

Unit 1 Brief Biographies

John Adams (1735-1829) Adams was the second president of the United States. He was a lawyer, revolutionary leader, and leading Federalist. As a member of the Continental Congress, Adams served on the committee to draft the Declaration of Independence. He was minister to the Netherlands and Great Britain. Adams was elected vice president in 1789 and president in 1796.

Aristotle (384-322) Aristotle was a student of the philosopher Plato and the teacher of Alexander the Great. Considered one of the great philosophers in the Western intellectual tradition, he wrote treatises on subjects as diverse as government, logic, rhetoric, ethics, poetry, and biology. Aristotle continued an effort begun by Plato to place objects and ideas in categories based on similar properties. After Alexander's death, Aristotle fled Athens.

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Roger Bacon (1214-1294) Bacon was an English empirical philosopher who focused on sensation as the primary method of acquiring knowledge. One of first advocates of modern scientific method to study the world, he also urged theologians to study science. He advocated reading the Bible and other texts in original languages.

William Blackstone (1723-1780) William Blackstone (originally pronounced "blextun") was an unsuccessful lawyer who became a lecturer on law at Oxford. He wrote *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, placing the history of English common law into four categories: rights of persons, rights of things, private wrongs (torts), and public wrongs (crimes). Written to be understood by non-lawyers, this work became an important source of legal information for the American colonists. Blackstone, among others, famously articulated "the Rights of Englishmen" held dear by American colonists. Statutory as well as common law, he argued, guarantees the sanctity of an Englishman's life, liberty, and property. These rights include due process of law, the attorney-client confidentiality, equality before the law, habeas corpus, the right to confront accusers, and forbidding bills of attainder and forced self-incrimination.

John Calvin (1509-1564) Calvin was a French Protestant theologian who also trained as lawyer. He was a devout Catholic before converting to Protestantism sometime between 1528 and 1533. Calvin published *Institution Christianae Religionis* in 1536 (republished as *Institutes of the Christian Religion* in 1541) as an introductory textbook of Protestant faith. He attacked the teachings of Roman Catholicism.

Charles I (1600-1649) King of Britain and Ireland (1625-1649). Charles believed in the divine right of kings and absolute power of the monarch. He clashed with the House of Commons and ruled seven years without Parliament. Charles was forced to assent to the Petition of Right in 1628. His struggle with Parliament led to Civil War and his execution for high treason.

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Charles II (1630-1685) King of Britain and Ireland (1660-1685). Son of Charles I, he restored the monarchy in 1660 but continued to have problems with Parliament. He agreed to the Habeas Corpus Act in 1678.

Cicero (106-43) Marcus Tullius Cicero was an orator, a lawyer, a politician, and a philosopher whose life coincided with the decline and fall of the Roman Republic. Elected to each of the major offices in Roman government, including senator and consul, Cicero was exiled in 58 BC. During his eleven-year exile he wrote extensively about politics and philosophy, much of his work focusing on the defense and improvement of the Roman Republic. Cicero's *De Officiis*, a profound meditation on morality and moral duty, including moral principles as applied to public life, deeply influenced Western civilization since its writing in 44 BC. *De Officiis* was so influential that when the printing press was invented, it was the second book to be printed after the Bible. Cicero, echoing the views of Stoic philosophy, argued for self-restraint and limits to action for the sake of self-interest. He argued that what is honorable and what is expedient cannot ever rightly be said to conflict. What is honorable must always be chosen, and some actions, even to save the state, are so morally abhorrent that they must be rejected. In the sixteenth century Machiavelli directly contradicted these ideas and argued that to establish, maintain, and expand their power, rulers must be taught "how not to be good."

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Nicolaus Copernicus (1473-1543) A Polish astronomer and mathematician, Copernicus advocated the view that Earth rotates on an axis and makes a yearly revolution around a stationary sun. This view marked the beginning of the scientific revolution. The Catholic Church rejected his scientific theories.

William Dawes (1745-1799) Dawes was a tradesman and was active in the Revolutionary movement in Boston. He gave the warning, with Paul Revere, before the battles of Lexington and Concord. Dawes served in the Continental Army.

Rene Descartes (1596-1650) This French mathematician, who invented analytic geometry, was also a scientist and philosopher—he was considered to be the father of modern philosophy.

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Descartes sought to discover truth through systematic doubt. He believed that if one were "a real seeker after truth, it is necessary that at least once in your life to doubt, as far as possible, all things." Descartes gave us the famous Latin phrase, "cogito ergo sum" (I think, therefore I am).

Elizabeth I (1533-1603) The third monarch to follow Henry VIII, she was his daughter and re-established the Protestant church in England after her half-sister Mary had taken the kingdom back to Catholicism. Elizabeth was a long-lived and immensely popular monarch, who sought and took advice to make England one of the most prosperous and powerful countries in the world. Science and culture also flourished during her reign.

Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790) Franklin was the oldest delegate to the Philadelphia Convention. With the possible exception of George Washington, Franklin was the best-known man in America. Born into a poor family, Franklin became an inventor, scientist, diplomat, and publisher. His *Poor Richard's Almanac* was read nationwide. His career in public service was long and varied, and included service as ambassador to England and France and as governor of Pennsylvania. At the Philadelphia Convention, Franklin was a compromiser, using wit to bring delegates together. A staunch advocate of colonial rights, he helped draft the Declaration of Independence and the Treaty of Paris (1783). He played an important role in creating the Great Compromise. He favored a strong national government and argued that the Framers should trust the judgment of the people. Although he was in poor health in 1787, he missed few sessions, being carried to and from the meeting place in a special chair. Although he did not agree with everything in the Constitution, he believed that no other convention could come up with a better document.

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Galilei Galileo (1564-1642) Galileo was a Tuscan mathematician, astronomer, and physicist who championed Copernicus and his view that Earth revolves around the sun. His empirical approach to science broke tradition with Aristotle. Albert Einstein called him the "father of modern science." Galileo spent his later years under house arrest on orders of the Italian Inquisition, a Catholic Church tribunal created to protect the church from heresy.

Alexander Hamilton (1755-1804) Hamilton was a senior aide-de-camp to General Washington and an artillery captain during the Revolutionary War. He was a delegate from New York to the Philadelphia Convention and one of three authors of *The Federalist*, written to urge ratification of the U.S. Constitution. He later served as the first secretary of the treasury, put the nation's finances on a firm footing and advocated a strong national government.

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Henry VIII (1491-1547) The second monarch of the house of Tudor, Henry severed the Church of England from the Roman Catholic Church and established the king as head of the Church of England. Famous for six marriages, Henry made the royal court a center of scholarly and musical innovation.

Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) Thomas Hobbes, a philosopher of materialism, fled to France during English civil war (1642-1651, which pitted Parliament against the Crown), where he wrote *Leviathan*. This book argued that humans without government live in a "state of nature," which is a "state of war" of against all. Life in such conditions is "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short." Thus in a state of nature all fear violent death, and violent death is what people fear most. To avoid violent death, they agree to set up a state with strict authority and the power to protect life. People agree to leave this state of nature through "social contract" and to give all power to the *Leviathan* state, which Hobbes characterized as a "mortal god." Hobbes was accused of atheism for the views he expressed in *Leviathan*, where Hobbes pilloried various theological ideas. The English Parliament asserted that *Leviathan* helped cause the plague of 1665 and the Great Fire of 1666. The book was placed on the Index of Forbidden Books by the Catholic Church because it undermined the theory of divine right of kings.

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James I (1566-1625) King of Scots (1567-1625). King of England (1603-1625). James was son of Mary, Queen of Scots. He sought to assert the divine right of kings.

John Jay (1745-1829) Jay was the first chief justice of the United States, serving from 1789 to 1795. He wrote New York's first constitution. Jay served as president of the Continental Congress and as minister to Spain and England. He was a strong supporter of the Constitution and one of the authors of *The Federalist*. Jay was appointed chief justice by President Washington but resigned in 1795 when he was elected governor of New York.

Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826) Thomas Jefferson was the third president of the United States. He was a scientist, philosopher, diplomat, and architect. He supported the revolutionary cause and served as governor of Virginia. Between June 11 and June 28, 1776, Jefferson wrote the initial draft of the Declaration of Independence, which was amended by John Adams and Benjamin Franklin and submitted to Congress. Jefferson supported the Constitution but was critical of its lack of a bill of rights. He was the first secretary of state in Washington's cabinet and the leader of the Republican Party. Jefferson was elected vice president in 1796 and was chosen president four years later. He was reelected to the presidency in 1804.

King of England John (1167-1216) King of England (1199-1216). John is most well known for having been forced by the barons to sign the Magna Carta in June 1215. His reign was marked

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by the loss of territory to Philip II of France, which contributed to the dissatisfaction of the barons.

Johannes Kepler (1571-1630) A German mathematician and astronomer, Kepler believed that God created the world according to a plan knowable through natural reason. He formulated theories of planetary motion and "laws" built on Copernicus's theories and laid the foundation for Newton's theory of gravity in the next century. Kepler served as imperial mathematician to Emperor Rudolph II and was allowed to practice the Lutheran faith.

John Locke (1632-1704) John Locke, a physician and philosopher, worked with famous scientists, including Robert Boyle and Robert Hooke. In contrast to Hobbes, Locke used state of nature and social contract theory to justify limited government and the preservation of individual rights, particularly life, liberty, and property. Locke is sometimes called "America's philosopher" because his *Second Treatise of Government* (1690) was widely read by the colonists and important ideas found in it (as well as in works of English republican writers) are found in the Declaration of Independence, especially his theories of natural rights and his defense of violent revolution after "a long train of abuses" of power by rulers. Two verbatim phrases of Locke's are found in the Declaration.

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Martin Luther (1483-1546) A German monk and theologian considered to be founder of Protestantism, Luther argued that the Bible, not the pope, was the source of all religious authority and that individuals can attain salvation through faith alone, unmediated by the church. Luther translated the Bible into vernacular German, making it accessible to laypeople. He also wrote hymns that developed the tradition of congregational singing and set the pattern for Protestant clerical marriage.

Niccolo di Machiavelli (1469-1527) Niccolo di Bernardo dei Machiavelli was an Italian political philosopher and diplomat. A central figure in the political Renaissance, he wrote *The Prince* and discourses on Livy. He is most famous for *The Prince*, which describes how political leaders can get, keep, and expand political power. Machiavelli believed that political ends justify whatever means—including cruelty—are required to achieve them. He famously observed that it is safer for a prince to be feared than loved.

James Madison (1751-1836) The "Father of the Constitution" was born to a wealthy Virginia family. He was taught at home and in private schools, then graduated from the College of New Jersey. While deciding whether to become a lawyer or minister, Madison became involved in the revolutionary cause, thereby entering state and local politics. His poor health kept him from serving in the military. In 1780, Madison was chosen to serve in the Continental Congress, where he played a major role. He was one of the most influential voices calling for a constitutional convention. He came to the Philadelphia Convention with a plan for the new government, took extensive notes on the proceedings, spoke more than 150 times, and worked tirelessly on various committees. As one of the authors of *The Federalist*, Madison was also a key figure in the battle for ratification. Following the convention, Madison served as a member of the U.S. House of Representatives, helping to frame the Bill of Rights and organize the executive department. Under Jefferson, Madison served as secretary of state. He then succeeded Jefferson as president. In retirement, Madison continued to speak out on public issues.

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George Mason (1725-1792) Mason was the author, in 1776, of the Virginia Declaration of Rights. He was a delegate from Virginia to the Philadelphia Convention but refused to sign the proposed Constitution because it contained no bill of rights. He argued against ratification for same reason.

George Mason (1725-1792) George Mason wrote the Virginia Declaration of Rights. Later, as a delegate to the Philadelphia Convention (*see* Lessons 9-12) Mason led the movement against ratification of the U.S. Constitution because it lacked a bill of rights (*see* Lesson 13). Mason did not want government in America to become like government in England, and he believed declarations of rights as limits on government were one way to prevent this.

Montesquieu (1689-1755) (Charles-Louis de Secondat, Baron de La Brede et de Montesquieu) Montesquieu was a French lawyer, nobleman, author, and political philosopher. He is recognized as one of greatest thinkers of the Enlightenment. Montesquieu first gained fame for a satire, *The Persian Letters*, in 1721, which pointed out the absurdities of modern European, especially French, life. He also published *Considerations of the Causes of the Greatness of the Romans and of their Decline* (anonymously) in 1734. His masterpiece, *The Spirit of the Laws* (1748), greatly influenced political thought in Europe and America and was placed on the Index of Forbidden Books by Catholic Church because of its "liberal" views.

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Thomas More (1478-1534) More was an English barrister and politician who was imprisoned for advocating a decrease in proposed appropriations for King Henry VII. He later helped King Henry VIII repudiate Martin Luther. As speaker of House of Commons he also helped establish the parliamentary privilege of free speech. Convicted of treason in 1534 for failing to recognize King Henry VIII as head of Church of England, More was imprisoned again and then beheaded.

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He was canonized by the Catholic Church in 1886 and declared a saint by Pope Pius XI in 1935. More coined the word utopia for his controversial novel of that title, published in 1516.

Isaac Newton (1643-1727) An English mathematician and physicist, Newton was one of greatest thinkers of his or any generation. He was influenced by Descartes, laid the foundation for differential and integral calculus, and is considered the founder of modern physical science. His most notable contributions were in optics and universal gravitation, although he did not invent this idea. Newton opposed attempts by King James II to make universities Catholic institutions.

James Otis (1725-1783) James Otis was born in West Barnstable, Massachusetts, in 1725. He was the brother of Mercy Otis Warren. He had once been an advocate general in the vice admiralty courts charged with prosecuting smugglers, but resigned his post to represent Boston merchants in the effort to prevent general writs from being reissued. Otis argued that general writs violated the colonists' natural rights and that any act of Parliament contrary to those rights was void. Otis lost the case and the writs were reissued. John Adams, then a young lawyer, later said that Otis's argument was the first act of colonial resistance to British policies. Otis became an instant celebrity and was elected to the Massachusetts legislature (called the general court). He played a prominent role in revolutionary politics until 1769, when a British customs official beat him on the head with a cane in retaliation for a newspaper article Otis had written. Otis's head injuries left him mentally unstable and ended his political career.

Thomas Paine (1737-1809) Author and political theorist. Born in England, he came to America in November, 1774. In early 1776, he published the pamphlet *Common Sense* which stirred many Americans to the revolutionary cause. During the war, his pamphlet, *The Crisis*, helped support the Revolution and encouraged the soldiers in the Continental Army.

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Paul Revere (1735-1818) Silversmith and revolutionary patriot. Leader of the Boston Sons of Liberty. Principal express rider for the Boston Committee of Safety, spreading news of revolutionary activities, including his famous ride of April 18, 1775, warning of the forthcoming attack of British troops.

Adam Smith (1723-1790) A Scottish economist who popularized the theory that rational economic self-interest in a free market leads to overall economic well-being. Smith's early works focused on ethics and charity, which Smith argued were part of self-interest. In *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* Smith wrote, "Man has almost constant occasion for the help of his brethren, and it is in vain for him to expect it from their benevolence only." Smith also argued that the American colonies were too expensive for the British Empire to keep.

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George Washington (1732-1799) George Washington was born in Virginia in 1732. He grew up there on several plantations along the Potomac and Rappahannock Rivers. He was not particularly well educated, but did learn surveying. In 1753, he began his service to the country, which was to continue throughout his life, despite his desire to live a more private existence. Washington's efforts as commander of the Continental Army are well known. After the Treaty of Paris was signed in 1783, Washington returned to his home, Mount Vernon. Although he did not initially want to attend the Philadelphia Convention, his friends convinced him that his presence was necessary. He was elected president of the convention but spoke little. His presence and approval, however, were important. Nearly everyone assumed that Washington would be the first president of the United States, which, of course, he was, serving from 1789-1797.

William The Conqueror (1027-1087) First Norman king in England. Introduced the feudal order to the old Anglo-Saxon system of government.