

The Visionaries

Mayflower Compact (1620)

Freedom
Opportunity
Representation
Equality

*** How do the Puritans envision America? ***

After severe storms and seasickness, the Pilgrims sighted the Cape Cod coast of Massachusetts, far north of the site to which they were granted settling privileges by the Virginia Company. The absence of valid rights caused uncertainty, so in an effort to hold the tiny band together, the leaders persuaded forty-one male passengers to sign a pledge known as the Mayflower Compact.

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IN THE NAME OF GOD, AMEN.

We, whose names are underwritten, the Loyal Subjects of our dear Sovereign Lord King James, by the Grace of God, of Great Britain, France, and Ireland, King, Defender of the Faith. Having undertaken for the Glory of God, and Advancement of the Christian Faith, and the Honour of our King and Country, a Voyage to plant the first Colony in the northern Parts of Virginia; Do by these Presents, solemnly and mutually, in the Presence of God and one another, covenant and combine ourselves together into a civil Body Politick, for our better Ordering and Preservation, and Furtherance of the Ends aforesaid: And by Virtue hereof do enact, constitute, and frame, such just and equal Laws, Ordinances, Acts, Constitutions, and Officers, from time to time, as shall be thought most meet and convenient for the general Good of the Colony; unto which we promise all due Submission and Obedience.

IN WITNESS whereof we have hereunto subscribed our names at Cape-Cod the eleventh of November, in the Reign of our Sovereign Lord King James, of England, France, and Ireland, the eighteenth, and of Scotland the fifty-fourth, Anno Domini; 1620.

For each visionary, annotate for their vision of a new nation founded in these FORE values.

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Thomas Paine, Excerpt from "Common Sense" (1776)

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*** How does Thomas Paine envision America? ***

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Thomas Paine utilized many persuasions in his lengthy argument for why the American colonies should separate from Great Britain. It was published anonymously 6 months before the Declaration was signed and became an immediate sensation, selling upwards of 120,000 copies in 1776. It was distributed widely and read aloud throughout the colonies. This excerpt comes from the first part which outlines ideal governments in general.

Society in every state is a blessing, but Government, even in its best state, is but a necessary evil; in its worst state an intolerable one: for when we suffer, or are exposed to the same miseries by a government, which we might expect in a country without government, our calamity is heightened by reflecting that we furnish the means by which we suffer. Government, like dress, is the badge of lost innocence. For were the impulses of conscience clear, uniform and irresistibly obeyed, man would need no other lawgiver; but that not being the case, he finds it necessary to surrender up a part of his property to furnish means for the protection of the rest.

In order to gain a clear and just idea of the design and end of government, let us suppose a small number of persons settled in some **sequestered** part of the earth, unconnected with the rest; they will then represent the first peopling of any country, or of the world. In this state of natural liberty, society will be their first thought.

Necessity, like a gravitating power, would soon form our newly arrived emigrants into society and render the obligations of law and government unnecessary while they remained perfectly just to each other. But as nothing but Heaven is **impregnable** to **vice**, it will unavoidably happen that they will begin to relax in their duty and attachment to each other: and this **remissness** will point out the necessity of establishing some form of government to supply the defect of moral **virtue**.

Some convenient tree will afford them a State House, under the branches of which the whole Colony may assemble to **deliberate** on public matters. It is more than probable that their first laws will be enforced by no other penalty than public **disesteem**. In this first parliament, every man by natural right will have a seat.

But as the Colony increases, the public concerns will increase likewise, and the distance at which the members may be separated, will render it too inconvenient for all of them to meet on every occasion as at first. This will point out the convenience of their consenting to leave the legislative part to be managed by a select number chosen from the whole body who will act in the same manner as the whole body would act were they present.

If the colony continue increasing, it will become necessary to **augment** the number of representatives, and that the interest of every part of the colony may be attended to, it will be found best to divide the whole into convenient parts, each part sending its proper number. So that the elected might never form to themselves an interest separate from the electors, **prudence** will point out the **propriety** of having elections often: because their **fideliy** to the public will be secured by the prudent reflection of not making a rod for themselves.

And as this frequent interchange will establish a common interest with every part of the community, they will mutually and naturally support each other, and on this depends the strength of the government, and the happiness of the governed.

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Excerpts from the Declaration of Independence
(1776)

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*** How does Thomas Jefferson envision America? ***

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Written most entirely by a young Thomas Jefferson, this Declaration borrowed heavily the ideas already established among Enlightened thinkers, including John Locke and Thomas Paine, as well as English law. Jefferson, who owned hundreds of slaves, originally wrote language blaming the crown for the existence of slavery in the colonies, but was removed as part of Congress's edits.

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When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal **station** to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which **compel** them to the separation.

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are **endowed** by their Creator with certain **unalienable** Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.--That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, --That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government... **Prudence**, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath be **shrewd**.

[Long list of the "repeated injuries and usurpations" of the king]

We been wanting in attentions to our British **brethren**. We have warned them from time to time of attempts by their legislature to extend an **unwarrantable** jurisdiction over us. We have appealed to their native justice and **magnanimity**, and we have conjured them by the ties of our common kindred to disavow these **usurpations**. They too have been deaf to the voice of justice and of **consanguinity**. We must, therefore, **acquiesce** in the necessity, which denounces our Separation, and hold them, as we hold the rest of mankind, Enemies in War, in Peace Friends.

We, therefore, the Representatives of the united States of America, in General Congress, Assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world, do, in the Name, and by Authority of the good People of these Colonies, solemnly publish and declare, that these United Colonies are, and of Right ought to be Free and Independent States; that they are **Absolved** from all Allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain, is and ought to be totally dissolved; and that as Free and Independent States, they have full Power to impose War, conclude Peace, contract Alliances, establish Commerce, and to do all other Acts and Things which Independent States may of right do. And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of divine **Providence**, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor.

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Preamble of the U.S. Constitution (1787)

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*** How do the Constitution Conventioneers envision America? ***

The Preamble was placed in the Constitution during the last days of the Constitutional Convention by the Committee on Style, which wrote its final draft. It was not proposed or discussed on the floor of the convention beforehand. The initial wording of the preamble did not refer to the people of the United States, rather, it referred to people of the various states, which was the norm of the time. The change was made out of necessity, as the Constitution provided that whenever the popularly elected ratifying conventions of nine states gave their approval, it would go into effect. The Preamble serves solely as an introduction, and does not assign powers to the federal government, nor does it provide specific limitations on government action. Due to the Preamble's limited nature, no court has ever used it as a decisive factor in case decisions. It can be likened to the U.S's mission statement.

Noted

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We the People of the United States,
in Order to form a more perfect Union,
establish Justice,
insure **domestic Tranquility**,
provide for the common defence,
promote the general **Welfare**,
and secure the Blessings of Liberty to
ourselves and our **Posterity**,
do ordain and establish this Constitution
for the United States of America.