment of the members of the others.

Please see

[http://www.montpelier.org/explore/james\\_madison/federalist\\_papers.php](http://www.montpelier.org/explore/james_madison/federalist_papers.php) for more detail on Madison and the Federalist Papers.

What does Madison think is essential in order to preserve liberty?

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## Document 9

Barry Faulkner, *The Constitution*, 1936



Please see

[http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/charters\\_mural\\_constitution\\_b.html](http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/charters_mural_constitution_b.html)  
to learn more about this mural and the historic figures represented.

How is Faulkner's work similar or different from Christy's?

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