CE 2b EarlierDocuments

Before the United States of America became a country, there were some documents written by different people that helped shape our thoughts and actions as a country.

1, The first document was actually written by the King of England. **The Charters of the Virginia Company of London** were written to give permission for the colony of Jamestown to be started. There were actually three Charters written and the most important element of the Charters was they gave the colonist at Jamestown the same rights as citizens in England. This confirmed that all citizens of a country should have the same rights.

2. The second document was written over 100 years after the first. The **Virginia Declaration of Rights** was written by **George Mason** clearly stated the rights all Virginia citizens had. The important thing was that it was used as a model to go by when the Bill of Rights of the Constitution was being written.

3. As tensions grew between the colonists and England, the colonists

decided they should break away from England and become their own

country. The **Declaration of Independence** was written by **Thomas**

**Jefferson** to announce to England and the world that a new nation was

being formed.

The Declaration of Independence had four major points it wanted to make.

These points can best be remembered by using **R.I.C.E.**

**R**= **Rights**- the colonists believed that all people have certain unalienable

rights: Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness.

**I**= **Independence-** the colonist demanded their freedom from England

**C**= **Complaints (or grievances)** - Against the King. How King had treated

the colonies.

**E=Equality-** All men are considered equal.

Once freedom was received from England, the new country needed

Guidelines to run their country. The **Articles of Confederation** was written

for this. The important points were mostly bad ones. The only good thing

was that it was the *first form* of national government for the new country.

Since most of the power was given to the States, the Central (national)

government was very weak and had no power to enforce laws or collect

taxes.

In the same time frame, another document came from the State of Virginia.

This was written by Thomas Jefferson and **the Virginia Statute of**

**Religious Freedom**. The important thing about this was that it cleared the

way foranyone to worship anyway they chose.

The final important document was the **Constitution of the United States**

**of** **America**. This was written to replace the Articles of Confederation. It

set up the structure for the government as well as confirming everyone’s

fundamental rights and equality. The Constitution also supported the idea

of majority rule and the worth and dignity of all citizens.

What do you know?

1. Who wrote The Charters of the Virginia Company of London?
2. George Washington c) King of England
3. Thomas Jefferson d) George Mason
4. What document was the first form of national government for the United States?
5. U.S. Constitution c) Declaration of Independence
6. Articles of Confederation d) Bill of Rights
7. What document replaced the Articles of Confederation?

a) U.S. Constitution c) Declaration of Independence

b) Articles of Confederation d) Bill of Rights