

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

# What Is the Constitution?

*Use the text to answer each question below.*

1. During the 17th and 18th centuries, Britain owned 13 colonies in the “New World”—that is, America. But in 1776, the United States declared its independence. Years of Revolutionary War followed; Britain didn’t want to give the colonies up. However, the United States won the war in 1783. It was its own country at last. Now the new country needed a government. The revolutionary leaders didn’t want to have a system like England’s, with a king or queen holding much of the power. Instead, they thought people should govern themselves. This type of government is called a democracy.

Why didn’t revolutionary leaders want a king or queen to rule America?

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| A. They felt that kings and queens didn’t have enough power. | B. They believed the American people should govern themselves.             |
| C. They hoped to one day be back under British rule.         | D. They felt that a king or queen would give too much power to the people. |
2. In 1787, a group of American leaders came together to craft a set of rules for the new government. These leaders are known as America’s Founding Fathers. The set of rules they created is called the Constitution. The Founding Fathers believed that having too much power could be dangerous. It could tempt some leaders to use all that power to help themselves instead of helping the country. But they also knew that the government had to have *\*some\** clout. Otherwise, nothing would get done! They decided that the best solution was to spread out the power so that no one has too much. So the Constitution divides the government’s power among three different branches.

According to this passage, why is it dangerous when leaders have too much power?

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| A. Some leaders might use the power for their own good rather than the good of the country. | B. It would be impossible to get anything done in government.                               |
| C. So many things would get done that the government would no longer be needed.             | D. The government would become so powerful that other governments would want to destroy it. |

- 3.** The Founding Fathers created the Constitution in 1787. But they couldn't predict the future. They knew life would change in ways they couldn't even imagine. Rules made in 1787 might not work so well in 1887, 1987, or 2087. So the Founding Fathers made rules for amending, or changing, the Constitution. By 1992, the Constitution had been amended 27 times. The 13th Amendment, which was added in 1865, outlawed slavery. The 19th Amendment, added in 1920, gave women the right to vote.

Based on this passage, what inference can you make?

- A. When America became an independent country, all enslaved people were freed.
- B. Slavery was against the law until 1992.
- C. The Founding Fathers did not make slavery against the law.
- D. The Founding Fathers outlawed slavery.