SS.7.C.1.2 Benchmark Clarification 1: Students will identify the important ideas contained in the Magna Carta, English Bill of Rights, Mayflower Compact, and Common Sense.

The Magna Carta is a document that was developed by English citizens to require King John of England to protect certain rights of the people and to limit the king’s powers. The document forced the king to observe the laws of the land, which allowed for the citizens to gain liberties they did not have before the document was signed. The Magna Carta provided the idea of a limited monarchy. This means that the king shares power with an elected legislature and agrees to be bound by a constitution or a set of laws. Additionally, three other ideas came out of the Magna Carta: writ of habeas corpus, rule by constitutional law (the constitution governs all people within a country), and the development of common law. Although these goals of the document were not achieved, the Magna Carta became a symbol that, even in a monarchy, the king could be required to follow the law.

The English Bill of Rights is a document that was written with the purpose of protecting peoples’ rights and stated that every citizen possesses individual rights which are unbreakable. The rights in the document are enumerated, or listed and include the right to bear arms in defense and the right to petition the monarch. The right to petition the monarch means that citizens have the right to communicate with the monarch to make requests about what the monarch might do for the people. This document also focused on the importance of having the consent of the people in government.

The Mayflower Compact was a document to set up a government and write down the first set of laws for the settlers who arrived in Plymouth, Massachusetts. This document introduced the idea of self-government. When this group of people left England, their goal was not to avoid having a government but to create a government that worked better for their goals. They wanted a government that relied on the consent of the governed, had fair and equal laws for all, and included a social contract. A social contract means that the people give their consent to being governed and the government protects the people and make sure that laws are fair and equal for all. This document established one of America’s first democratic governments.

Common Sense by Thomas Paine is a pamphlet that encouraged colonists to seek independence from England and to move toward self-government. The pamphlet also accused King George III of England of tyranny, challenged his power and blamed him for the unfair treatment the colonists were receiving from England in the 1700’s. The pamphlet also stressed the importance of having a written constitution with a set of rules that everyone would have to follow and a government that could not become abusive.

**Common Sense** - a pamphlet published by Thomas Paine in 1776 to convince the American colonists to support becoming independent from England

**English Bill of Rights** - a government document that expanded the powers of the English Parliament and expanded the rights of the people, as well as further limited the rights of the king; written by the members of the English Parliament in 1689

**limited monarchy** - a system of government in which the king or queen shares authority with an elected legislature and agrees to be bound by a constitution or a set of laws, also known as a constitutional monarchy

**Magna Carta** - a government document that limited the power of the king of England and protected the rights of the nobility; written by the English nobles in 1215

**Mayflower Compact** - an agreement between individuals that created a government that would provide order and protect the rights of the colonists; written by a group of English Puritans in Massachusetts in 1620

**self-government** - popular or representative system where the people create and run their own government