

Name: _____ C: _____

Date: _____

RH.6-8.2: Reading for Main Idea

The task of creating a new government posed a great challenge. Among many other issues, the relationship between the new states and the national government was difficult to define. The debate over the nature of the new government of the United States would consume the political energies of the new nation.

Title:

British settlers in North America had founded not one colony but many, each with its own governor, council, and colonial assembly. This system of distinct, self-governing colonies encouraged people to think of the colony as the primary political unit. Because of this, most people's allegiance was to the colony in which they lived. The Revolutionary War gave the colonies a common goal, but as these colonies became states, they remained reluctant to unite under a strong central government. The challenge was to develop a system of government that balanced the interests of the several states with those of the nation.

Main Idea:

Title:

Eighteenth-century Americans believed that a democracy, or government directly by the people, placed too much power in the hands of the uneducated masses. Therefore, they favored a republic—a government in which citizens rule through their elected representatives. However, republicanism, the idea that governments should be based on the consent of the people (which should not be confused with the Republicanism of the modern-day political party), meant different things to different Americans.

Some, like John Dickinson, believed that a republic required a virtuous people. The new government could only succeed, they argued, if people placed the good of the nation above their personal interests.

Other Americans, influenced by the writings of the philosopher and economist Adam Smith, believed that a republic would benefit from self-interest. They asserted that if a government allowed independent citizens to pursue their own economic and political interests, the whole nation would benefit.

Main Idea:

Title:	
An important issue in the early years of the nation was the role that women should play in the republic. In the years before and during the Revolutionary War, many women became politically active, organizing boycotts of British goods and helping raise money for the army. This involvement in public affairs was an important departure for women, who had traditionally been confined to the	private sphere of family life. After the Revolution, as the nation readjusted to peace, the new ideal of republican motherhood helped channel women's newfound political awareness and activism back into the home. Women were expected to raise the next generation of patriots by instilling democratic values in their children.
Main Idea:	

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As the states created their own constitutions, they wrestled with how to put republican ideals into practice. Many state constitutions shared certain similarities. They limited the powers of government leaders. They guaranteed specific rights for citizens, including freedom of speech, religion, and the press. In general, state constitutions emphasized liberty rather than equality and reflected a fear of centralized authority. At the same time, state constitutions differed widely in granting the right to vote. Although the new states were more democratic than any western nation at this time, it was still only a	very limited democracy by modern standards. African Americans were generally not allowed to vote. Some states granted voting rights to all white males. Other states, like Maryland, continued to make property ownership a requirement for voting. Despite the more active political role that women had played during the Revolution, they were still denied the right to vote in most states. However, New Jersey gave voting rights to all free property owners but neglected to specify males. Consequently, some New Jersey women gained the right to vote—at least until 1807, when this right was revoked.
Main Idea:	

Title:	
In a world where most nations were still governed by kings, there were few political systems that could serve as models for the new republic. The nation's founders searched history for political precedents for the new government. In the previous century, the English had established a shortlived republic after the execution of King Charles I. During the Middle Ages, Italian cities such as Florence, Pisa, Genoa, and Venice had become self-	governing city-states. Swiss communities also had resisted royal control, forming alliances that developed into the Swiss Confederation. In ancient times, republics and various democratic systems had existed in Greece and in Rome. However, none of these models could be adapted easily to the political situation of the new United States, with its need to balance the concerns of state and national governments.
Main Idea:	