

Name \_\_\_\_\_

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## An American Identity Forms Notes and Graphic Organizer

Directions: Read the information below. As you read, highlight the MAIN IDEA in EACH paragraph. Write a note in the margin to help you remember what you highlighted. Use the information FROM THE READING and information FROM YOUR NOTES to help you complete a brace map. **After you have completed the chart, write a 2 paragraph response to the following question: What traditions, events, and forces, helped form an American identity?**

### Background

*When the English began to establish colonies in America, they already had a long history of living with certain rights. Things like the Magna Carta and English Bill of Rights defined the relationship between citizens and government. Englishmen and colonists alike expected their government to abide by these rights. On the eve of the American Revolution, many of these rights were brought into question by actions of the King of England and Parliament; hence the reasoning behind revolution. However, it is important to remember that this is not the only thing that contributed to these events. Prior to the Revolution, many changes occurred in the colonies that helped English colonists start to see themselves as “Americans” and not subjects of the English Crown. In this reading, you will learn about many events and political movements that worked to divide colonists from England. As you read, notice how these ideas and concepts changed the way people thought about government, politics and human capacity in general.*

### Early American Culture; how was it different from Europe?

#### A New Kind of American Society

Like Europe, America had social ranks. Wealthy landowners were at the top, small farmers were in the middle and hired workers/servants were the lowest rank. Unlike Europe, America had a large middle class, a huge underclass of slaves and no titled aristocracy or nobility. In America, many people could own land. More Americans also had the right to vote.

#### Colonial Life

Most Americans lived on farms and valued hard work. Children helped with chores. America had a higher literacy rate than England. New England had free public schools where children were taught to read the Bible. During the 1700's many towns published newspapers. Benjamin Franklin published *Poor Richard's Almanac*. Settlers came from many countries, ensuring religious and social diversity in the American colonies

## Roots of American Democracy

### The Rights of Englishmen

In 1215, English nobles force the king to sign the Magna Carta. This document said the king had to obey the laws of the land. After that, the rights of Englishmen were slowly strengthened. Throughout the English colonies, free Americans also had these rights.

One right that the colonists wanted to protect was the right to representative government. They believed that they had the right to govern themselves completely. The Parliament and the king had allowed the colonists to elect their own assemblies but still kept ultimate control. Parliament passed laws without the colonists consent. The king also chose royal governors to rule some colonies for him. In the late 1600's the conflict between the colonists and the English government grew more intense.

### English Rights Threatened

When King James II became king in 1685, he wanted to strengthen royal power. He restricted English rights not only in the colonies, but in England itself. However, the Glorious Revolution brought James's daughter Mary and her husband William to the English throne in 1688. William and Mary agreed in 1689 to uphold the English Bill of Rights. This document strengthened the rights of the English people by making government based on laws, not the desire of rulers. During the late 1600's tensions between the American colonies and England eased.

### Important Vocabulary:

- Magna Carta: document giving English people rights in the year 1215
- Parliament: England's chief lawmaking body
- Glorious Revolution: events of 1688-1689 when William and Mary replaced King James II and rulers of England
- English Bill of Rights: 1689 laws protecting the rights of English people

## Social and Political Movements in the American Colonies

### The Enlightenment

The Enlightenment was a shift in philosophy or ideas. This movement stressed human reason and science as a path to knowledge. It began in Europe as scientists discovered natural laws (like gravity) governing the universe. Science could now be used to explain things that were not understood before. Enlightenment thinkers believed that human beings could use rational thought to improve themselves and society. In other word, human beings were capable thinkers who could reason things out instead of always contributing the unknown to the "power of God".

John Locke was an "Enlightenment Thinker." He challenged the idea that kings had a God-given right to rule. Locke believed that people had a natural right to life, liberty and property and to choose their own government.

Writers like Locke and Benjamin Franklin encouraged people to believe in progress- the idea that people can improve society. This idea had a **strong influence** on American culture and colonial leaders. They soon began to question their political ties to England.

### **Religious Revival and The Great Awakening**

The Great Awakening (1730's-1740's) was a religious movement in America. It offered hope that everyone could break from the past and have a spiritual rebirth. People began to see that there were other options in religion and they began to feel comfortable with questioning the truth within their churches. Some people left their churches to join other groups such as the Baptists. It became harder for large churches to control religious life. The idea of spiritual equality threaten the social order. Baptist congregations for example, welcomed African Americans and Native Americans.

The Great Awakening helped develop an American Identity by encouraging spiritual equality and by challenging religious authority. Later Americans would also challenge British authority.

## **The French and Indian War Changes the Colonies**

### **Europeans in Native American Lands**

The English and French created Rival empires in North America. The two nations both wanted to buy furs. Different Native American groups wanted to sell them. The fur trade created alliances between the Europeans and their Native American trading partners.

These alliances dragged the trading partners into each other's wars. In the 1600's and 1700's, European wars between France and England fueled wars in their colonies too.

### **War Begins and Spreads**

The French built forts and sent troops to remove the British colonists from the Ohio River Valley which was claimed by Virginia. In response, Virginia sent George Washington to lead a surprise attack on French forces. In response, the French and their Native American allies attacked Washington's troops at Fort Necessity on July 3, 1754. This event started the French and Indian War.

England sent General Edward Braddock to attack Fort Duquesne, a French fort. Braddock was defeated by the French and their allies. British colonists were stunned by this defeat and other losses. However, they soon won the Battle of Quebec which proved to be the turning point of the war. This war showed the British colonists that they were stronger when they were united together. The Treaty of Paris (1763) ended the French and Indian War in America.

## **Conflict with Native Americans help to unite American colonists**

### **The New Colonial World**

After the British won the French and Indian War, they refused to give gifts to the Native Americans as the French had. British settlers also began to move farther onto Native American lands. The native Americans responded by attacking the forts in Pontiac's Rebellion. The British settlers invited the Native American leaders to talk and gave them blankets infected with smallpox, pretending they were gifts. A deadly outbreak caused the Native Americans to retreat.

To avoid further trouble with Native Americans, Britain issued the Proclamation of 1763. This law said the settlers could not move west of the Appalachian Mountains. This frustrated and limited the power of all the colonies. The colonist now had another dispute with Britain.

## **Publications and Political Cartoons help Define an American Identity**

“Join or Die”

In 1754 Benjamin Franklin drew this image of a severed snake to encourage the British colonies to unite against the threat posed by French and Indian forces. The design was inspired by a superstition that a sliced snake would revive if the pieces of its body were joined before sunset.

The image, the first political cartoon to be published in an American newspaper, was widely circulated in 1754 and later during the American Revolution. A remarkably direct and simple cartoon, it reveals the beginning of a sense of national identity.

