

Founding Fathers' Selected Quotations Key

Benjamin Franklin

1) "History affords us many instances of the ruin of states, by the prosecution of measures ill suited to the temper and genius of their people. The ordaining of laws in favor of one part of the nation, to the prejudice and oppression of another, is certainly the most erroneous and mistaken policy. An equal dispensation of protection, rights, privileges, and advantages, is what every part is entitled to, and ought to enjoy. . . . These measures never fail to create great and violent jealousies and animosities between the people favored and the people oppressed; whence a total separation of affections, interests, political obligations, and all manner of connections necessarily ensue, by which the whole state is weakened."

- Benjamin Franklin, *Emblematical Representations*, ca. 1774
Source: *The Complete Works of Benjamin Franklin* (New York: G. P. Putnam, 1887), 5:417.

Key Words: *ill suited, ordaining of laws, equal, protection, weakened, oppressed*

Summary in Author's Words: *The ordaining of laws that do not provide equal protection to all people is ill suited and results in oppression and a weakened state or nation.*

Summary in Your Own Words: *To keep unity and avoid one group having advantage over another, laws must be created and enforced equally for everyone.*

2) When a broad table is to be made, and the edges of planks do not fit, the artist takes a little from both, and makes a good joint. In like manner, here, both sides must part from some of their demands, in order that they may join in some accommodating proposition.

- Benjamin Franklin, Constitutional Convention debate, June 30, 1787
Source: [James Madison], *Journal of the Federal Convention*, ed. E. H. Scott (Chicago: Albert, Scott & Co., 1893), 278.

Key Words: *makes, takes, both, join, accommodating*

Summary in Author's Words: *When making one thing from many it is necessary to take from both in order to join the pieces to form an accommodating result.*

Summary in Your Own Words: *Every side of an issue needs to give a little in order to get anything, which is known as compromising.*

Prompt for Student Response:

Benjamin Franklin states in the first quote, "the ordaining of laws in favor of one part of the nation, to the prejudice and oppression of another . . . never fail[s] to create great and violent jealousies and animosities between the people favored and the people oppressed." Explain how his suggestion of compromise in the second quote could lessen the "great and violent jealousies and animosities."

The process of compromising will bring all interested people to the table to exchange ideas. As people are presenting their ideas and listening to others they will hear both sides of the issues. Compromising requires someone to give up something in order to gain something. If everyone is compromising then everyone will get something in return, so there will be less to be jealous about.

Founding Fathers' Selected Quotations Key

Thomas Jefferson

1) "Every man, and every body of men on earth, possesses the right of self-government. They receive it with their being from the hand of nature. Individuals exercise it by their single will, collections of men by that of their majority; for the law of the majority is the natural law of every society of men."

- Thomas Jefferson, Constitutionality of the Residence Bill of 1790, July 15, 1790
Source: John P. Foley, ed. *The Jeffersonian Encyclopedia* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1900), 798.

Key Words: *every, right, self-government, law of majority, natural law*

Summary in Author's Words: *Every one has the right to self-government by natural law, which is exercised in groups by the law of majority.*

Summary in Your Own Words: *When groups of people live in a society, "majority rule" is the natural law.*

2) "Never was a finer canvas presented to work on than our countrymen. All of them engaged in agriculture, or in the pursuits of honest industry, independent in their circumstances, enlightened as to their rights, and firm in their habits of order and obedience to the laws."

- Thomas Jefferson to John Adams, February 28, 1796
Source: John P. Foley, ed. *The Jeffersonian Encyclopedia* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1900), 386.

Key Words: *countrymen, honest industry, independent, enlightened, rights, order, obedience*

Summary in Author's Words: *Countrymen who are engaged in honest, independent, industry, enlightened to their rights, orderly, and obedient to the laws are willing to be governed.*

Summary in Your Own Words: *People who are in honest business for themselves, are informed about their government, behave well, and obey the law are the best kind of people to be governed.*

3) "A government is republican in proportion as every member composing it has his equal voice in the direction of its concerns (not indeed in person, which would be impracticable beyond the limits of a city, or small township, but) by representatives chosen by himself, and responsible to him at short periods."

- Thomas Jefferson to Samuel Kerchival, July 12, 1816
Source: John P. Foley, ed. *The Jeffersonian Encyclopedia* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1900), 391.

Key Words: *republican, equal voice, representatives, chosen, responsible, short periods*

Summary in Author's Words: *A republican government requires an equal voice from everyone represented by a chosen few who are responsible to the governed for short periods.*

Summary in Your Own Words: *Representatives chosen by the members of the republic voice the members concerns and are responsible to the members for short periods of time.*

Prompt for Student Response:

Using your analysis of these three quotes by Thomas Jefferson, describe Jefferson's expectations for the government of the new nation.

Thomas Jefferson expects that citizens involved in governing and government are honest in their business, informed about their government, well behaved, and law abiding as described in the second quotation. The third quotation references representation for the people's concerns by chosen officials who serve for a short

Founding Fathers' Selected Quotations Key

Thomas Jefferson

period of time. The first quotation expresses the use of the law of majority when men engage in self-government.

Founding Fathers' Selected Quotations Key

Alexander Hamilton

1) "It has been observed . . . that a pure democracy, if it were practicable, would be the most perfect government. Experience has proved, that no position in politics is more false than this. The ancient democracies, in which the people themselves deliberated, never possessed one feature of good government. Their very character was tyranny; their figure deformity."

- Alexander Hamilton, Speech to the New York Ratifying Convention, June 21, 1788
Source: *The Papers of Alexander Hamilton*, ed. Harold Syrett, et al. (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1961–1987), 5:38–39.

Key Words: *practicable, people, never, tyranny, government*

Summary in Author's Words: *It is not practicable for the people to deliberate for themselves; this government results in tyranny.*

Summary in Your Own Words: *The people in a large society are not capable of coming to an acceptable agreement if everyone is talking.*

2) "All communities divide themselves into the few and the many. The first are the rich and well born, the other the mass of the people...The people are turbulent and changing; they seldom judge or determine right. Give therefore to the first class a distinct, permanent share in the government. They will check the unsteadiness of the second, and as they cannot receive any advantage by a change, they therefore will ever maintain good government."

- Alexander Hamilton, Constitutional Convention debate, June 18, 1787
Source: *The Papers of Alexander Hamilton*, ed. Harold Syrett, et al. (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1961–1987), 4:200.

Key Words: *divide, rich and well-born, mass of the people, turbulent, changing, seldom right, permanent, government*

Summary in Author's Words: *The rich and well-born should permanently govern because the mass of the people is turbulent and changing and seldom right.*

Summary in Your Own Words: *Wealthy, well-born people are better able to govern because they have right judgment and thinking, and should be in permanent positions in government; poor people can't possibly know what they are doing.*

Prompt for Student Response:

Thinking about the Hamilton quotes you just read, what does Alexander Hamilton believe to be important attributes of government?

Representative government rather than a pure democracy has more chance of success. The representatives in government should be those people who are wealthy and well-born, and hold permanent positions, rather than chosen from all the people.

Founding Fathers' Selected Quotations Key

James Madison

1) "The powers delegated by the proposed Constitution to the federal government are few and defined. Those which are to remain in the State governments are numerous and indefinite."

- James Madison, *Federalist No. 45*, January 26, 1788

Source: *The Federalist Papers*, THOMAS, The Library of Congress,
<http://thomas.loc.gov/home/histdox/fedpapers.html>

Key Words: *powers, federal government, few, defined, state, numerous, indefinite*

Summary in Author's Words: *The few powers of the federal government are well defined; the many powers of the state government are indefinite.*

Summary in Your Own Words: *States' powers are more numerous and more flexible than those of the federal government, which are limited in number and action.*

2) "There are more instances of the abridgment of the freedom of the people, by gradual and silent encroachments of those in power, than by violent and sudden usurpations."

- James Madison, Speech to the Virginia Ratifying Convention, June 16, 1788

Source: David Robertson, *Debates and Other Proceedings of the Convention of Virginia . . .* 2nd edition (Richmond, VA: Ritchie and Worsley and Augustine Davis, 1805), 71.

Key Words: *abridgement, freedom, gradual, encroachment, power*

Summary in Author's Words: *The abridgement of freedom comes gradually from those in power.*

Summary in Your Own Words: *Freedoms are quietly taken away by those in power if the people are not watching and holding the powerful accountable.*

3) "A popular Government without popular information, or the means of acquiring it, is but a Prologue to a Farce or a Tragedy, or perhaps both. Knowledge will forever govern ignorance: And a people who mean to be their own Governors, must arm themselves with the power which knowledge gives."

- James Madison to W. T. Barry, August 4, 1822

Source: *The Writings of James Madison*, ed. Gaillard Hunt (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1910), 9:103.

Key Words: *information, knowledge, govern, ignorance, power, arm*

Summary in Author's Words: *Information is knowledge, and to govern and be governed with power and not ignorance you must arm yourself with knowledge.*

Summary in Your Own Words: *To be a powerful participant in government, a person should learn as much information as they can about their government and how they are governed.*

In these three quotes James Madison speaks to the power held by the federal government. Using your analysis of these quotes, summarize Madison's views on keeping the federal government's power in check.

Founding Fathers' Selected Quotations Key

James Madison

In the first quotation Madison explains that the powers of the federal government are limited and defined. The states' powers are more numerous and flexible, which gives the states and their citizens more governing control than the federal government. In the second quote Madison is cautioning against the quiet loss of freedom by those in power, which can be avoided if citizens participate in their government by staying informed and holding those in power accountable as described in the third quotation.

Founding Fathers' Selected Quotations Key

The Founding Fathers – Ideas about Government

Review the summary statements of the Founding Fathers' quotations as you respond to the following:

Benjamin Franklin said, "both sides must part with some of their demands in order that they may join in some accommodating proposition." This suggests he knew compromise was necessary as the new United States government was formed because everyone had his own ideas about government. As you think about the quotations from these Founding Fathers, what are the similarities in their thinking, what are the differences? Where will compromise most likely be necessary?

Thomas Jefferson supported the idea of majority rule, noting that the law of majority is the natural law of every society. He also said that representatives should be chosen by the people being governed and that these chosen people should be responsible to the governed in short periods. Alexander Hamilton seems to agree with Jefferson in that the people should be represented when he states "democracies in which the people themselves deliberated never possessed one good feature of government."

Where Jefferson and Hamilton seem to disagree is on whom these people are that represent the concerns of everyone. Jefferson says, "every man possesses the right to self-government," and "a government is republican in proportion as every member composing it has equal voice in the direction of its concerns." Hamilton says the first class (rich and well-born) should have a "distinct, permanent share in the government" as they will "check the unsteadiness" of the "mass of the people."

While Jefferson includes all people, there is the expectation that the citizenry will be "engaged...in the pursuits of honest industry, independent in their circumstances, enlightened as to their rights, and firm in their habits of order and obedience to the laws."

Benjamin Franklin supports "an equal dispensation of protection, rights, privileges, and advantages" that every one "is entitled to and ought to enjoy."

In these selected quotes Madison does not specify a group of people to govern, but does caution that the "abridgement of freedom of the people by gradual and silent encroachments of those in power" is a danger. Madison encourages a knowledgeable people who mean to be their own Governors as they "must arm themselves with the power which is knowledge."

Compromise seems to be most needed in the question of who will be the representatives of the people, as Jefferson and Hamilton seem to disagree. Compromise will also be necessary as laws are created to protect the rights, privileges, and advantages of everyone.