

Take a Stand!

Government and Economics

Socratic Discussion in History

Student's Edition

DEDICATION

Dedicated to Zdenka and the De Gree Kids

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Week One: Political Crisis or Hand-Wringing Fact or Opinion?

Fact

A **fact** in history is a statement that is accepted as true and is not debatable. A fact often refers to a date, a person, or a document. For example, “The Declaration of Independence was written and signed in 1776.” We know this happened because we have the original document, the men who wrote and signed this document wrote about it, and observers wrote about it as well. There is no doubt in anybody’s mind whether the facts in this statement are true.

Which of these sentences are facts and which are not?

Fact or Not a Fact?

- 1. The first Egyptian settlements were near the Euphrates River.
- 2. Early civilizations often settled near major rivers.
- 3. Another way of saying Old Stone Age is Paleolithic.
- 4. Early man used guns to hunt buffaloes.
- 5. California has the best waves to surf in the United States.

Opinion

An **opinion** is an expression of somebody’s ideas and is debatable. Opinions that are based on facts and good reasoning are stronger than opinions not based on facts. In history, opinions alone tend to be less persuasive than when a person supports his opinions with facts.

Are the following opinions or facts?

Opinion or Fact?

- 1. Life for early man was more peaceful than our life today.
- 2. Teachers who are nice don’t assign homework.
- 3. Almost everybody’s favorite food is pizza.
- 4. Mesopotamia means “the land between two rivers.”
- 5. Sumerians were the first people to use wheeled vehicles.

Now that you've learned the difference between fact and opinion, read the example paragraphs below and answer the questions. These two students attempted to answer the question "Did the ancient civilizations of Mesopotamia contribute much to world civilizations?"

Student 1: The ancient civilizations of Mesopotamia contributed much to the world. These societies rocked! When there was a really big war, the Sumerians and Assyrians knew how to fight hard. These societies would use a lot of arrows in their battles, and the enemy wouldn't know how to respond. Most of the time, the enemy would just die, or quit. Also, everyone knows that Mesopotamia had the best kind of clothing. Have you seen pictures of the great Babylonian kings? Their clothing was "tight." And, Mesopotamia was the land between two rivers, so therefore this area had to have a lot of water. All in all, the ancient civilizations of Mesopotamia contributed much to the world.

Student 2: The ancient civilizations of Mesopotamia contributed much to the world. The Sumerians created the first written language. We call this "Cuneiform." Sumerians also were the first people to use the wheel for transportation. The Babylonian king Hammurabi established one of the first written law codes, known as Hammurabi's Code. These laws helped the weak against the strong, protected women's property rights, and regulated doctors' fees. Also, the Hittites discovered how to use iron, which at that time was the strongest metal in the world that humans could work with. Phoenicians gave us the world's first alphabet, with 22 symbols. In addition, the Hebrews were the first people ever to worship only one God. Yes, the ancient civilizations of Mesopotamia contributed much to the world.

Questions

- 1. Which of these two students uses more opinion than fact? _____
- 2. Copy one sentence that is an opinion. _____

- 3. Copy one sentence that details at least one fact. _____

- 4. Which of these two students' writings is more persuasive? Why? _____

Judgment

Judgment in social studies means a person's evaluation of facts. For example, if we use the fact that the Romans believed citizens could vote, we can judge from this that the Romans looked somewhat favorably on democracy. Good judgment is very persuasive but bad judgment is not.

Write facts and judgments in the spaces provided. Discuss your judgments in class.

Fact: 11-year-old Maria Perez won the gold medal in the city 800-meter sprint.
Judgment: Maria is a fast runner.
Fact: Private Smith was killed in war and had one wife and 7 children.
Judgment: Private Smith's death was a tragedy.
Fact: Thursday's temperature in Santa Ana was 105 degrees Fahrenheit.
Judgment: Thursday was very hot.

Make your own.

Fact:
Judgment:

Fact:
Judgment:

Fact:
Judgment:

Week Two: American Government

Supporting Evidence

Supporting evidence refers to everything you use to support your thesis. These include, but are not limited to, the following.

1. Diaries and journals
2. Government documents such as birth certificates
3. Songs and stories
4. Coins, medals, jewelry
5. Artistic works such as pictures and paintings
6. Tools and pottery
7. Documents such as the Declaration of Independence
8. Weapons
9. Burial remains
10. Literature and customs

Good writers overwhelm the reader with so many pieces of supporting evidence that the writing will be quickly accepted. Also, the writer has a duty to explain carefully and logically the meaning of the evidence, showing how it supports the thesis. A writer must be careful, however, not to include unnecessary evidence. For example, the fact that Lincoln was born in a log cabin isn't evidence that he was a good president. Also, the dates a president was born and died may be evidence, but they would not support a thesis arguing who was the best president.

Practice

With your teacher discuss which of the following is evidence for the topic "Explain what daily life was like in the Roman Republic in the third century B.C."

1. A diary from 234 B.C: _____
2. A newspaper article from A.D. 250: _____
3. Your friend likes the subject: _____
4. A movie about life in the third century B.C: _____
5. A song Romans sang in the third century B.C: _____
6. A story on the crucifixion of Christ: _____
7. A painting of a Roman slave working in 299 A.D: _____

Primary or Secondary Source Analysis

A **primary source** is a piece of evidence authored by a person who witnessed or experienced a historical event. For example, diaries and journals are primary sources. It is usually better to find out something from a person who experienced a particular event than to hear about it secondhand. Primary source documents are usually the most useful for historians.

A **secondary source** is a piece of evidence that has been worked on by somebody who was not a witness to the historical event. Examples of secondary sources are textbooks, documentaries, and encyclopedias. Secondary sources are valuable but not as valuable as primary sources. Secondary sources contain the bias of the writer. This means that the writer of a secondary source will put his ideas into his explanation of the historical event, even when he may be trying not to.

Take a look at these two examples regarding the same event.

Event: Car accident outside of school

Example 1: "Oh no! I was in the back seat of my mom's car. This kid threw his friend's handball onto the street. All of a sudden, his friend jumped in front of my mom's car to get his ball. He didn't even look if a car was coming. My mom hit him and his body smashed against our windshield. Blood was everywhere!"

Example 2: "Did you hear what happened? Mario told me that his brother was walking home when he dropped his handball onto the street. After his brother looked both ways for cars, he stepped out onto the street to get his ball. Then this mad lady came speeding down the street and aimed her car at him. She hit him on purpose!"

Questions
1. Which is a primary source?
2. Which is a secondary source?
3. What is usually more believable, a primary or secondary source? Why? _____

Socratic Discussion Open-Ended Question #2
The U.S. Constitution

Which Branch is the Strongest?

In 1787, 55 delegates from 12 American states met for over six months in the middle of summer in a small room with windows that were nailed shut for secrecy. In this hot and stuffy atmosphere, the oldest living representative government was created. Founding Fathers, such as John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, James Madison, and Roger Sherman, created a government that separated power into three parts: the legislative branch, the executive branch, and the judicial branch. In “Federalist Paper no. 51,” James Madison discusses the strengths of each of the branches and points out the checks and balances written into the Constitution. Read this document to help you answer the question.

Based on your research of the U.S. Constitution and other evidence, which branch of the American government is the strongest? In your answer, include a discussion of the members of the three branches, the eligibility requirements of its members, and the various powers of each branch.

Powers of the Three Branches

Legislative Branch

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Executive Branch

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Judicial Branch

1. _____

2. _____

Analyze on Your Own

Based on your research, which branch do you think is the most powerful? Why? _____

because _____

Checks and Balances

The Founding Fathers wrote the Constitution so that no branch would ever become too powerful. The writers thought that men were greedy and would always try to obtain more power if they could. Each branch, then, has powers to control the other two branches.

In this prewriting activity, list the powers that each branch has to control the other branches. As you are doing this, ask yourself if one of these powers makes this branch stronger.

Powers of the Legislative Branch	
To Check the Executive Branch:	To Check the Judicial Branch:
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.

Powers of the Executive Branch	
To Check the Legislative Branch:	To Check the Judicial Branch:
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	

Powers of the Judicial Branch	
To Check the Executive Branch:	To Check the Legislative Branch:
1.	1.

Questions

1. Based on the facts you found, which branch seems to have the most powerful checks on the other two? _____

2. Why do you think this? _____

“Federalist Paper No. 51”

James Madison, Alexander Hamilton, and John Jay were instrumental in generating support for ratification of the U.S. Constitution by the thirteen states. To detail the best arguments as to why it was in the best interest of each state to ratify the Constitution, these men wrote a series of essays entitled “The Federalist Papers.” Eighty-five essays were written, each showing how the new document created a government and system both strong but protective of liberty. Using “Federalist Paper no. 51,” answer the questions below.

1. In paragraph one, how does Madison argue the best way to keep the branches of government distinct from each other? _____

2. In paragraph two, Madison states that it might appear best to have the people vote in each member of the government. Why does he state that for the judiciary this is not the best method? _____

3. In paragraph four, Madison writes that it is necessary to place controls on men so that they do not usurp powers of others. What is his view of man? _____

4. In paragraph six, Madison states that a particular branch of government “predominates.” Which branch is this? _____
5. According to Madison, what is the best way to hinder the legislative branch? _____

6. The last two paragraphs of “Federalist No. 51” point out two interesting points on the American Republic. The first point deals with how it is good when government is divided. Explain: _____

7. Explain the last paragraph of “Federalist Paper No. 51.” _____

Week Three Ancient and Medieval Heritage

Using Quotes

A **quote** is when a writer uses the exact words of another writer. An effective analytical essay in social studies will use quotes. For example, an essay about the use of violence in the Middle Ages will be stronger if certain quotes from this time period are used. When you argue a point about the past, there is no better evidence than a primary source document or quote.

Look at the example below. The paragraph is part of an answer to the question “Was the plague a problem in ancient Greece?”

The plague was most certainly a problem to the ancient Greeks. The Greek historian Thucydides, in “The Peloponnesian Wars,” wrote, “Words indeed fail one when one tries to give a general picture of this disease; and as for the sufferings of individuals, they seemed almost beyond the capacity of human nature to endure.” To the ancient Greeks, the plague was a serious problem.

When using quotes, write the original author’s name and the speech or document from which the quote was taken from. Punctuate correctly with quotation marks.

Practice

Practice writing three quotations taken from your textbook. Use correct punctuation! Pay attention to the commas, the quotation marks, and the end marks. For example, Julius Caesar, when crossing the Rubicon River, said, “The die is cast.”

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing means to take information from your research and to put it in your own words. This is an important skill to have when writing a research paper. If you copy directly from a source, such as a book, but do not place the words in quotation marks and write the author's name, it is called **plagiarism**. Plagiarism is against the rules of writing and your teacher will not accept the work!

Here is an example of paraphrasing a quote from a teacher.

Quote:

"China's mountainous geography made it very difficult for Chinese leaders to unify their country."

Paraphrase:

Ancient Chinese leaders had a hard time unifying their country because of the many mountains in China.

Practice

Quote:

"Confucius lived in a time of turmoil in China. He wrote about respecting parents and authority. Many Chinese grew to believe in what Confucius wrote about."

Paraphrase:

Quote:

"The Chinese were great traders with other cultures. The Silk Road ran from China through central Asia to the Middle East. Along this trail, Chinese met with Arabs, Africans, Europeans, and other Asians."

Paraphrase:

Socratic Discussion Open-Ended Question #3

Western Political Thought and American Government

The political and legal worlds of ancient Greece and Rome, and the religions of Judaism and Christianity, are commonly considered the beginnings of Western political thought. It is from these lands and religions that much of the Western world received the ideas of government, law, philosophy, morality, and religion. Europeans who founded the United States were very aware of the fact that Western political thought inspired laws, religions, and customs in the new country.

In your essay, support or reject the statement “Western political thought and the societies from which it originated are based on ideas that are detrimental to humanity.” Include in your essay a discussion on whether the United States of America is continuing in the framework of Western political tradition or embarking in a different direction. Use your textbook and any other source needed to find the answers.

You should be familiar with these terms and people to answer the question:

Athens	Athenian democracy	Plato	suffrage
citizenship	Pericles	Roman Republic	Judeo-Christian
the Ten Commandments		Roman law	equality
the Stoics and "law of nations"			

Views of Law and Religion

Judeo-Christian Views of Law and Religion

1. According to the Ten Commandments, are there different rules for the rich and the poor? _____
2. According to the Ten Commandments, do kings have to follow the same rules as servants? _____
3. Based on the teachings of Christianity, is salvation open to everyone, regardless of financial position or race? _____
4. According to Judaism and Christianity, do all people have to follow the same laws of God, or do some people not have to? _____
5. In Judaism and Christianity, does God treat all people equally? _____
6. Do Jews and Christians believe in one God, or many gods? _____
7. Do Jews and Christians believe their God has a moral code that humans should follow? _____

Greco-Roman Views of Law

1. In ancient Athens, did all citizens have the same political rights? _____
2. In the Roman Republic, did all citizens have the same rights? _____
3. In the Roman Republic, what were the Twelve Tables? _____
4. Were laws in ancient Greece or the Roman Republic written? _____
5. Which views of law were similar in ancient Greece and the Roman Republic? _____
6. Who were the Stoics of the Roman Republic? _____
7. Who introduced Stoicism in ancient Athens? _____
8. According to the Stoics, should a society view all people as equals, or should some people have more rights? _____
9. Did ancient Rome and ancient Greece have official religions? _____
10. In what American documents is *equality* referred to? _____

Greco-Roman Traditions of Government

While both Greek and Roman governments had periods of dictatorship, they both also had the world's first elements of democracy. In this exercise, write how democratic Greece and republican Rome functioned.

Athenian Democracy				
Five Branches of Government				
Assembly	Council	Board of Generals	Board of Officials	Juries

1. Briefly list the duties of each of these branches.
Assembly: _____

Council: _____

Board of Generals: _____
Board of Officials: _____
Juries: _____

2. In Athens, democracy is said to have reached a high point under Pericles (461–429 b.c.). Who could vote during this time? _____

3. Was there another government in the world where people voted for their leader? If so, where? _____

The Roman Republic		
Three Branches of Government		
Executive Branch: Two Consuls	Lawmakers: A. The Senate B. The Assembly of Tribes C. The Assembly of Centuries	Judges: Praetors

1. Which modern country has three branches? _____

2. Why did the Romans think it a good idea to have power in different groups of men? _____

Summary of Western Political Thought

1. What are a few basic ideas of Western political thought? _____

2. Where did these ideas originate? _____

3. In what countries or societies do we see Western political thought today, and how do we see these ideas in practice? _____

4. Which American document contains a reference to *equality*? _____

5. Are the ideas of Western political thought valid exclusively for one ethnic or racial group? For example, are Western political ideas only good for Greeks (as Plato was Greek) or Jews (as Moses was Hebrew)? _____

Explain your answer. _____

6. Are the ideas of Western political thought too hard for today's student to understand? Were people a few thousand years ago more intelligent than we are today? _____

Week Five: Colonial Experiences and the Constitution
Socratic Discussion Open-Ended Question#4
The Declaration of Independence

In the summer of 1776, the Second Continental Congress met in Philadelphia. At stake was the survival of the British Empire in the thirteen English colonies and the rights of English colonists living in America. At this congress it was determined that the colonies had to break away from Great Britain to become free. Delegates decided that a document was necessary to announce to the world why the colonies intended to overthrow the British in America. Thomas Jefferson wrote the original draft of the Declaration of Independence; Benjamin Franklin and John Adams edited it with him. This paper declared the American colonists independent from Great Britain. On July 4, 1776, the Congressional delegates approved and signed this document.

According to the Declaration of Independence, the individual has certain rights that are protected. No government can take away these rights. What are the two most important rights in the Declaration of Independence?

Rights

When Thomas Jefferson wrote the Declaration of Independence, King George III had taken away many rights of the colonists. For example, the colonists lost the right to a speedy trial. If a colonist were charged with a crime, he had to be shipped to Great Britain where he was tried by a British judge. Likewise, a colonist lost the right to control who slept under his own roof. Because of the Quartering Act, British soldiers could be housed in the colonists' houses. Jefferson wanted to make sure the American government would never take away the rights that King George III had.

What are rights? Below is one example of a right you have as a U.S. citizen (from the Declaration of Independence). Try to think of more rights.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Share your answers with your neighbor and then with the class. Put a star next to the two rights you consider the most important.

Analyzing a Primary Source Document

A **primary source** is a piece of evidence authored by a person who witnessed or experienced an event. For example, diaries and journals are primary sources. It is usually better to find out something from a person who experienced a particular event than to hear about it secondhand. Primary source documents are usually the most useful for historians.

When you have a question based on a document, you need to start answering the question by doing two things. The first is to understand the question. The second is to read the document.

When you read the Declaration of Independence, you need to read differently than if you were reading a book. As you read the document, you are concerned with answering the question. You are trying to find key phrases related to individual rights.

Key Phrases Involving Individual Rights	
Phrases About Individual Rights	What These Phrases Mean
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.
5.	5.

Now you need to determine the two most important phrases. Read your textbook, discuss with your teacher, speak with a classmate, and reflect on the ideas for a time. In the space below, list your choices.

Two key phrases about individual rights
1. _____
2. _____

Socratic Discussion Open-Ended Question #5
American Democracy: Founding Ideas

At the beginning of the American democratic experiment, no other government in the world existed that allowed its citizens to participate so fully as in the United States. Over two centuries have passed since the founding of our republic, and the premises upon which our government were created are no longer discussed in detail. Do we not have the discussion because we all agree with the Founding Fathers or have we become lazy? To understand how the American system of democracy was created, it is essential to discuss what the American Founding Fathers thought about people, power, and governance. Once we have learned what these men thought, we should ask ourselves if their ideas are correct.

Alexander Hamilton, John Jay, and James Madison wrote a series of essays supporting passage of the U.S. Constitution when each state voted for its adoption. These essays are known as “The Federalist Papers.” Discuss the ideas put forth by the writers of “The Federalist Papers.” How did these men view the nature of man? How did this view of human nature determine how the U.S. Constitution was written? Based on your historical analysis of history, was the U.S. Constitution founded on a premise or premises that you consider false or true? Defend your thesis with evidence and logic.

To answer this question well, you should be familiar with the following terms and people:

separation of powers	factions, in “The Federalist Papers”	checks and balances
independent judiciary	“The Federalist Papers”	James Madison
Alexander Hamilton	John Jay	federalism

The Federalist Papers

1. What were “The Federalist Papers”? _____

2. Who were the main authors? _____

3. After ratification of the U.S. Constitution, what happened to the writers of “The Federalist Papers”? _____

4. What does James Madison write about the nature of man in “Federalist Paper no. 10”? _____

5. According to Madison in “Federalist Paper no. 10”, what is the primary control of government? _____

6. According to Madison in “Federalist Paper no. 10,” which part of government naturally dominates? _____
7. What must be done to government in order for government to control itself, according to Madison in “Federalist no. 10”? _____

8. What did Alexander Hamilton write about the conflicts between the state and the federal governments in “Federalist Paper no. 28”? _____

9. According to “Federalist Paper no. 51,” what is “federalism”? _____

10. In “Federalist Paper no. 51,” Madison wrote, “Ambition must be made to counteract ambition.” What does this mean? _____

11. What must be done to diminish the power of the legislature, according to Madison in “Federalist no. 51”? _____

12. What is your opinion of how the authors of “The Federalist Papers” viewed human nature? Why do you think this? _____

Checks and Balances

The Founding Fathers wrote the Constitution so that one branch would never become too powerful. The writers thought that men were greedy and would always try to obtain more power if they could. Each branch, then, has powers to control the other two branches.

In this prewriting activity, write the powers that each branch has to control the other branches. As you are doing this, think if one of these powers makes this branch stronger.

Powers of the Legislative Branch	
Check the Executive Branch	Check the Judicial Branch
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.

Powers of the Executive Branch	
Check the Legislative Branch	Check the Judicial Branch
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	

Powers of the Judicial Branch	
Check the Executive Branch	Check the Legislative Branch
1.	1.

History and the Nature of Man

Using at least two historical examples, write a brief paragraph demonstrating how you view the nature of man. Is your view the same as the authors of “The Federalist Papers”? Why or why not? _____
