B.
1. The Declaration of Independence states, “All men are created equal.”
2. All people have the inalienable rights.
3. Slavery abridges those rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

Gouverneur Morris
Handout A—Gouverneur Morris (1752–1816)
1. As a teenager, Morris’s right arm was badly burned when a pot of scalding water overturned on him. The arm was badly crippled for the rest of his life. Morris lost his left leg after a carriage accident in Philadelphia. His left ankle was caught in the spokes of a moving carriage’s wheel. Doctors amputated the leg just below the knee.
2. Aggravated by Congress’ failure to support the troops, Morris began to hint to some that the Continental Army itself might employ force if Congress did not act. In March 1783, the officers of the Continental Army assembled at a barn in Newburgh, New York. Talk of treason was in the air, as many officers whispered about marching on Philadelphia. Fortunately for the republic, Washington himself quelled the conspiracy by appearing at the gathering.
3. At the Convention, Morris became a leader of the nationalist bloc. He was the only delegate to make a lengthy speech against the institution of slavery. Morris was appointed to the Committee of Style as the debates ended. Morris worked on the document for four days to fashion a finished product that was more concise and clear than the draft given to him. He also glossed the wording of the Constitution so as to enhance the power of the new federal government. Most significantly, Morris began the Preamble with the phrase, “We the people,” to signal that the new government was not the creature of the states, but the handiwork of the entire nation.
4. Some students may list the following as Morris’s shortcomings: his propensity to engage in affairs; his encouraging the Continental Army to consider using force against Congress; his dismissive attitude toward the lower classes, demonstrated by his calling the people “reptiles.” Students might list the following as Morris’s strengths: his charm and intelligence; his moral vision, shown in his denunciation of slavery at the Philadelphia convention; his political skill, evidenced by the use of his position as writer of the Constitution to get what he wanted; his bravery during the Reign of Terror in Paris; his patriotism, demonstrated by his service to his state and country.

James Otis
Handout A—James Otis (1725–1783)
1. Writs of assistance were search warrants that gave customs officials broad authority to inspect ships, warehouses, and even private homes. Officials did not have to present evidence to a judge before a search was conducted. They also did not have to specify what they were looking for. Writs of assistance soon became one of the chief complaints of the colonists against the British government.
2. In defending the liberty of his fellow colonists, Otis appealed to both natural and English rights. He asserted that every man possessed inalienable rights of
life, liberty, and property, which could not rightfully be taken away by anyone. Otis argued that the British government had no right to tax the colonies because they were not represented in Parliament. Otis argued that British taxation of the American colonies “is absolutely irreconcilable with the rights of the colonists as British subjects and as men.” Taking away one’s property without one’s consent, Otis claimed, makes a person a “slave.”

3. Otis condemned slavery as a violation of the rights of the enslaved. He argued that “all men are, white or black...by the law of nature freeborn.” Otis condemned slavery as “the most shocking violation of the law of nature” and declared that it “makes every dealer in it a tyrant.”

4. Though he lost the writs of assistance case of 1761, Otis became a hero among Americans. During the 1760s, Otis became a leader of the Patriot resistance to the British government’s attempt to tax the American colonies. He soon became an ally of Samuel Adams and John Hancock. Otis headed the Massachusetts committee of correspondence. He gave speeches and wrote essays in defense of American liberty. In 1764, Otis published The Rights of the British Colonies Asserted and Proved. Otis played a leading role in the Stamp Act Congress. In 1767, he and Samuel Adams wrote a circular letter to the other colonies, coordinating resistance to the Townshend Duties.

5. Otis’s challenge of writs of assistance was based on natural, rather than English, rights. Otis headed the Boston Committee of Correspondence, and spoke and wrote publicly opposing British policies. He challenged British authority to tax the colonists. He used the term “tyrant” to describe slaveowners.

Handout B—Vocabulary and Context Questions
1. Vocabulary
   a. serenity
   b. well-being
   c. brothers
   d. collective unit of people
   e. limitless
   f. peddler
   g. trade
   h. given up

2. Context
   a. James Otis wrote this document.
   b. This document was written in 1764.
   c. This is a pamphlet.
   d. This document was written to bring the colonists’ attention to British tyranny.

Handout D—Analysis: James Otis and John Locke’s Theory of Natural Rights
1. Otis’s main idea is that the only purpose of a just government is to protect the security, life, liberty, and property of the people. Locke’s main idea is that all men have equal rights, and that they choose to unite in communities for the protection of those rights. Otis may have been influenced by the idea that governments exist to protect rights.

2. Otis’s main idea is that the colonists are human beings, just as Englishmen are human beings. Therefore, they have the same rights as Englishmen, and furthermore, the same natural rights. They need only surrender those rights if they come together as a society under one government. Locke’s main idea is that people voluntarily give up some liberty to better preserve their own good. Otis may have been influenced by the idea that government protects the common good.
3. Otis’s main idea is that slavery is an obvious and terrible violation of Africans’ natural rights. Locke’s main idea is that all men are created equal and there can be no natural subordination of one people to another. Otis may have been influenced by the idea that all men have equal claim to natural rights.

4. Otis’s main idea is that men are by nature free, and that property rights are essential to freedom. Locke’s main idea is that property (lives, liberties, and estates) and liberty are interdependent. Otis may have been influenced by the idea that all property rights are essential to freedom.

**THOMAS PAINE**

**Handout A—Thomas Paine (1737–1809)**

1. Paine condemned slavery as a “savage practice.” He pointed out the irony by which Americans held Africans as slaves and at the same time complained of attempts by the British government to enslave the colonies.

2. He rejected the idea that Britain was America’s mother country. British policies violated American liberty and hindered the country’s economic prospects. Paine called for the colonists to fight for their independence. He also argued “government even in its best state is but a necessary evil.” He also denounced custom as no more than “a long habit of not thinking a thing wrong.” Paine also saw the American cause as a part of worldwide uprising against tyranny.

3. *The Rights of Man*’s critique of monarchy was so radical that the British government (a monarchy) attempted to arrest Paine for inciting resistance to government. Even more radically, he called for social programs to help the poor. In *The Age of Reason*, Paine strongly condemned all organized religion, and in particular Christianity, as a series of “fabulous inventions.” He claimed the only true religion was Deism.

4. Some students may say that Paine did deserve the negative reaction he received. His condemnation of organized religion was offensive to many, and his open, hostile letter to the very popular George Washington created enemies. Others may say that he did not deserve the negative reaction he received. He acknowledged freedom of belief in *The Age of Reason*, and freedom of belief and non-belief is a cherished American liberty. They may say that while his letter to Washington might have offended many, Paine maintained his right to express his opinions and the letter should not have affected his reputation.

5. Thomas Paine’s commitment to republican government remained constant throughout his career. His work inspired the Continental Army to persevere when they felt neglected by the Congress. His words also summoned support for independence in the many who read *Common Sense*. His belief that the people have the right to do away with a government that does not protect their rights, and replace it with a just one, was essential to the American Revolution.

**Handout B—Vocabulary and Context Questions**

1. Vocabulary
   a. oppressive power
   b. beaten
   c. comfort
   d. value
   e. difficulty or expense
   f. heavenly
   g. disrespectful
   h. God’s care
   i. comfort
   j. trickery