

Handout C: Graphic Organizer: Colonial Charters

Directions:

As you review the excerpts from colonial charters, write clause numbers (or paragraph numbers from the excerpts provided) in the appropriate cells. For the Later Laws column, place a check in each row if you think later laws included a similar guarantee.

| Principle | Virginia, 1606 | Maryland, 1632 | Massachusetts, 1641 | Pennsylvania, 1682 | Later Laws? |
|--|----------------|----------------|---------------------|--------------------|-------------|
| Rights of Englishmen; protection against arbitrary laws; due process | | | | | |
| Laws made by representative assembly | | | | | |
| Protection of property rights | | | | | |
| Free speech in courts, meetings, and legislative assemblies | | | | | |
| Equal justice for all | | | | | |
| Jury trial, fair trial | | | | | |
| Reasonable bails and fines | | | | | |
| Protection against cruel and unusual punishment | | | | | |
| Protection of rights of conscience and religion | | | | | |

Debrief Questions:

1. Based on your review of excerpts of these four charters, what rights do you believe are included in the phrase “traditional rights of Englishmen”?

2. Based on your study of these excerpts, to what extent, if at all, do the most prevalent constitutional themes seem to change over time?

3. What cultural values and political institutions at this early time in the English colonies contributed to the development of an American identity?

4. To what extent do these documents foreshadow protections with which you are familiar in the twenty-first century?
