

Jean-Jacques Rousseau Excerpts

Preview the Text

- We will be “Text Coding” the reading for our first read.
 - ★ (Star): Key idea or main point
 - ? (Question Mark): Something you found confusing or want to discuss
 - → (Arrow): Connection to something you have learned before
 - ! (Exclamation Point): Surprising or interesting fact

Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778)

Rousseau was a French philosopher and author during the Enlightenment. He saw current governments as corrupt. The following is an excerpt from his most famous work, The Social Contract, where he talks about his idea for government.

Document 1 Source: Jean-Jacque Rousseau, “The Social Contract,” written in 1762

Man is born free, and everywhere he is in chains. This is because Man has given up his freedom to many masters (kings) to **preserve** his life. This primitive (ancient) condition can continue no longer. The problem now is to find a form of government that will defend and protect the life and goods of each member while still allowing each member to obey himself alone and thus remain as free as before.

The Social Contract provides the solution to this fundamental problem. The masses must unite together. This union of all people together is called the **general will**. Each person must put himself and all his power under the common control of the general will and must obey whatever the general will decide. Each member has the same power and is thus an equally important part of the whole.

With this **Social Contract**, people keep as much of their natural freedom as possible. By giving their freedom to everyone, they give it to no one in particular. This is because, in the general will, each person has the same power that they have given. (Each person gives their freedom to the general will but also becomes a part of it and shares the same power as everyone else.)

Published 1762

Preserve: Maintain in its original state

General Will: The collective will of a community, or the will of the people as a whole.

Social Contract: An agreement among individuals to create and obey a government in exchange for the protection of their rights and maintenance of social order.

Document 2 Source: Excerpt from the Declaration of Independence (July 4, 1776)

Preamble: “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 (begin) 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 (create) new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness.”

Grievances Against the King: “The history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations (takeovers), all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute **Tyranny** over these States... He has refused his **Assent to Laws**, the most wholesome and necessary for the public good... He has dissolved Representative Houses repeatedly, for opposing with manly firmness his invasions on the rights of the people.”

Unalienable Rights: Rights that cannot be taken away or given up.

Consent of the Governed: The idea that the government's power comes from the agreement of the people it governs

Tyranny: Cruel and oppressive government or rule.

Assent to laws is the act of approving or agreeing to a proposed law

Document 3 Source: United States Constitution: Article II Section 1

Article II, Section 1 of the U.S. Constitution outlines how the president and vice president are elected. It explains the process for electing these officials, including the use of electors from each state, known as the **Electoral College**, who cast votes for presidential candidates. It also describes the requirements for a person to be president, such as being a natural-born citizen, at least 35 years old, and having lived in the U.S. for at least 14 years.

The **Electoral College** is a system used to elect the president of the United States. Each state gets a certain number of electors based on its population, and these electors vote for the president on behalf of their state. The candidate who receives the majority of electoral votes wins the presidency.

The electors will meet in their states and vote for two people, but at least one of those people must not live in the same state as the electors. They will make a list of all the people who received votes, along with the number of votes each person got. They will sign the list, seal it, and send it to the seat of the U.S. government, addressed to the President of the Senate.

The President of the Senate will open all the sealed certificates in front of the Senate and House of Representatives, and the votes will be counted. The person with the most votes will become President, as long as they have more than half of the total electoral votes. If there is more than one person with a majority and they have the same number of votes, then the House of Representatives will choose the President by voting. If no one has a majority, the House will choose the President from the top five people on the list. When choosing the President, each state gets one vote, and there must be members from two-thirds of the states present. A majority of the states is needed to make a choice.

After the President is chosen, the person with the second-highest number of votes becomes the Vice President. If two or more people have the same number of votes for Vice President, the Senate will choose the Vice President by voting.