



*George Mason was a major contributor to the development of freedom in the colonies. He wrote or coauthored many of the key documents on that issue. Mason wrote the Fairfax Resolutions as well as the Virginia Declaration of Rights. Both of these documents were key documents in the quest for independence, and Thomas Jefferson drew heavily on the Virginia Declaration of Rights when he wrote the Declaration of Independence. While Mason attended the constitutional convention, he refused to sign the document, but played a major role in drafting the bill of rights.*

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## General Meeting of the Freeholders and other Inhabitants of Fairfax, in Virginia

*During the summer of 1774, each of the counties of Virginia passed resolutions advocating a non-importation policy, and recommending a Continental Congress. In Fairfax County, George Washington was chairman of the meeting, and one of the committee to prepare the resolutions. The work of drafting these resolves, however, was committed to George Mason. When the convention met in August, the Fairfax Resolves were taken as the basis of the association there entered upon, which association was in substance adopted by the general Congress at its first session in the following September.*

### FAIRFAX COUNTY (VIRGINIA) RESOLUTIONS.

At a General Meeting of the Freeholders and other Inhabitants of the County of *Fairfax*, at the Court House in the Town of *Alexandria*, on *Monday*, the 18th day of *July*, 1774:

GEORGE WASHINGTON, Esquire, *Chairman*, and  
ROBERT HARRISON, Gentleman, *Clerk*.

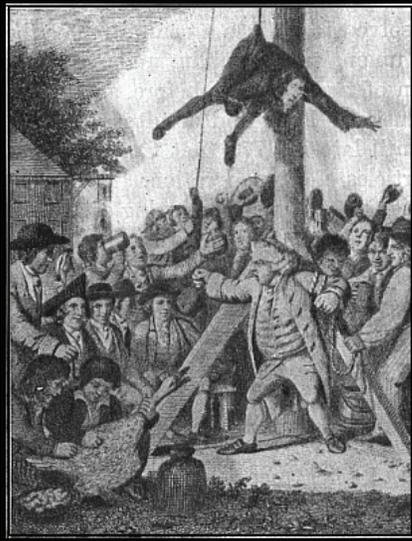
*Resolved*, That this Colony and Dominion of *Virginia* cannot be considered as a conquered country, and, if it was, that the present inhabitants are the descendants, not of the conquered, but of the conquerors. That the same was not settled at the national expense of *England*, but at the private expense of

**Fast Fact**

At this time, most colonists still thought of themselves as “the king’s men” and were very loyal to the crown.

However, they thus assumed that they were deserving of all the rights pertaining to a citizen of Great Britain.

**Right:** Separatists mobbing the Tories, showing the revolutionary sentiment to those who continued to support King George.



the adventurers, our ancestors, by solemn compact with, and under the auspices and protection of, the *British* Crown, upon which we are, in every respect, as dependent as the people of *Great Britain*, and in the same manner subject to all his Majesty's just, legal, and constitutional prerogatives; that our ancestors, when they left their native land, and settled in *America*, brought with them, even if the same had not been confirmed by Charters, the civil Constitution and form of Government of the country they came from, and were by the laws of nature and Nations entitled to all its privileges, immunities, and advantages, which

have descended to us, their posterity, and ought of right to be as fully enjoyed as if we had still continued within the Realm of *England*.

*Resolved*, That the most important and valuable part of the *British* Constitution, upon which its very existence depends, Is the fundamental principle of the people's being governed by no laws to which they have not given their consent by Representatives freely chosen by themselves, who are affected by the laws they enact equally with their constituents, to whom they are accountable, and whose burthens they share, in which consists the safety and happiness of the community; for if this part of the Constitution was taken away, or materially altered, the Government must degenerate either into an absolute and despotick monarchy, or a tyrannical aristocracy, and the freedom of the people be annihilated.

*Resolved*, Therefore, as the inhabitants of the *American* Colonies are not, and from their situation, cannot be represented in the *British* Parliament; that the Legislative power here can, of right, be exercised only by our Provincial Assemblies, or Parliaments, subject to the assent or negative of the *British* Crown, to be declared within some proper limited time; but as it was thought just and reasonable that the people of *Great Britain* should reap advantages from the Colonies adequate to the protection they afforded them, the *British* Parliament have claimed and exercised the power of regulating our trade and commerce, so as to restrain our importing from foreign countries such articles as they could furnish us with, of their own growth and manufacture, or exporting to foreign countries such articles and portions of our produce as *Great Britain* stood in need of, for her own consumption or manufacture. Such a power directed with wisdom and moderation, seems necessary for the general good of that great body politick of which we are a part, although in some degree repugnant to the principles of the Constitution. Under this idea, our ancestors submitted to it, the experience of more than a century, during the government of his Majesty's royal predecessors, have proved its utility, and the reciprocal benefits flowing from it produced mutual uninterrupted harmony and good will between the inhabitants of *Great Britain* and her Colonies, who during that long period always considered themselves as one and the same people; and though such a power is capable of abuse, and in some instances hath been stretched beyond the original design and institution, yet to avoid strife and contention with our fellow-subjects, and strongly im-

**Discussion Question**

Do you think America is still governed by laws which the people approved? Explain.

pressed with the experience of mutual benefits, we always cheerfully acquiesced in it while the entire regulation of our internal policy, and giving and granting our own money, were preserved to our own Provincial Legislatures.

*Resolved*, That it is the duty of these Colonies, on all

**Discussion Question**

What do you think of the assertion that Americans deserved representation?

emergencies, to contribute in proportion to their abilities, situation, and circumstances, to the necessary charge of supporting and defending the *British* Empire, of which they are a part; that while we are treated upon an equal footing with our fellow-subjects, the motives of self-interest and preservation will be a sufficient obligation, as was evident through the course of the last war; and that no argument can be fairly applied to the *British* Parliament's taxing us, upon a presumption that we should refuse a just and reasonable contribution, but will equally operate in justification of the Executive power taxing the people of *England*, upon a supposition of their Representatives refusing to grant the necessary supplies.

**Discussion Question**  
 The purpose of taxes in a free society is to pay for government services, such as protection in time of war or the right of representation. If representation is equal, should taxation be equal too?

*Resolved*, That the claim lately assumed and exercised by the *British* Parliament for making all such laws as they think fit to govern the people of these Colonies, and to extort from us our money without our consent, is not only diametrically contrary to the first principles of the Constitution and the original compacts by which we are dependent upon the *British* Crown and Government, but is totally incompatible with the privileges of a free people and the natural rights of mankind, will render our own Legislatures merely nominal and nugatory, and is calculated to reduce us from a state of freedom and happiness to slavery and misery.

*Resolved*, That taxation and representation are in their nature inseparable; that the right of withholding, or of giving and granting their own money, is the only effectual security to a free people against the encroachments of despotism and tyranny; and that whenever they yield the one, they must quickly fall a prey to the other.

*Resolved*, That the powers over the people of *America*, now claimed by the *British* House of Commons, in whose election we have no share; in whose determinations we have no influence; whose information must be always defective, and often false; who in many instances may have a separate, and in some an opposite interest to ours; and who are removed from those impressions of tenderness and compassion, arising from personal intercourse and connection, which soften the rigours of the most despotick Governments, must, if continued, establish the most grievous and intolerable species of tyranny and oppression that ever was inflicted upon mankind.

*Resolved*, That it is our greatest wish and inclination, as well as interest, to continue our connection with, and dependence upon, the *British* Government; but though we are its subjects, we will use every means which Heaven hath given us to prevent our becoming its slaves.

*Resolved*, That there is a premeditated design and system formed and pursued by the *British* Ministry to introduce an arbitrary Government into his Majesty's *American* Dominions, to which end they are artfully prejudicing our Sovereign and inflaming the minds of our fellow-subjects in *Great Britain*, by propagating the most malevolent falsehoods, particularly that there is an intention in the *American* Colonies to set up for independent states, endeavouring at the same time, by various acts of violence and oppression, by sudden and repeated dissolutions of our Assemblies, whenever they presume to examine the illegality of Ministerial mandates, or deliberate on the violated rights of their constituents, and by breaking in upon the *American* Charters, to reduce us to a state of desperation, and dissolve the original compact, by which our ancestors bound themselves and their posterity to remain dependent upon the *British* Crown; which measures, unless effectually counteracted, will end in the ruin, both of *Great Britain* and her Colonies.

**Fast Fact**  
 Notice how Mason wanted for America to remain part of Great Britain. Separating was always considered a last resort, one which none of the founders relished. Had Britain acceded to the requests of the colonists, there would have, in all likelihood, been no revolution.

*Resolved*, That the several Acts of Parliament for raising a revenue upon the people of *America*, without their consent; the erecting new and dan-

gerous jurisdictions here; the taking away our trials by jury; the ordering persons, upon criminal accusations, to be tried in another country than that in which the fact is charged to have been committed; the Act inflicting Ministerial vengeance upon the town of *Boston*; and the two Bills lately brought into Parliament for abrogating the Charter of the Province of *Massachusetts Bay*, and for the protection and encouragement of murderers in the said Province, are part of the above mentioned iniquitous system; that the inhabitants of the town of *Boston* are now suffering in the common cause of all *British America*, and are justly entitled to its support and assistance; and, therefore, that a subscription ought immediately to be opened, and proper persons appointed, in every county in this Colony, to purchase provisions and consign them to some gentlemen of character in *Boston*, to be distributed among the poorer sort of the people there.

“[T]he fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.”  
 ~James 3:18

*Resolved*, That we will cordially join with our friends and brethren of this and the other Colonies, in such measures as shall be judged most effectual, for procuring a redress of our grievances; and that, upon obtaining such redress, if the destruction of the tea at *Boston* be regarded as an invasion of private property, we shall be willing to contribute towards paying the *East India* Company the value; but, as we consider the said Company as the tools and instruments of oppression in the hands of Government, and the cause of the present distress, it is the opinion of this meeting, that the people of these Colonies should forbear all further dealings with them, by refusing to purchase their merchandise, until that peace, safety, and good order, which they have disturbed, be perfectly restored; and that all tea now in this Colony, or which shall be imported into it, shipped before the first day of *September* next, should be deposited in some store-house; to be appointed by the respective Committees of each county, until a sufficient sum of money be raised, by subscription, to reimburse the owners the value, and then to be publicly burnt and destroyed; and if the same is not paid for and destroyed as aforesaid, that it remain in the custody of the said Committees, at the risk of the owners, until the Act of Parliament imposing a duty upon tea for raising a revenue in *America*, be repealed; and immediately afterwards be delivered unto the several proprietors thereof, their agents or attornies.

*Resolved*, That nothing will so much contribute to defeat the pernicious designs of the common enemies of *Great Britain* and her Colonies, as a firm union of the latter, who ought to regard every act of violence or oppression inflicted upon any one of them, as aimed at all; and to effect this desirable purpose, that a Congress should be appointed, to consist of Deputies from all the Colonies, to concert a general and uniform plan for the defence and preservation of our common rights, and continuing the connection and dependence of the said Colonies upon *Great Britain*, under a just, lenient, permanent, and constitutional form of Government.

*Resolved*, That our most sincere and cordial thanks be given to the patrons and friends of liberty in *Great Britain*, for their spirited and patriotick conduct in support of our constitutional rights and privileges, and their generous efforts to prevent the present distress and calamity of *America*.

*Resolved*, That every little jarring interest and dispute which hath ever happened between these Colonies, should be buried in eternal oblivion; that all manner of luxury and extravagance ought immediately to be laid aside, as totally inconsistent with the threatening and gloomy prospect before us; that it is the indispensable duty of all the gentlemen and men of fortunes to set examples of temperance, fortitude, frugality, and industry, and give every encouragement in their power, particularly by subscriptions and premiums, to the improvement of arts and manufactures in *America*; that great care and attention should be had to the cultivation of flax, cotton, and other materials for manufactures; and we recommend it to such of the inhabitants as have large stocks of sheep, to sell to their neighbours at a moderate price, as the most certain means of speedily increasing our breed of sheep and

**Fast Fact**  
 Fifteen pence in that time was equal to about five dollars of today's money.



Though America was rich in natural resources, the infrastructure for extracting these was not fully developed at this time, and the colonies were heavily dependent on trade.

quantity of wool.

*Resolved*, That until *American* grievances be redressed, by restoration of our just rights and privileges, no goods or merchandise whatsoever ought to be imported into this Colony, which shall be shipped from *Great Britain* or *Ireland*, after the first day of *September* next, except linens not exceeding fifteen pence per yard, coarse woollen cloth, not exceeding two shillings sterling per yard; nails, wire, and wire cards, needles and pins, paper, saltpetre, and medicines, which may be imported until the first day of *September*, 1776; and if any goods or merchandise, other than those hereby excepted, should be shipped from *Great Britain* after the time aforesaid, to this Colony, that the same, immediately upon their arrival, should either be sent back again by the owners, their agents or attornies, or stored and deposited in some warehouse, to be appointed by the Committee for each respective county, and there kept at the risk and charge of the owners, to be delivered to them when a free importation of goods hither shall again take place; and that the merchants and venders of goods and merchandise within this Colony ought not to take advantage of our present distress, but continue to sell the goods and merchandise which they now have, or which may be shipped to them before the first day of *September* next, at the same rates and prices they have been accustomed to do within one year last past; and if any person shall sell such goods on any other terms than above expressed, that no inhabitant of this Colony should, at any time forever thereafter, deal with him, his agent, factor, or storekeeper, for any commodity whatsoever.

*Resolved*, That it it [sic] is the opinion of this meeting, that the merchants and venders of goods and merchandise within this Colony should take an oath not to sell or dispose of any goods or merchandise whatsoever, which may be shipped from *Great Britain* after the first day of *September* next, as aforesaid, except the articles before excepted; and that they will, upon the receipt of such prohibited goods, either send the same back again by the first opportunity, or deliver them to the Committees of the respective counties, to be deposited in some warehouse, at the risk and charge of the owners, until they, their agents, or factors, shall be permitted to take them away by the said Committees; and that the names of those who refuse to take such oath, be advertised by the respective Committees, in the counties wherein they reside; and to the end that the inhabitants of this Colony may know what merchants and venders of goods and merchandise have taken such oath, that the respective Committees should grant a certificate thereof to every such person who shall take the same.

*Resolved*, That it is the opinion of this meeting, that during our present difficulties and distress, no slaves ought to be imported into any of the *British* Colonies on this Continent; and we take this opportunity of declaring our most earnest wishes to see an entire stop forever put to such a wicked, cruel, and unnatural trade.

*Resolved*, That no kind of lumber should be exported from this Colony to the *West Indies*, until *America* be restored to her constitutional rights and liberties, if the other Colonies will accede to a like resolution: and that it be recommended to the general Congress to appoint as early a day as possible for stopping such exports.

[p. v1:601]

*Resolved*, That it is the opinion of this meeting, if *American* grievances be not redressed before the first day of *November*, 1775, that all exports of produce from the several Colonies to *Great Britain*, should cease; and to carry the said resolution more effectually into execution, that we will not plant or cultivate any tobacco after the crop now growing, provided the same measure shall be adopted by the other Colonies on this Continent, as well as those who have

Conversely, the resources which the colonies DID produce were prevalent in the British market. A cut-off of trade would have hurt Britain immensely, possibly causing an economic meltdown.

**Fast Fact**

George Mason, like most of the Founding Fathers, detested slavery, but saw no easy way out of it. The economy was intertwined with slavery, and to end slavery suddenly would have stunted growth.

heretofore made tobacco, as those who have not. And it is our opinion, also, if the Congress of Deputies from the several Colonies shall adopt the measure of non-exportation to *Great Britain*, as the people will be thereby disabled from paying their debts, that no judgments should be rendered by the Courts in the said Colonies, for any debt, after information of the said measures being determined upon.

*Resolved*, That it is the opinion of this meeting, that a Solemn Covenant and Association should be entered into by the inhabitants of all the Colonies, upon oath, that they will not, after the time which shall be respectively agreed

on at the general Congress, export any manner of lumber to the *West Indies*; nor any of their produce to *Great Britain*; or sell or dispose of the same to any person who shall not have entered into the said Covenant and Association; and also, that they will not import or receive any goods or merchandise which shall be shipped from *Great Britain*, after the first day of *September* next, other than the before enumerated articles; nor buy or purchase any goods, except as before excepted, of any person whatsoever, who shall not have taken the oath herein before recommended to be taken by the merchants and venders of goods; nor buy or purchase any slaves hereafter imported into any part of this Continent, until a free exportation and importation be again resolved on by a majority of the Representatives or Deputies of the Colonies; and that the respective Committees of the counties in each Colony, so soon as the Covenant and Association becomes general, publish by advertisements in their several counties, a list of the names of those, (if any such there be) who will not accede thereto, that such traitors to their country may be publickly known and detested.

*Resolved*, That it is the opinion of this meeting, that this and the other associating Colonies should break off all trade, intercourse, and dealings, with that Colony, Province, or town, which shall decline or refuse to agree to the plan which shall be adopted by the general Congress.

*Resolved*, That should the town of *Boston* be forced to submit to the late cruel and oppressive measures of Government, that we shall not hold the same to be binding upon us, but will, notwithstanding, religiously maintain, and inviolably adhere to, such measures as shall be concerted by the general Congress, for the preservation of our lives, liberties, and fortunes.

*Resolved*, That it be recommended to the Deputies of the general Congress, to draw up and transmit an humble and dutiful Petition and Remonstrance to his Majesty, asserting in decent firmness our just and constitutional rights and privileges, lamenting the fatal necessity of being compelled to enter into measures disgusting to his Majesty and his Parliament, or injurious to our fellow-subjects in *Great Britain*; declaring, in the strongest terms, our duty and affection to his Majesty's person, family, and Government, and our desire forever to continue our dependence upon *Great Britain*; and most humbly conjuring and beseeching his Majesty not to reduce his faithful subjects of *America* to a state of desperation, and to reflect, that from our Sovereign there can be but one appeal. And it is the opinion of this meeting, that after such Petition and Remonstrance shall have been presented to his Majesty, the same shall be printed in the public papers in all the principal towns in *Great Britain*.

*Resolved*, That *George Washington*, Esquire, and *Charles Broadwater*, Gentleman, lately elected our Representatives to serve in the General Assembly, attend the Convention at *Williamsburg*, on the first day of *August* next, and present these Resolves as the sense of the people of this county upon the measures proper to be taken in the present alarming and dangerous situation of *America*.

*Resolved*, That *George Washington*, Esquire, *John West*, *George Mason*, *William Rumney*, *William Ramsay*, *George Gilpton*, *Robert Hanson Harrison*, *John Car-lyle*, *Robert Adam*, *John Dalton*, *Philip Alexander*, *James Kirk*, *William Brown*,

**Short essay**

Write a 300-500 essay on one of the committee members listed at left.

Charles Broadwater, William Payne, Martin Cockburne, Lee Massey, William Hartshorne, Thomas Triplett, Charles Alexander, Thomas Pollard, Townsend Dade, Junior, Edward Payne, Henry Gunnell, and Thomas Lewis, be a Committee for this county; that they, or a majority of them, on any emergency, have power to call a general meeting, and to concert and adopt such measures as may be thought most expedient and necessary.

*Resolved*, That a copy of these Proceedings be transmitted to the Printer at *Williamsburg*, to be published.



**Discussion question**  
 To what extent do the values espoused by modern leaders coincide with the ideals of the founders? To what extent to they differ?

## The Virginia Declaration of Rights

*Virginia's Declaration of Rights was drawn upon by Thomas Jefferson for the opening paragraphs of the Declaration of Independence. It was widely copied by the other colonies and became the basis of the Bill of Rights. Written by George Mason, it was adopted by the Virginia Constitutional Convention on June 12, 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 indefeasible right to reform, alter, or abolish it, in such manner as shall be judged most conducive to the public weal.

**Section 4.** That no man, or set of men, is entitled to exclusive or separate emoluments or privileges from the community, but in consideration of public services; which, nor being descendible, neither ought the offices of magistrate, legislator, or judge to be hereditary.

**Section 5.** That the legislative and executive powers of the state should be separate and distinct from the judiciary; and that the members of the two first may be restrained from oppression, by feeling

and participating the burdens of the people, they should, at fixed periods, be reduced to a private station, return into that body from which they were originally taken, and the vacancies be supplied by frequent, certain, and regular elections, in which all, or any part, of the former members, to be again eligible, or ineligible, as the laws shall direct.

**Section 6.** That elections of members to serve as representatives of the people, in assembly ought to be free; and that all men, having sufficient evidence of permanent common interest with, and attachment to, the community, have

### Fast Fact

Section 4 is very important. No man is above another, and thus general ideas of castes accepted for thousands of years are discredited. All are born equal in the eyes of the law.

the right of suffrage and cannot be taxed or deprived of their property for public uses without their own consent or that of their representatives so elected, nor bound by any law to which they have not, in like manner, assembled for the public good.

**Section 7.** That all power of suspending laws, or the execution of laws, by any authority, without consent of the representatives of the people, is injurious to their rights and ought not to be exercised.

**Section 8.** That in all capital or criminal prosecutions a man has a right to demand the cause and nature of his accusation, to be confronted with the accusers and witnesses, to call for evidence in his favor, and to a speedy trial by an impartial jury of twelve men of his vicinage, without whose unanimous consent he cannot be found guilty; nor can he be compelled to give evidence against himself; that no man be deprived of his liberty except by the law of the land or the judgment of his peers.

**Section 9.** That excessive bail ought not to be required, nor excessive fines imposed, nor cruel and unusual punishments inflicted.

**Section 10.** That general warrants, whereby an officer or messenger may be commanded to search suspected places without evidence of a fact committed, or to seize any person or persons not named, or whose offense is not particularly described and supported by evidence, are grievous and oppressive and ought not to be granted.

**Section 11.** That in controversies respecting property, and in suits between man and man, the ancient trial by jury is preferable to any other and ought to be held sacred.

**Section 12.** That the freedom of the press is one of the great bulwarks of liberty, and can never be restrained but by despotic governments.

**Section 13.** That a well-regulated militia, composed of the body of the people, trained to arms, is the proper, natural, and safe defense of a free state; that standing armies, in time of peace, should be avoided as dangerous to liberty; and that in all cases the military should be under strict subordination to, and governed by, the civil power.

**Section 14.** That the people have a right to uniform government; and, therefore, that no government separate from or independent of the government of Virginia ought to be erected or established within the limits thereof.

**Section 15.** That no free government, or the blessings of liberty, can be preserved to any people but by a firm adherence to justice, moderation, temperance, frugality, and virtue and by frequent recurrence to fundamental principles.

**Section 16.** That religion, or the duty which we owe to our Creator, and the manner of discharging it, can be directed only by reason and conviction, not by force or violence; and therefore all men are equally entitled to the free exercise of religion, according to the dictates of conscience; and that it is the mutual duty of all to practise Christian forbearance, love, and charity toward each other.

**Fast Fact**

“Religion” at this time meant “denomination.” It was generally accepted that everyone would at least call himself a Christian; thus, section 16 was perfectly reasonable in talking about religious freedom and Christian virtues in the same sentence.

## George Mason's Objections to the Constitution

*In September 1787, during the final days of the Constitutional Convention, George Mason wrote the reasons for his refusal to sign the Constitution on the back of a Committee of Style report. Manuscript copies of this document were circulated and Mason sent copies to various individuals, including George Washington. On November 22, the objections were printed in the Virginia Journal at the behest of Washington's secretary Tobias Lear in order that he could publicly refute them. The original manuscript is in the Chapin Library at Williams College.*

### Objections to This Constitution of Government

There is no Declaration of Rights, and the laws of the general government being paramount to the laws and constitution of the several States, the Declarations of Rights in the separate States are no security. Nor are the people secured even in the enjoyment of the benefit of the common law.

In the House of Representatives there is not the substance but the shadow only of representation; which can never produce proper information in the legislature, or inspire confidence in the people; the laws will therefore be generally made by men little concerned in, and unacquainted with their effects and consequences.

The Senate have the power of altering all money bills, and of originating appropriations of money, and the salaries of the officers of their own appointment, in conjunction with the president of the United States, although they are not the representatives of the people or amenable to them.

These with their other great powers, viz.: their power in the appointment of ambassadors and all public officers, in making treaties, and in trying all impeachments, their influence upon and connection with the supreme Executive from these causes, their duration of office and their being a constantly existing body, almost continually sitting, joined with their being one complete branch of the legislature, will destroy any balance in the government, and enable them to accomplish what usurpations they please upon the rights and liberties of the people.

The Judiciary of the United States is so constructed and extended, as to absorb and destroy the judiciaries of the several States; thereby rendering law as tedious, intricate and expensive, and justice as unattainable, by a great part of the community, as in England, and enabling the rich to oppress and ruin the poor.

The President of the United States has no Constitutional Council, a thing unknown in any safe and regular government. He will therefore be unsupported by proper information and advice, and will generally be directed by minions and favorites; or he will become a tool to the Senate--or a Council of State will grow out of the principal officers of the great departments; the worst and most dangerous of all ingredients for such a Council in a free country; From this fatal defect has arisen the improper power of the Senate in the appointment of public officers, and the alarming dependence and connection between that branch of the legislature and the supreme Executive.

Hence also spurring that unnecessary officer the Vice- President, who for want of other employment is made president of the Senate, thereby dangerously blending the executive and legislative powers, besides always giving to some one of the States an unnecessary and unjust pre-eminence over the others.



The founding fathers recognized that the power to print money was a dangerous one. After all, if not enough money is printed, people begin to hoard money. But if too much is printed, money becomes worthless. Historical examples of both exist. Virtually any time the US has tried to reintroduce dollar coins, collectors have hoarded the new coins until the mint decides it is not worth it to make more. Conversely, in Germany in 1923, printing got out of control, and 4 trillion marks were worth one US dollar.

**Discussion question**

Mason believed that such a union would give unfair advantage to the majority, allowing the rights of the minority to be trampled, and that a president who could pardon would have too much power. Do you agree with him on these issues?

The President of the United States has the unrestrained power of granting pardons for treason, which may be sometimes exercised to screen from punishment those whom he had secretly instigated to commit the crime, and thereby prevent a discovery of his own guilt.

By declaring all treaties supreme laws of the land, the Executive and the Senate have, in many cases, an exclusive power of legislation; which might have been avoided by proper distinctions with respect to treaties, and requiring the assent of the House of Representatives, where it could be done with safety.

By requiring only a majority to make all commercial and navigation laws, the five Southern States, whose produce and circumstances are totally different from that of the eight Northern and Eastern States, may be ruined, for such rigid and premature regulations may be made as will enable the merchants of the Northern and Eastern States not only to demand an exorbitant freight, but to monopolize the purchase of the commodities at their own price, for many years, to the great injury of the landed interest, and impoverishment of the people; and the danger is the greater as the gain on one side will be in proportion to the loss on the other. Whereas requiring two-thirds of the members present in both Houses would have produced mutual moderation, promoted the general interest, and removed an insuperable objection to the adoption of this government.

Under their own construction of the general clause, at the end of the enumerated powers, the Congress may grant monopolies in trade and commerce, constitute new crimes, inflict unusual and severe punishments, and extend their powers as far as they shall think proper; so that the State legislatures have no security for the powers now presumed to remain to them, or the people for their rights.

There is no declaration of any kind, for preserving the liberty of the press, or the trial by jury in civil causes; nor against the danger of standing armies in time of peace.

The State legislatures are restrained from laying export duties on their own produce.

Both the general legislature and the State legislature are expressly prohibited making ex post facto laws; though there never was nor can be a legislature but must and will make such laws, when necessity and the public safety require them; which will hereafter be a breach of all the constitutions in the Union, and afford precedents for other innovations.

This government will set out a moderate aristocracy: it is at present impossible to foresee whether it will, in its operation, produce a monarchy, or a corrupt, tyrannical aristocracy; it will most probably vibrate some years between the two, and then terminate in the one or the other.

The general legislature is restrained from prohibiting the further importation of slaves for twenty odd years; though such importations render the United States weaker, more vulnerable, and less capable of defence.

**Discussion question**

Some of the founding fathers were opposed to a bill of rights. They thought that such a bill would be twisted to mean that ONLY the rights listed were actual rights, and everything else was debatable. Others, like Mason, thought that if no rights were enumerated, the government would encroach unfairly. Which side do you take, and why?

## George Mason's Master Draft of the Bill of Rights

*[During the Federal Convention, on September 12, 1787, Elbridge Gerry and George Mason proposed that a committee be appointed to prepare a bill of rights. This proposal was unanimously rejected by the State delegations, and in consequence both withheld their signatures from the new Constitution. Mason wrote his Objections to This Constitution of Government which began, "There is no Declaration of Rights, and the laws of the general government being paramount to the laws and constitution of the several States, the Declarations of Rights in the separate States are no security."*

*By the time the Constitution had been ratified by the necessary nine States, several had proposed amendments to be inserted in the body of the Constitution, but no proposal had been made for a declaration of rights. On June 25, 1788, the Virginia ratifying convention appointed a committee to prepare a bill of rights. Two days later, the committee reported a proposed bill of rights, and additional amendments to be included in the Constitution.*

*The proposal by this committee was a nearly verbatim copy of a Master Draft that George Mason had sent to Gen. John Lamb of the Republican Committee in New York on June 9th, a copy of which remains among the Lamb Papers at the New York Historical Society. The receipt of the Draft was acknowledged in a letter to Mason from Judge Robert Yates, June 21:*

*Your letter of the 9th inst. directed to John Lamb, Esquire at New York Chairman of the Federal Republican Committee in that City enclosing your proposed Amendments to the new Constitution, has been by him transmitted to such of the Members of Our Convention, who are in sentiment with him. In consequence of this Communication a Committee has been appointed by the members in Opposition to the New System (of which they have appointed me their Chairman) with a special view to continue our correspondence on this necessary and important Subject.*

*We are happy to find that your Sentiments with respect to the Amendments correspond so nearly with ours, and that they stand on the Broad Basis of securing the Rights and equally promoting the Happiness of every citizen in the Union*

*The provisions of the bill of rights proposed by the New York ratifying convention were primarily drawn from Mason's Master Draft, though in differing order. North Carolina proposed a bill of rights whose provisions were nearly identical to those of the Virginia convention. The proposals later tendered by the ratifying convention of Rhode Island were probably taken directly from the Master Draft.*

*The bill of rights proposed by James Madison to the Congress on June 8, 1789 was a nearly verbatim copy of Virginia's proposal, which was a nearly verbatim copy of Mason's Master Draft. Elbridge Gerry probably had a copy of this Draft before him during the congressional debates on the amendments.*

*In preparing the Master Draft, Mason drew heavily from the Virginia Declaration of Rights which he had written 12 years earlier, and also borrowed provisions from the Declarations of Rights of Pennsylvania and Maryland, as well as the Virginia Constitution of which he was also author. A manuscript copy of the Master Draft in George Mason's handwriting is among the Mason Papers at the Library of Congress.]*

## Amendments to the New Constitution of Government

That there be a Declaration or Bill of Rights, asserting and securing from Encroachment, the Essential and Unalienable Rights of the People, in some such manner as the following. —

1. That all Freemen have certain essential inherent Rights, of which they cannot by any Compact, deprive or divest their Posterity; among which are the Enjoyment of Life and Liberty, with the means of acquiring, possessing and protecting Property, and pursuing and obtaining Happiness and Safety.

2. That all Power is naturally vested in, and consequently derived from the People; that Magistrates therefore are their Trustees and Agents, and at all Times amenable to them.

3. That Government ought to be instituted for the Common Benefit, Protection and Security of the People; and that whenever any Government shall be found inadequate or contrary to these purposes, a Majority of the Community hath an indubitable unalienable and indefeasible Right to reform, alter or

**Research Assignment**

George Mason was reluctant to sign the Constitution before the inclusion of the Bill of Right because he wanted to ensure that the government could not infringe upon the fundamental rights that our country was founded on. In his eyes, our government was founded by the people, for the people and was of the people. This means that all power that the government had was given them by the people, and that the people were entrusting them not to rule, but to protect their rights and freedoms. In other words, the rights that we have in America are not given to us by the government, they are intrinsic rights that all men have, and we as citizens elect fellow citizens that we trust to protect these rights, within the limited scope of the power and authority we authorize them to have.

How has this played out? Let us take the example of personal property. This was one that Mason called an inherent right without which no man could ever be free. But do we really have this?

Many of you, once you graduate college and move out on your own, will probably not be able to purchase a house to live in, so you will rent one. This is an arrangement wherein the owner of the property allows you to live there for a set fee. You get to decorate, come and go as you please, and have privacy, but the home is not yours, you are “borrowing” it. If you quit paying your rent, you will be forced to leave. If you own a house, you don’t need to pay someone else to live their, it is yours. You have to pay for the upkeep, but the house and property belong to you and once purchased, you get to live there for free. Or do you?

Property tax. All of us in the United States have to pay taxes to the government for property we own, usually houses, and in some states, even our cars. As with any other taxes, if you fail to pay them, you will face some form of government sanctions, including losing your property. Let’s review.

If you fail to pay the property taxes the government has levied on your car, the government will take it away. If you pay them, they will “allow” you to keep your car. What type of arrangement does this sound like, renting or owning? The right to personal property was one George Mason considered fundamental, so much so it is one of the very first things listed in the bill of rights! What would Mason think of personal property tax? Research the issue of property tax some more on your own, and then write an essay, using Mason’s writings to argue for or against the property tax. If you argue against it, research and propose an alternative tax to replace the revenue lost.

“ Government ought to be instituted for the Common Benefit, Protection and Security of the People; and that whenever any Government shall be found inadequate or contrary to these purposes, a Majority of the Community hath an indubitable unalienable and indefeasible Right to reform, alter or abolish it, and to establish another, in such manner as shall be judged most conducive to the public Weal; and that the Doctrine of non-resistance against arbitrary Power and Oppression is absurd, slavish and destructive of the good and Happiness of Mankind.”

abolish it, and to establish another, in such manner as shall be judged most conducive to the public Weal; and that the Doctrine of non-resistance against arbitrary Power and Oppression is absurd, slavish and destructive of the good and Happiness of Mankind.

4. That no man or Set of Men are entitled to exclusive or separate public Emoluments or privileges from the Community, but in Consideration of public Services; which not being descendable neither ought the Offices of Magistrate, Legislator or Judge, or any other public Office to be hereditary.

5. That the Legislative, Executive and Judicial powers of Government should be separate and distinct; and that the members of the Two first may be restrained from Oppression, by feeling and participating the public Burthens, they should, at fixed periods, be reduced to a private Station, return into the Mass of the people, and the vacancies be supplied by certain and regular Elections, in which all, or any part of the Former members to be eligible or ineligible, as the Rules of the Constitution of Government and the Laws shall direct.

6. That the Right of the People to participate in the Legislature is the best Security of Liberty, and the Foundation of all Free Governments; for this purpose Elections ought to be free and frequent; and all men having sufficient Evidence of permanent common Interest with, and Attachment to the Community, ought to have the Right of Suffrage: And no Aid, Charge, Tax or Fee can be set, rated or levied upon the People without their own Consent, or that of their Representatives so elected; nor can they be bound by any Law to which they have not in like manner assented for the Public Good.

**Discussion question**

Section four states that no man should be entitled to exclusive emoluments or privileges. Yet there is executive immunity: to keep a state or the union functioning, an executive has the right to resist arrest for some crimes. What do you think about this?

**Research Essay**  
 Write a 800-1000  
 word essay on how  
 these 20 points grew  
 into the Bill of Rights  
 in our constitution

7. That all power of suspending Laws, or the Execution of Laws by any Authority, without Consent of the Representatives of the People in the Legislature, is injurious to their Rights, and ought not to be exercised.

8. That in all capital or criminal Prosecutions, a man hath a right to demand the cause & nature of his Accusation, to be confronted with the Accusers and Witnesses, to call for Evidence and be admitted Counsel in his Favor, and to a fair and speedy Trial by an impartial Jury of his Vicinage, without whose unanimous Consent he cannot be found guilty, (except in the Government of the Land and Naval Forces in Time of actual war, Invasion or rebellion) nor can he be compelled to give Evidence against himself.

9. That no Freeman ought to be taken, imprisoned, or desseized of his Freehold, Liberties, privileges or Franchises, or outlawed or exiled, or in any manner destroyed, or deprived of his Life, Liberty or Property, but by the Law of the Land.

10. That every Freeman restrained of his Liberty is entitled to a remedy, to enquire into the Lawfulness thereof, and to remove the same if unlawful, and that such Remedy ought not to be denied or delayed.

11. That in Controversies respecting Property, and in Suits between Man and man, the ancient Trial by Jury of Facts, where they arise, is one of the greatest Securities to the Rights of a Free people, and ought to remain sacred and inviolable.

12. That every Freeman ought to find a certain Remedy, by recourse to the Laws, for all Injuries or wrongs he may receive in his person, property or Character: He ought to obtain Right and Justice freely, without sale, compleatly and without Denial, promptly and without Delay; and that all Establishments or regulations contravening these Rights are oppressive and unjust.

13. That excessive Bail ought not to be required, nor excessive Fines imposed, nor cruel and unusual Punishments inflicted.

14. That every Freeman has a Right to be secure from all unreasonable Searches and Seizures of his Person, his papers, and his property; all Warrants therefore to search suspected places, or to seize any Freeman, his Papers or property, without Information upon Oath (or Affirmation of a person religiously scrupulous of taking an Oath) of legal and sufficient Cause, are grievous and Oppressive; and all General Warrants to search suspected Places, or to apprehend any suspected Person, without specially naming or describing the Place or Person, are dangerous and ought not to be granted.

15. That the People have a Right peaceably to assemble together to consult for their common Good, or to instruct their Representatives, and that every Freeman has a right to petition or apply to the Legislature for redress of Grievances.

16. That the People have a right to Freedom of speech, and of writing and publishing their Sentiments; that the Freedom of the Press is one of the great Bulwarks of Liberty, and ought not to be violated.

17. That the People have a Right to keep and to bear Arms; that a well regulated Militia, composed of the Body of the People, trained to arms, is the proper, natural, and safe Defence of a free State; that Standing Armies in Time of Peace are dangerous to Liberty, and therefore ought to be avoided as far as the Circumstances and Protection of the Community will admit; and that in all Cases, the military should be under strict Subordination to, and governed by the Civil Power.

18. That no Soldier in Time of Peace ought to be quartered in any House without the Consent of the Owner; and in Time of War, only by the civil Magistrate in such manner as the Laws direct.

19. That any Person religiously scrupulous of bearing Arms ought to be exempted upon payment of an Equivalent to employ another to bear Arms in his stead.

20. That Religion or the Duty which we owe to our Creator, and the manner of discharging it, can

**Fast fact**

Section 20 inspired part of the first amendment. Notice that only denominations of Christianity are talked about in relation to religious freedom. The founders had no trouble with laws regarding non-Christian religions, as they were generally recognized to be false. Only denominations of Christianity were supposed to be free from regulation.

be directed only by Reason and Conviction, not by Force or violence, and therefore all men have an equal, natural, and unalienable Right to the free Exercise of Religion according to the Dictates of Conscience, and that no particular religious Sect or Society of Christians ought to be favored or established by Law in preference to others.

That each State in the Union shall retain its Sovereignty, Freedom and Independence, and every Power, Jurisdiction and Right which is not by this Constitution expressly delegated to the Congress of the United States.

That there shall be one Representative for every Thirty Thousand Persons according to the Enumeration or Census mentioned in the Constitution until the whole Number of representatives amounts to Two Hundred.

That Congress shall not exercise the Powers respecting the regulation of Elections, vested in them by the Fourth Section of the First Article of the Constitution, but in Cases when a State neglects or refuses to make the Regulations therein mentioned, or shall make Regulations subversive of the Rights of the People to a free and equal Representation in Congress agreeably to the Constitution, or shall be prevented from making Elections by Invasion or Rebellion; and in any of these Cases, such Powers shall be exercised by the Congress only until the Cause be removed.

That the Congress do not lay direct Taxes, nor Excises upon any Articles of the growth, or manufactured from the growth of any of the American States, but when the Monies arising from the Duties on Imports are insufficient for the public Exigencies; nor then until the Congress shall have first made a Requisition upon the States, to assess, levy and pay their respective Proportions of such requisitions according to the Enumeration or Census fixed in the Constitution, in such Way and Manner as the Legislature of the State shall judge best; and if any State shall neglect or refuse to pay its proportion pursuant to such Requisition, then Congress may assess and levy such States' proportion, together with Interest thereon, at the Rate of Six per Centum per Annum, from the Time of Payment prescribed in such requisition.

That the Members of the Senate and House of Representatives shall be ineligible to, and incapable of holding any Office under the Authority of the United States, during the Time for which they shall respectively be elected.

\* That there shall be a constitutional responsible Council, to assist in the Administration of Government, with the Power of chusing out of their own Body, a President, who in the case of the Death, Resignation, or Disability of the President of the United States, shall act, pro tempore, as Vice President instead of a Vice President elected in the Manner prescribed by the Constitution; and that the Power of making Treaties, appointing Ambassadors, other public Ministers or Consuls, Judges of the Supreme Courts, and all other Officers of the United States, whose appointments are not otherwise provided for by the Constitution, and which shall be established by Law, be vested in the President of the United States with the Assistance of the Council so to be appointed. But all Treaties so made or entered into, shall be subject to the Revision of the Senate and House of Representatives for their Ratification. And no Commercial Treaty shall be ratified without the Consent of Two-Thirds of the members present in both

**Fast fact**

If we still had one representative for every 30,000 people, there would be over 10,000 congressmen today.

**Discussion question**

How much power do you think treaties should have? Currently, they are second only to the constitution in terms of hierarchy. Is this right? Should it be changed? How? Explain.

Houses; nor shall any Treaty ceding, contracting, restraining or suspending the Territorial Rights or Claims of the United States, or any of them, or their or any of their Rights or Claims to fishing in the American Seas, or navigating the American Rivers be ratified without the Consent of Three-Fourths of the whole number of the members of both Houses.

No Navigation Law, or Law for regulating Commerce, shall be passed without the Consent of Two-Thirds of the Members present in both Houses.

No Standing Army or Regular Troops shall be raised or kept up in Time of Peace without the Consent of Two-Thirds of the members of both Houses.

Neither the President, nor Vice President of the United States, nor any member of the Council, shall command the Army or Navy of the United States in person, without the Consent of Two-Thirds of the members of both Houses.

No Soldier shall be enlisted for a longer Term than four Years, except in Time of War, and then for no longer Term than the Continuance of the War.

No Mutiny Act shall be passed for any longer Term than Two years.

The President of the United States, or any other Officer acting under the Authority of the United States shall, upon Impeachment, be suspended from the Exercise of his Office during his Trial.

The Judges of the Federal Court shall be incapable of holding any other Office, or of receiving the Profits of any other Office or Emolument under the United States or any of them.

- This article not yet finally agreed upon by the Committee appointed to prepare the amendments.

- [NOTE: The footnote refers to the committee in the Republican Society tasked with preparing amendments to present to the Virginia ratifying convention, as this Master Draft had been written at least 2 weeks before the Virginia convention appointed a committee to prepare amendments.]

## Excerpts on Slavery from George Mason's Writings

Although opposed to slavery, Mason remained a slave owner until the end of his life. His lengthy will, which named 36 slaves individually, manumitted none of them.[3] George Mason clearly presents us with a paradox: Why did this prominent gentry slave owner argue in the public forum against the institution of slavery, yet free none of his own slaves? The following excerpts from his writings help to explore George Mason's attitude:

1765: The Policy of encouraging the Importation of free People & discouraging that of Slaves has never been duly considered in this Colony, or we shou'd not at this Day see one Half of our best Lands in most Parts of the Country remain unsettled [sic], & the other cultivated with Slaves; not to mention the ill Effect such a Practice has upon the Morals & Manners of our People: one of the first Signs of the Decay, & perhaps the primary Cause of the Destruction of the most flourishing Government that ever existed was the Introduction of great Numbers of Slaves - an Evil very pathetically described by the Roman Historians - but 'tis not the present Intention to expose our Weakness by examining this Subject too freely.[4]

1773: [Slavery is] that slow Poison, which is daily contaminating the Minds & Morals of our People. Every Gentlemen [sic] here is born a petty Tyrant. Practiced in Acts of Despotism & Cruelty, we become callous to the Dictates of Humanity, & all the finer feelings of the Soul. Taught to regard a part of our own Species in the most abject & contemptible Degree below us, we lose that Idea of the Dignity of Man, which the Hand of Nature had implanted in us, for great & useful purposes. Habituated from our Infancy to trample upon the Rights of Human Nature, every generous, every liberal Sentiment, if not extinguished, is enfeebled in our Minds. And in such an infernal School are to be educated our future

### Discussion question

The constitution does not require a two thirds vote of congress to declare war. Should there be? Why or why not?

Legislators & Rulers. The Laws of impartial Providence may even by such Means as these, avenge upon our Posterity the Injury done a set of Wretches, whom our Injustice hath debased almost to a Level with the Brute Creation. These Remarks may be thought Foreign to the design of the annexed Extracts - They were extorted by a kind of irresistible, perhaps an Enthusiastick Impulse; and the author of them conscious of his own good Intentions, cares not whom they please or offend.[5]

**Discussion question**  
 Why do you think Mason, like many of the founding fathers, talked of the evils of slavery while owning slaves themselves?

1787: This infernal traffic [sic] originated in the avarice of British Merchants. The British Govt. constantly checked the attempts of Virginia to put a stop to it. The present question concerns not the importing States alone but the whole Union.... Slavery discourages arts & manufactures. The poor despise labor when performed by slaves. They prevent the immigration of Whites, who really enrich & strengthen a Country. They produce the most pernicious effect on manners. Every master of slaves is born a petty tyrant. They bring the judgment of heaven on a Country. As nations can not [sic] be rewarded or punished in the next world they must be in this. By an inevitable chain of causes & effects providence punishes national sins, by national calamities....[It is] essential in every point of view that the Genl. Govt. should have power to prevent the increase of slavery.[6]

1788: The augmentation of slaves weakens the states; and such a trade is diabolical in itself, and disgraceful to mankind. Yet by this constitution it is continued for twenty years, As much as I value an [sic] union of all the states, I would not admit the southern states into the union, unless they agreed to the discontinuance of this disgraceful trade, because it would bring weakness and not strength to the union. And though this infamous traffic be continued, we have no security for the property of that kind which we have already. There is no clause in this constitution to secure it; for they may lay such a tax as will amount to manumission. And should the government be amended, still this detestable kind of commerce cannot be discontinued till after the expiration of twenty years. For the fifth article [of the Constitution], which provides for amendments, expressly excepts this clause. I have ever looked upon this as a most disgraceful thing to America. I cannot express my detestation of it. Yet they have not secured us the property of the slaves we have already. So that “they have done what they ought not to have done, and left undone what they ought to have done.”[7]

1792: [Notes of Thomas Jefferson’s conversation with George Mason:] The const[itutio]n as agreed to till a fortnight before the convention rose was such a one as [Mason] w[oul]d have set his hand & heart to....With respect to the import[atio]n of slaves it was left to Congress. This disturbed the 2 Southernmost states who knew that Congress would immediately suppress the import[atio]n of slaves. Those 2 states therefore struck up a bargain with the 3 N. Engl[an]d states, if they would join to admit slaves for some years, the 2 Southernmost states w[oul]d join in changing the clause which required 2/3 of the legislature in any vote. It was done. These articles were changed accordingly, & from that moment the two S[outhern]. states and the 3 Northern ones joined Pen[nsylvania]. Jers[ey]. & Del[aware]. & made the majority 8. to 3. against us instead of 8. to 3. for us as it had been thro' the whole convention. Under this coalition the great principles of the Const[itutio]n were changed in the last days of the Convention.[8]

Notes:

1. Robert A. Rutland, ed., *The Papers of George Mason* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1970), 173.
2. *Ibid.*, 966.
3. *Ibid.*, 147-161.
4. *Ibid.*, 61, 62. This statement began a scheme drafted by Mason to circumvent the need for taxed documents by landlords. It became unnecessary as Parliament rescinded the Stamp Act.
5. *Ibid.*, 173. The “annexed Extracts” were Mason's annotated *Extracts from the Virginia Charters*.
6. *Ibid.*, 965-966. This statement reiterated and expanded Mason's views at the Constitutional Convention on August 22.
7. *Ibid.*, 1086. This statement was made by Mason at the Virginia Ratification Convention in Richmond.
8. *Ibid.*, 1275, 1276. Jefferson, traveling north, stopped at Gunston Hall and, afterward, made notes on his conversation with Mason. Jefferson was one of the last to visit Mason; he died on October 7, 1792, approximately a week after this visit. Historian Robert Rutland remarks that this version of the slavery compromise at the Constitutional Convention was generally accepted by James Madison and other delegates.

Sources:

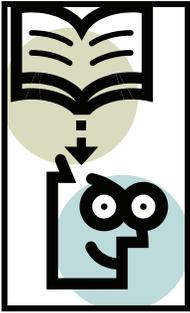
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**George Mason Essay Questions:**

Essays are intended to be 3-7 pages, double-spaced, depending on the age and ability of the student.



***Critical Thinking***

At the beginning of this lesson, Mason makes a statement about inhabitants being not the descendants of the conquered, but of the conquerors. What does he imply by this? What is he trying to demonstrate? Why does it matter so much to him?



***Research***

Find out which state constitutions were influenced by Virginia's, and how. Choose 2-3 of these states and give an in-depth description of the history behind their constitutions. Which ideas of Mason's did they accept, and which did they reject or omit?



***Argumentative***

Pick which of the points in the draft of the Bill of Rights you think are the most important and why. Describe how you think any of them could be improved, and state what the consequences would be for rejecting any of them and why.



***Compare and Contrast***

Write an essay comparing and contrasting the draft of the Bill of Rights with the finished document. There were twenty points in the draft, and only ten amendments in the final document. Sometimes, several points became one amendment. Describe the changes made, and discuss which you think were for the better, which for the worse, and why.