

Formative Assessment: Evaluating Evidence



Thinking historically means identifying the evidence related to a claim, assessing its validity, and corroborating it by comparing multiple sources' interpretations of events, developments, or processes.

Directions: Read the following secondary source and then answer the questions on evaluating evidence that follow. The multiple choice questions for this formative assessment are Weighted Multiple Choice (WMC) Questions. This means that there is only one *incorrect* answer, but the other 3 choices are weighted. The *best* answer is 3 points, the *second-best* answer is 2 points, and the *third-best* answer is 1 point. The *incorrect* answer is 0 points.

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Source: James Madison, Federalist No. 51, 1788. [Library of Congress](#).

In order to lay a due foundation for that separate and distinct exercise of the different powers of government, which to a certain extent is admitted on all hands to be essential to the preservation of liberty, it is evident that each department should have a will of its own;

...
But the great security against a gradual concentration of the several powers in the same department, consists in giving to those who administer each department the necessary constitutional means and personal motives to resist encroachments of the others... Ambition must be made to counteract ambition... It may be a reflection on human nature, that such devices should be necessary to control the abuses of government. But what is government itself, but the greatest of all reflections on human nature? If men were angels, no government would be necessary. If angels were to govern men, neither external nor internal controls on government would be necessary. In framing a government which is to be administered by men over men, the great difficulty lies in this: you must first enable the government to control the governed; and in the next place oblige it to control itself.



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1. Select the piece of evidence from the above document that *best* supports the claim: **America's founders favored separation of powers because they believed that people were naturally selfish.**
 - A. "In order to lay a due foundation for that separate and distinct exercise of the different powers of government, which to a certain extent is admitted on all hands to be essential to the preservation of liberty..."
 - B. "It may be a reflection on human nature, that such devices should be necessary to control the abuses of government."
 - C. "If men were angels, no government would be necessary."
 - D. "...you must first enable the government to control the governed; and in the next place oblige it to control itself."

2. Justify your choice in the space below.



1. Select the piece of evidence from the above document that *best* supports the claim: **America's founders favored separation of powers because they believed that people were naturally selfish.**
 - A. "In order to lay a due foundation for that separate and distinct exercise of the different powers of government, which to a certain extent is admitted on all hands to be essential to the preservation of liberty..." **(0 points)**
 - B. "It may be a reflection on human nature, that such devices should be necessary to control the abuses of government." **(3 points)**
 - C. "If men were angels, no government would be necessary." **(2 points)**
 - D. "...you must first enable the government to control the governed; and in the next place oblige it to control itself." **(1 point)**

2. Justify your choice in the space below.

Choice B, worth 3 points, is the best piece of evidence to support the claim that the belief in human selfishness justified the system of separation of powers. It claims that "such devices" must be put in place when one reflects "on human nature." Similarly, Choice C points out that "if men were angels," and therefore not selfish, "no government would be necessary." But since it is not as specific as Choice B, it is worth 2 points. Choice D is worth 1 point as it does state that government must "control itself" but the reasons why are not clear. Lastly, Choice A is 0 points, as it doesn't address human nature or actions' relationship to separation of powers.



1. Weighted Multiple Choice

3 points (Choice B)	2 points (Choice C)	1 point (Choice D)	0 points (Choice A)
			Subtotal: _____ / 3

2. Short Answer: Justify Your Answer

3 points	2 points	1 point	0 points
Student thoroughly justifies their choice of the <i>best</i> piece of evidence—which is worth three points as shown on the teacher key—that supports the claim.	Student thoroughly justifies their choice of either the 1 or 2 point option from the WMC question. OR Student's justification of the 3 point option needs deeper analysis.	Student's justification of their choice (either the 1 or 2 point option) lacks deep analysis.	Student either makes no attempt to justify their choice OR try to justify the 0 point option.
			Subtotal: _____ / 3

Total: _____ / 6

