

# Study Guide



## Chapter 2, Section 1

For use with textbook pages 28–32

### Our English Heritage



#### KEY TERMS

**monarch** a king or queen (page 28)

**legislature** a lawmaking body (page 29)

**Parliament** England’s lawmaking body (page 29)

**precedent** a court ruling in an earlier case that was similar (page 29)

**common law** a system of law based on precedent and customs (page 30)

**colony** a group of people in one place who are ruled by a parent country elsewhere (page 30)

**charter** a written document granting land and the authority to set up colonial governments (page 30)

**compact** an agreement among a group of people (page 31)

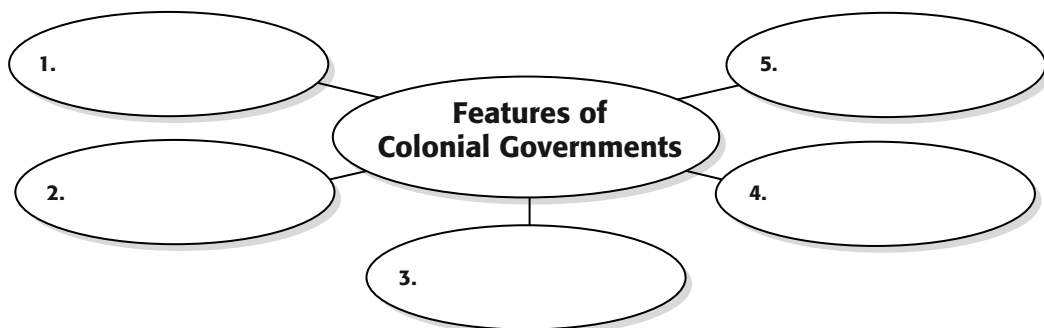
#### DRAWING FROM EXPERIENCE

How do people in the United States participate in their government? How is your community’s government set up? How do people in your community participate in their local government?

In this section, you will learn about early English government. You will also learn how the early English government influenced American colonial governments.

#### ORGANIZING YOUR THOUGHTS

Use the web diagram below to help you take notes. The early governments of the American colonies had several similarities. List these similarities in the diagram.



**Study Guide****Chapter 2, Section 1 (continued)****READ TO LEARN****• Influences From England's Early Government** *(page 28)*

The English people who settled in America in the 1600s brought with them England's history of limited and representative government. For centuries before the 1600s, England was ruled by a **monarch**—a king or queen. The noble families also had power. The monarch gave them land in exchange for their loyalty, taxes, and military support. King John, who became king in 1199, treated the nobles harshly. They rebelled in 1215 and forced the king to sign the Magna Carta. This document protected nobles' rights and gave certain rights to all landholders. The rights included equal treatment under the law and trial by one's peers. The Magna Carta guaranteed that no one would be above the law, not even the king.

Henry III followed King John. He met with a group of nobles who advised him. Eventually, the group increased in size and power. It began to include representatives of the common people. By the late 1300s this group had become a **legislature**, or a lawmaking body. It became known as **Parliament**. For a while, Parliament and the monarch cooperated with each other. However, in the mid-1600s, conflicts began between the two. In 1688 Parliament removed King James II from the throne. They placed his daughter Mary and her husband William on the throne. This peaceful change in power became known as the Glorious Revolution. It showed that Parliament was stronger than the monarch. In 1689, Parliament drew up the English Bill of Rights. The document stated that the monarch could not put Parliament's laws on hold. It said that the monarch could not place taxes or create an army without the consent of Parliament. It also said that members of Parliament would be elected. Citizens gained the right to a fair trial by a jury. Finally, the document outlawed cruel and unusual punishments.

At first, England had no written laws. The decisions of courts became the basis of laws. When judges were deciding a case, they would look for a **precedent**, or a ruling in an earlier case that was similar. The judge would then make a consistent ruling. This system of law became known as **common law**. It was based on court decisions rather than on written laws. Many of the laws in the United States are based on English common law.

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## Chapter 2, Section 1 (continued)

6. What was common law based on?

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### • **Bringing the English Heritage to America** (page 30)

In the 1600s and 1700s, England was setting up colonies in America. A **colony** is a group of people in one place who are ruled by a parent country elsewhere. Early colonists in America were loyal to England. The first permanent English settlement in North America was Jamestown. The Virginia Company founded it in 1607 in what is now Virginia. The Virginia Company was made up of a group of English merchants who had a **charter** from King James I. A charter was a document that gave land and the authority to set up colonial governments. The charter also granted the colonists all the rights that they had as English citizens.

Jamestown was governed by a governor and a council appointed by the Virginia Company. In 1619, the colonists chose two representatives from each county to meet with the governor and the council. These representatives were called burgesses. They made up the House of Burgesses, which was a lawmaking body. It was the start of self-government in the American colonies.

In 1620 the Pilgrims, a new group of colonists, came to America. They settled in Plymouth, in what is now Massachusetts. The Pilgrims arrived in America on the Mayflower. While they were on the ship, they realized that they would need rules to govern themselves. They signed a written plan of government called the Mayflower Compact. A **compact** is an agreement among a group of people. The Mayflower Compact stated that the government would set up just laws for the good of the colony. The people who signed the compact promised to obey these laws. The Mayflower Compact set up a direct democracy. It allowed all men to vote and called for majority rule.

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## Chapter 2, Section 1 (continued)

7. Why was the development of the House of Burgesses important?

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• **Early Colonial Governments** (*page 31*)

More colonies were established in America after Jamestown and Plymouth. Each colony set up its own government. Each colony had a governor. The governor was either elected by the colonists or appointed by the English monarch. Each colony had a legislature. Free adult males elected the members of the legislature. Most legislatures were modeled after the English Parliament.

The colonial governments eventually took on more responsibility. The English monarch and Parliament were paying attention to other matters at home. England became known as Great Britain in 1707, when the country united with Scotland. The colonists soon became used to taking care of themselves and making their own decisions.

8. Why did the American colonies eventually take on more responsibility and make more decisions on their own?

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