Unit 1 Glossary (Founding Fathers/Constitution)

**1776**- The Second Continental Congress moved that “These United Colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent states. . .” In the hopes of gaining broad colonial and international support, Congress appointed a committee to draft an inspirational document to explain to the world the reasons the colonies were asserting their independence. The committee included Thomas Jefferson who was charged with drafting the document. In it he asked for protection of the “unalienable rights” of humankind in addition to British rights, and listed British actions which prompted the quest for independence. Congress adopted the motion of independence on July 2, and on July 4, fifty-six representatives from the thirteen original colonies unanimously approved the Declaration of Independence.

**1787**- Between May 25 and September 17, 1787, delegates gathered in Philadelphia to revise the Articles of Confederation. Instead they drafted, debated, compromised, and finally approved for ratification the Constitution of the United States. It was then sent to the states to adopt or reject based on the votes of delegates to ratification conventions. The debate over ratification continued into 1788 as Federalists and Anti-Federalists faced off over issues of states’ rights, human liberties, and governmental authority. Ratification of the new constitution required acceptance by nine of the thirteen states. By 1790 all thirteen states ratified the Constitution respectively.

**Alexis de Tocqueville**- (1805-1859) A French political thinker and historian, best known for authoring *Democracy in America* which deals with issues like religion, the press, money, class structure, racism, the role of government, the judicial system, etc. Issues that are just as relevant today as they were then. Colleges around the country use the text in political science and history courses, and historians consider it one of the most comprehensive and insightful books ever written about the U.S.

**Articles of Confederation**- The nation’s first constitution, was adopted by the Second Continental Congress in 1781 during the Revolution. It provided guidance to government for seven years and gave Congress limited authority to make laws and to draw up treaties with other nations. The Articles were limited in providing solutions to many challenges facing the new Republic because the states held most of the power, and Congress lacked the power to tax, regulate trade, or control coinage. In 1787 the Constitutional Convention met in Philadelphia to revise the Articles, but instead the delegates constructed a new constitution.

**Benjamin Rush**- (1745-1813) An eminent Physician, writer, educator, and humanitarian born in December 1745 in Pennsylvania. He was active in the Sons of Liberty in Pennsylvania during 1773. In June of 1776 he was elected to attend the provincial conference to send delegates to the Continental Congress. He was appointed to represent Philadelphia that year and signed the Declaration of Independence. In 1777 he was appointed surgeon-general of the middle department of the Continental Army. In 1789 he wrote in Philadelphia newspapers in favor of adopting the Federal constitution. He was then elected to the Pennsylvania convention which adopted that constitution. He was appointed treasurer of the US Mint where he served from 1797 to 1813. He died at the age of 68 at his home in Philadelphia, the most celebrated physician in America.

**Bill of Rights**- The first ten amendments to the Constitution ratified in 1791. The 1st Amendment protects several fundamental rights of U.S. citizens: freedom of religion, of speech, of the press, and the rights to assemble and to petition. The next seven amendments guarantee other freedoms including the right to a fair trial and the right to bear arms. Homes are protected from search without just cause, citizens are protected from the imposition of housing troops during peacetime, and those accused of crimes are entitled to fair treatment before the law. The 9th Amendment guarantees that people retain rights not enumerated in the Constitution and the 10th amendment limits federal power by granting to the states all powers not specifically assigned by the Constitution to the national government.

**Charles Carroll**- (1737-1832) In 1772 he anonymously engaged the secretary of the colony of Maryland in a series of Newspaper articles protesting the right of the British government to tax the colonies without representation. He visited the Continental Congress in 1776, and was enlisted in a diplomatic mission to Canada, along with Franklin and Chase. When he returned, the Maryland Convention decided to join in support for the Revolution. Carroll was elected to represent Maryland on the 4th of July, and though he was too late to vote for the Declaration, he did sign it. He died the last survivor of the signers of the Declaration, in 1832 at the age of 95.

**Checks and Balances**- The U.S. Constitution authorizes each branch of government to share its powers with the other branches and thereby check their activities and power. The President can veto legislation passed by Congress, but Congress can override the veto. The Senate confirms major appointments made by the President, and the courts may declare acts passed by Congress as unconstitutional.

**Declaration of Independence**- A document adopted by the Second Continental Congress on July 4, 1776. It established the 13 colonies as independent states, free from rule by Great Britain. Thomas Jefferson wrote the majority of the declaration. In the Preamble, Jefferson explained that it was necessary to list the reasons why the colonies sought their own government. In three sections, Jefferson outlined the reasons: people have the right to control their own government; the British government and King used their power unjustly to control the colonies; and the colonies had tried to avoid separating from Britain, but Britain refused to cooperate. The most famous passage concerns the right to govern:

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among men, deriving their just power from the consent of the governed. That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government. . .“

**Federalism**- The distribution of power between a federal government and the states within a union.

**Federalists and Anti-Federalists**- The adoption of the U.S. Constitution was not an easy process. Citizens disagreed over the way the document divided power between the states and the national government, the degree to which the rights of states were protected, and the degree to which the rights of citizens were protected. Those favoring ratification of the Constitution and adoption of the federalist form of government were called Federalists Those opposed to the Constitution because they feared the power of the national government in the new federal system were called Anti-Federalists. Anti-Federalists were also concerned that if the national government could overrule state decisions, the protection of the liberty of individuals would be at risk. Thomas Jefferson favored some aspects of the Constitution but was concerned about the lack of protection for the rights of states and the absence of support for individual rights. He supported the inclusion of a Bill of Rights. In an effort to sway opinion and get the Constitution ratified, three leading Federalists — James Madison, Alexander Hamilton, and John Jay — published their views in

The Federalist, a series of 85 newspaper essays which have become a classic of American political thought.

**Founding Fathers**- The term founding fathers applies to those individuals who played a major role in declaring U.S. independence, fighting the Revolutionary War, or writing and adopting the U.S. Constitution.

**Individual Rights**- Many opposed the Constitution in 1787 because they believed it did not offer adequate protection of individual rights. The Bill of Rights, ratified in 1791, were created to correct this. The individual rights protected in the Bill of Rights include economic rights related to property, political rights related to freedom of speech and press, and personal rights related to bearing arms and maintaining private residences. The structure of the U.S. Constitution allows for adaptation based on changing public opinion and the need to protect individual rights.

**John Hancock**- (1737-1793) Born in Massachusetts, he became involved in revolutionary politics and for independence from Great Britain. He was elected to the Boston Assembly in 1766, and was a member of the Stamp Act Congress. In 1774, he was elected to the Provincial Congress of Massachusetts and simultaneously to the Continental Congress. When Peyton Randolph resigned in 1776, Hancock assumed the position of President. The signature of John Hancock on the Declaration of Independence is the most flamboyant and easily recognizable of all. He was elected to the Governorship of the state where he served for five years, declined reelection, and was again elected in 1787. He served that office until his death in 1793.

**John Jay**- (1745-1829) In early 1774 he was one of the most prominent members of the New York Committee of Correspondence. In September of that year he attended the First Continental Congress as the second youngest member, at age twenty eight. He retired from the Congress in 1776 rather than sign the Declaration of Independence. He became involved in the development of a new state government for New York and in 1777 he attended the New York constitutional convention, and was selected to draft that constitution. In 1782 Jay, along with Adams, Franklin, and Laurens signed the treaty of peace with Great Britain. When he returned to Congress, he was appointed Secretary of Foreign Affairs. In 1787 he along with James Madison, and Alexander Hamilton authored three of the articles now called *The Federalist* in support of the ratification of the new Federal Constitution. In 1789, Washington appointed him Chief Justice to the Supreme Court under the new federal constitution. In 1794 he was appointed an envoy extraordinary to Great Britain, in order to seek a resolution to conflicts on the western border and in commercial relations. The result of this was the *Jay Treaty*, which proved unpopular with the public but was approved by the Washington administration. Upon his return home Jay found that, in his absence, he had been elected Governor of New York.

**Limited Government**- Everyone, including all authority figures, must obey the laws. Constitutions, statements of rights, or other laws define the limits of those in power so they cannot take advantage of their elected, appointed, or inherited positions. In an unlimited government, control is placed solely with the ruler and his/her appointees, and there are no limits imposed on his/her authority.

**John Peter Muhlenberg**- (1746-1807) During the Revolutionary War he raised and commanded the Eighth Virginia (German) Regiment, commissioned brigadier general of the Continental Army in 1777, and brevetted major general in 1783. He returned to Pennsylvania and was elected to the First Congress (March 4, 1789-March 3, 1791), the Third Congress (March 4, 1793-March 3,1795), and the Sixth Congress (March 4,1799-March 3,1801). He was elected to the U.S. Senate and served from March 4, 1801 until his resignation on June 30, 1801. He was appointed by President Thomas Jefferson supervisor of revenue for Pennsylvania in 1801 and collector of customs at Philadelphia in 1802 where he served until his death in October 1807.

**Popular Sovereignty**- The concept that political power rests with the people who can create, alter, and abolish government. People express themselves through voting and free participation in government. Popular sovereignty is an important characteristic of democratic government

**Preamble to the Constitution**- “We the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.”

**Primary Sources**- Evidence produced by someone who participated in an event or lived during the time being studied. Letters written to a friend or maps to a friend’s house are both primary sources. Researchers collect primary sources through conducting surveys, field work, personal interviews, and research in archives.

**Representative Government**-Power is held by the people and exercised through the efforts of representatives elected by those people.

**Republicanism**- The philosophy of limited government with elected representatives serving at the will of the people. Republicanism says that the only legitimate government is one based on the consent of the governed.

**Secondary Sources**- Descriptions or interpretations prepared by people who were not involved in the events described. Researchers often use primary sources to understand past events but they produce secondary sources. Secondary sources provide useful ground material and context for information gained from primary sources.

**Separation of Powers**- Baron de Montesquieu first outlined the concept of separating the powers of government between the executive, legislative, and judicial branches in *The Spirit of the Laws* (1748). His ideas influenced those who proposed the Virginia Plan in the opening discussion of the Philadelphia Convention held in 1787 to revise the Articles of Confederation. Delegates to the convention modified the Virginia Plan, merged it with the New Jersey Plan proposed later, defined the three branches, and outlined their responsibilities and limitations of power in the U.S. Constitution. The branches included the legislative branch know as “Congress” made up of a “House of Representatives” and a “Senate,” the executive branch known as the “President,” and the judicial branch known as the “Supreme Court.” The convention agreed that Congress, which made laws, would consist of an equal number of senators from each state and a variable number of representatives from each state based on population. The President would lead the executive branch, which carried out the laws and ensured their just application. The judicial branch, consisting of all courts of the United States including the highest court, the Supreme Court, would interpret and apply the laws, ensuring that they are just. The delegates to the Philadelphia Convention felt this afforded protection to U.S. citizens. In addition, this new form of government distributed the power between a central government and the states. The system was called federalism.

**Jonathan Trumbull Sr.**- (1710-1785) One of the few men who served as governor in both a pre-Revolutionary colony and a post-Revolutionary state. From 1733-1740 he was a delegate to the general assembly, and in 1739-1740 was Speaker of the House. He was appointed lieutenant colonel in Connecticut’s militia in 1739. He served as deputy-governor of the Colony of Connecticut from 1766-1769, and on the death of the governor became Governor of Connecticut in 1769, serving in that capacity until 1784. He was a friend and advisor of General Washington throughout the revolutionary period, dedicating the resources of Connecticut to the fight for independence. He was the only colonial governor to continue office through the American Revolution. He is the father of John Trumbull (1756-1843) who is known as the “Painter of the American Revolution”.

**Unalienable Rights**- Fundamental rights or natural rights guaranteed to people naturally instead of by the law. The Declaration of Independence equated natural rights with several truths, “that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” The phrase “unalienable rights” was also used in the Virginia Declaration of Rights. Other rights are guaranteed in the Bill of Rights, the first ten amendments to the U.S. Constitution.

**U.S. Constitution**- A document that outlines the powers of government. One of the foundations of the American system of government is the use of a written constitution defining the values and principles of government and establishing the limits of power. The U.S. Constitution evolved from the Articles of Confederation adopted in 1781. The Articles established a national congress with a limited number of powers including the authority to make laws and enter into treaties with other nations. By 1787 a new system was needed as states were acting independently, and Congress lacked the power to tax, regulate trade, or control coinage, issues critical for the survival of a new nation of United States. Congress announced a call for delegates to a convention “for the sole and express purpose of revising” the Articles of Confederation. The Philadelphia Convention began in the Pennsylvania State House, now called Independence Hall, on May 25, 1787. Fifty-five delegates from 12 of the 13 states participated. The Framers of the Constitution understood that society would change over time, and made provisions for amendments to be formally proposed and ratified by both the state and federal governments. In the last 200 years, there have been 27 amendments to the Constitution, including the Bill of Rights. Through the process of amendment and judicial review, the Constitution is adapted to the needs of each generation of Americans.

**John Witherspoon**- (1723-1794) In 1776 he was elected to the Continental Congress in time to vote for R.H. Lee’s Resolution for Independence. He voted in favor and shortly after voted for the Declaration of Independence. His notable comment in reply to another member who argued that the country was not ripe for such a declaration was that in his opinion, “was not only ripe for the measure, but in danger of rotting for the want of it.” Witherspoon was a very active member of congress, serving on more than a hundred committees through his tenure and debating frequently on the floor. (Fun fact, he is related to current day actress Reese Witherspoon.)