HISTORICAL DOCUMENTS PART I

Unit Overview
In this unit, students will examine three historical documents: Declaration of Independence (CS#5), the Northwest Ordinance (CS#6), and the Articles of Confederation (CS#7).

Content Statement #5
The *Declaration of Independence* reflects an application of *Enlightenment* ideas to the grievances of British subjects in the American colonies.
Content Elaborations

The Declaration of Independence opens with a statement that the action the American COLONIES were undertaking required an explanation. That explanation begins with a brief exposition of ENLIGHTENMENT thinking, particularly NATURAL rights and the SOCIAL contract, as the context for examining the recent history of the colonies.

The document includes a list of GRIEVANCES the colonists have with the KING of Great Britain and PARLIAMENT as a justification for independence. The grievances refer to a series of events since the French and Indian War which the colonists deemed were tyrannical acts and destructive of their rights.

The Declaration of INDEPENDENCE ends with a clear statement that the political bonds between the colonies and Great Britain are ended. Independence is declared as an exercise of social contract thought.

Content Statement #6
The *Northwest Ordinance* addressed a need for government in the Northwest Territory and established precedents for the future governing of the United States.

**Content Elaboration**

As Ohio country settlement progressed, the *NORTHWEST ORDINANCE* provided the basis for temporary governance as territory and eventual entry into the United States as states.

The Northwest Ordinance also set some precedents that influenced how the United States would be governed in later years. New *STATES* were to be admitted “into the Congress of the United States, on an equal footing with the original States.” This provision was continued in later years and it meant that there would be no colonization of the lands as there has been under Great Britain. “Schools and the means of *EDUCATION*” were to be encouraged. This wording reinforced the provision in the Land Ordinance of 1785 allocating one section of each township for the support of schools and established a basis for national aid for education. Basic rights of *CITIZENSHIP* (e.g. religious liberty, right to trial by jury, writ of habeas corpus) were assured. These assurances were precursors to the Bill of Rights to the U.S. Constitution. *SLAVERY* was prohibited in the Northwest Territory. This provision was later included in the Constitution as Amendment 13TH. State governments were to be republican in structure. This provision was repeated in the U.S. Constitution.

**Content Statement #7**

Problems facing the national government under the *Articles of Confederation* led to the drafting of the *Constitution of the United States*. The framers of the Constitution applied ideas of *Enlightenment* in conceiving the new government.

**Content Elaboration**

The national government, under the *ARTICLES OF CONFEDERATION*, faced several critical problems. Some dealt with the structure of the government itself. These problems included weak provisions for ongoing management of national affairs (a lack of a separate *EXECUTIVE* branch), a limited ability to resolve disputes arising under the Articles (a lack of separate *JUDICIAL* branch) and stiff requirements for passing legislation and amending the Articles. National issues facing the government included paying the debt from the *REVOLUTIONARY* War, the British refusal to evacuate forts on U.S. soil, the Spanish closure of the Mississippi River to American navigation and state disputes over land and trade. Economic problems in the states led to *SHAY’S* Rebellion.

The *CONSTITUTION* of the United States strengthened the structure of the national government. Separate executive and judicial branches were established. More practical means of passing legislation and amending the Constitution were instituted. The new government would have the ability to address the issues facing the nation. Powers to levy taxes, raise armies, and regulate commerce were given to *CONGRESS*. The principle
of **FEDERALISM** delineated the distribution of powers between the national government and the states.

The Constitution of the United States was drafted using **SOCIAL CONTRACT** ideas to create a workable form of government. The Preamble and the creation of a representative government reflect the ideas of the social contract. Articles I-III provide for a **SEPARATION** of powers in government.

**STOP: ANSWER QUESTIONS 1- 13**

**QUIZLET:** Click on the link below and complete the study sets for this unit.

https://quizlet.com/_2gs8og

**STOP: ANSWER QUESTIONS 14- 18**

**STOP: ANSWER QUESTIONS 19- 25**

Below are additional educational resources and activities for this unit.

- Unit 2 Cornell Notes
- Unit 2 Declaration of Independence
- Unit 2 Study Guide
- Unit 2 Cornell Notes Key
- Unit 2 Declaration of Independence Key