



Keeping the Republic

American Heritage Discussion Series for Learners with Littles

Essential Question

How can we maintain our constitutional republic?

Civic Virtue in Revolutionary Era
State Constitutions

Tocqueville's Habits of the
Hearts and Minds of Men (and
Women)

Bowling Alone

Love Your Enemies

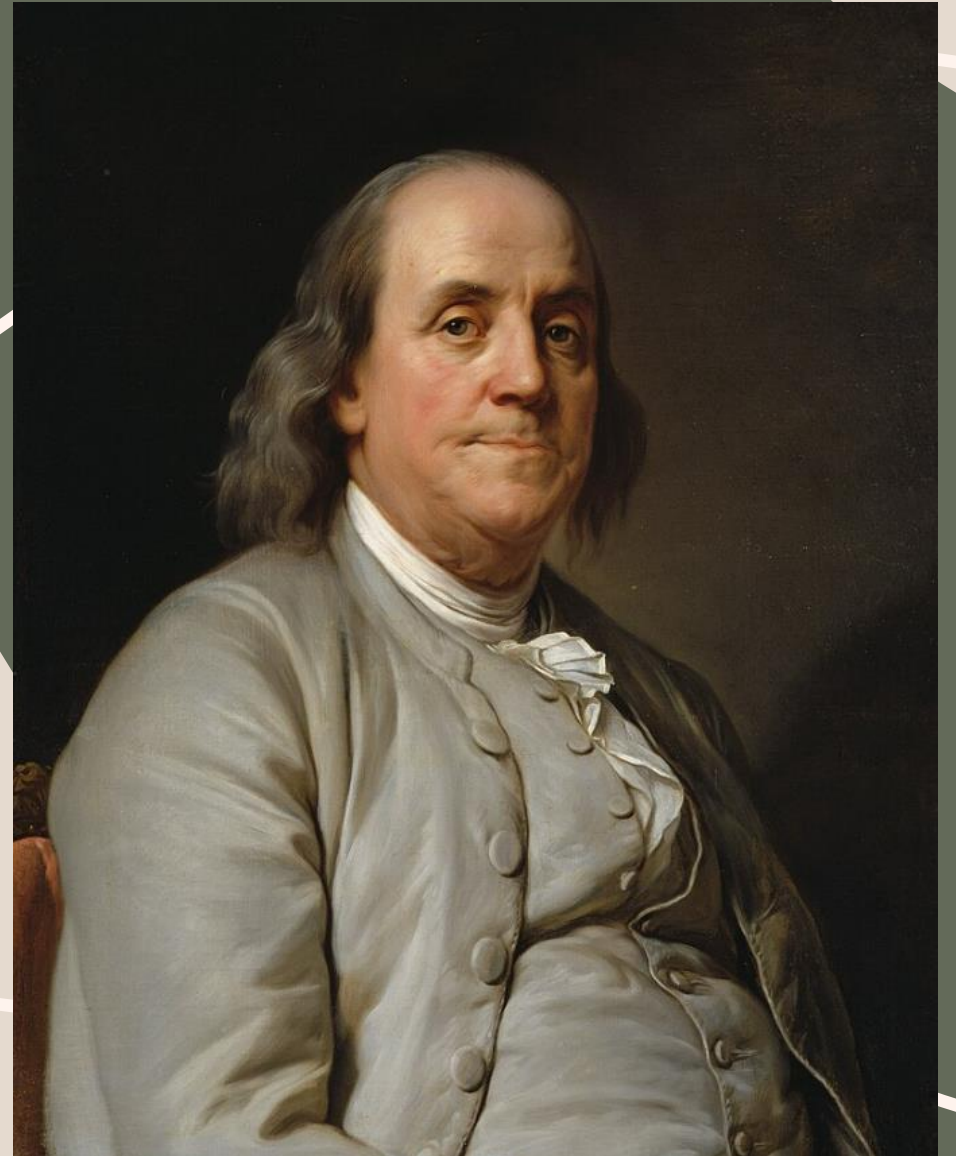
“A republic, madam, if you can keep it.”

Mrs. Powell asked Benjamin Franklin as he left the Constitutional Convention:

“What have you given us, Dr. Franklin? A monarchy or a republic?”

Benjamin Franklin replied:

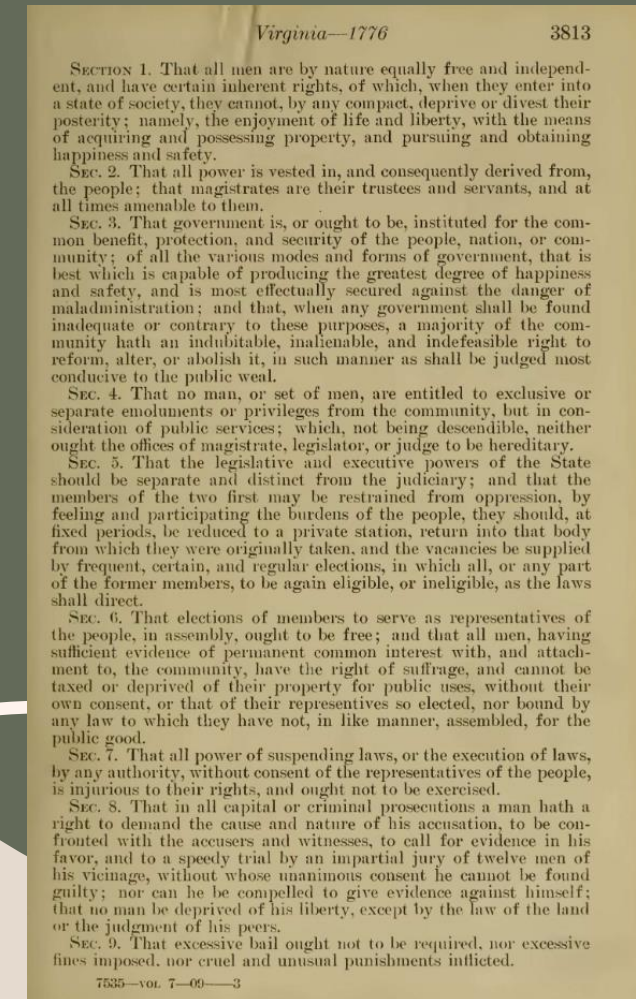
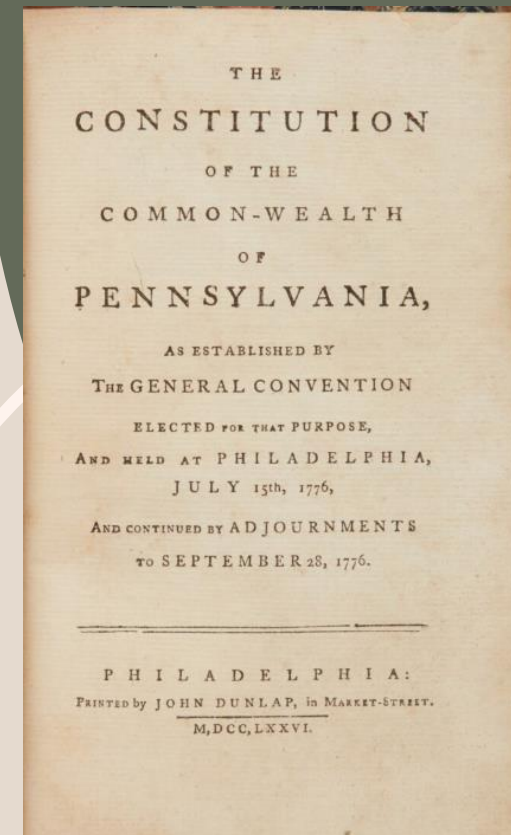
“A republic, Madam, if you can keep it.”



Civic Virtue in Revolutionary Era State Constitutions

Essential Question: What is the significance of emphasizing civic virtue at the creation of the new form of self-government?

- The state constitution excerpts identify the blessings of liberty as the product of upholding a variety of virtues. Why?



Tocqueville to Corcelle, September 17, 1853

Essential Question: According to Tocqueville, how is democracy maintained?

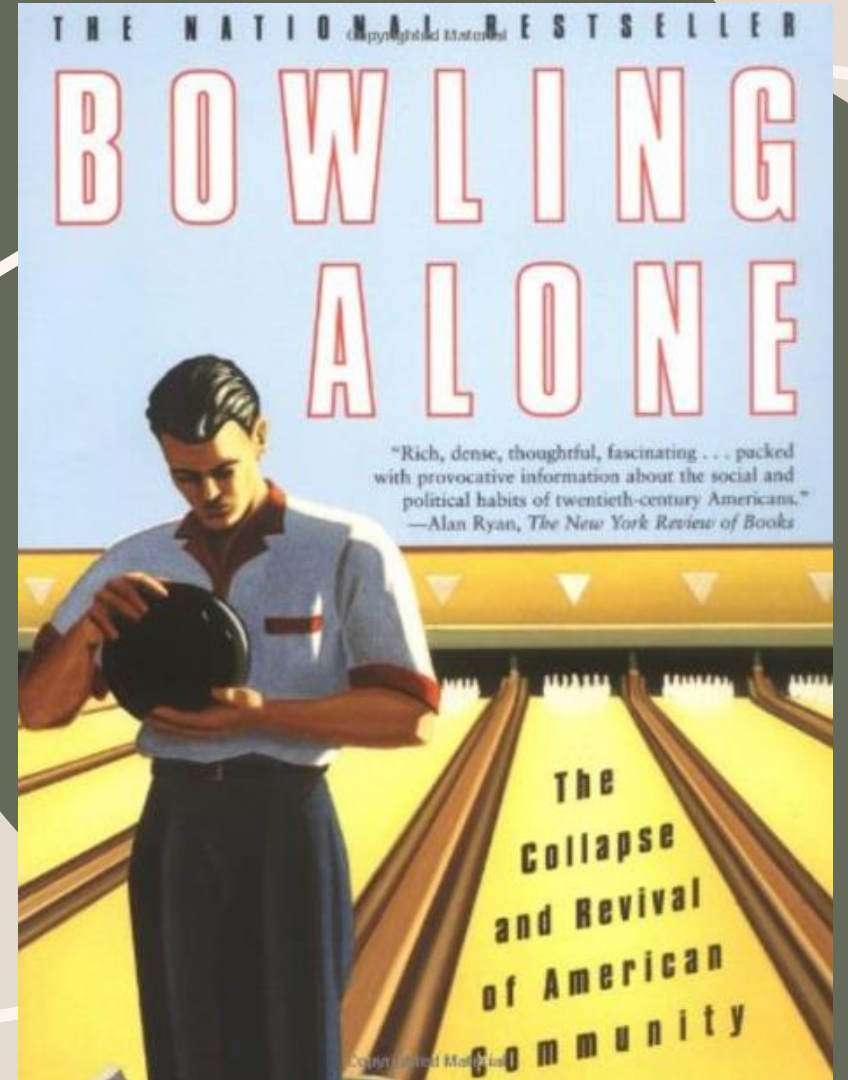
- Tocqueville, the author of *Democracy in America*, writes to his peer 20 years after the publication of his work, saying that democratic societies are not created by laws, but by sentiments, beliefs, ideas, and habits of the hearts and minds of men. Do you agree with him? Why or why not?
- In your opinion, how important are laws in maintaining democratic government compared to beliefs, ideas, and habits of the hearts and minds of men (and women)?
- What are the habits of the hearts and minds of men Tocqueville observed among Americans in 1831 that he believed fostered democracy?
- How can we foster these habits of heart and the mind today both collectively and personally?



Summary of Robert Putnam's *Bowling Alone*

Essential Question: Why is social capital important for maintaining a republic?

- What is social capital? How does it relate to maintaining a constitutional republic?
- What are the benefits and draw backs of bonding communities? What are the benefits of bridging communities? Why are both important?
- Why has social capital declined in recent decades? Why is this concerning?
- How can we increase social capital today? How does this help keep our republic?



Excerpt on contempt in American society from Arthur Brooks' *Love Your Enemies*

Essential Question: How can we improve our public discourse across our differences? Why is this important?

- Why is widespread contempt dangerous?
- What are the five rules the author proposes? What are some ways to get outside of our bubbles?
- How can improving our public discourse help keep our republic?

