Executive Power

Lesson Support for Material available on The Quill Project



Essential Question

How can the delegates in the Constitutional Convention make an executive strong enough to carry out the laws, but not so strong that he acts like a king?





How England Began to Limit the Power of Kings



Magna Carta, 1297. National Archives.

Glorious Revolution 1688



William of Orange, and Mary, his English wife are presented with the English crown by the Marquis of Halifax. Line engraving by J. Parker after J. Northcote, 1790. Wellcome Collection.



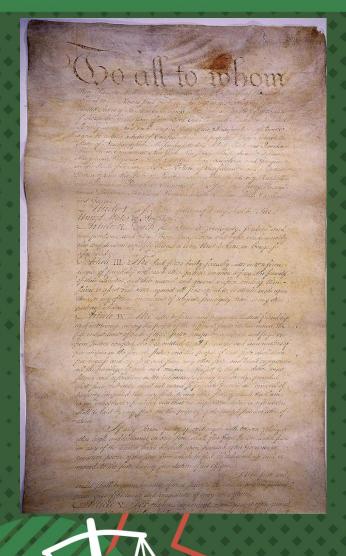
American Revolution: Americans Broke Away from the King

- Colonists believed their rights as Englishmen were violated and began to protest.
- Thomas Paine published Common Sense, arguing it's wrong to allow a king to rule just because of family name or birth. Many Americans are persuaded to reject the monarchy.
- Americans officially declared separation from the king stating a list of grievances against him.



George III Coronation portrait by Allan Ramsay







- When Americans declared independence in 1776, representatives began working on a new government. Eventually, the Articles of Confederation were agreed to by the states in 1781.
- The Articles had problems: Congress could not collect taxes, control trade between states, enforce its laws, and there was no real executive power.
- After the war ended, the problems from the Articles became more concerning. In 1787, delegates from the states gathered in Philadelphia to try to solve the problems.

Debate in the 1787 Constitutional Convention

How can the delegates make an executive strong enough to carry out the laws, but not so strong that he acts like a king?





Some Debates in the Constitutional Convention about the President (Executive)

Debate A: How many executives should there be?

Debate B: How should the executive be chosen?

Debate C: How long should the executive hold office?

Read the worksheet with excerpts from the debates. What were some of the ideas in the debates that stood out to you?







Some Outcomes of the Debates in the Constitutional Convention about the President (Executive)

- The executive is vested in a single person, not a council.
- The president will serve for a term of four years. He is allowed to run again.
 - In 1951, the 22 Amendment limited presidential service to two terms
- Rather than allowing Congress to choose the president, the delegates created a group of electors from each state.
 These electors could not hold public office to prevent any conflict of interest. This is the Electoral College.



Class Discussion

- 1. What did you think about the delegates' decisions to:
 - Make the executive one person?
 - Choose the executive with an Electoral College, rather than the Legislature?
 - Allow the executive to serve a four-year term and run for reelection?
- 2. How did the delegates make an executive strong enough to carry out the laws, but not so strong that he acts like a king?

