

We Are a *Constitutional Republic!* What does that mean?

What will your family learn? Your family will learn the dangers of **democracy** all by itself as a form of government. The founders of our country wisely added to the element of democracy two additional key elements – **representation** and **a written constitution** – and created a unique form of government called a **Constitutional Republic**. Our Constitutional Republic was created to preserve liberty and justice for everyone in the United States of America.



Step 1: GET READY...

Warm Up Activity!

#1: Ask for 3 volunteers to be two wolves and a lamb. Explain they will implement the element of *democracy* by each voting on what they want for dinner!

#2: Excuse the lamb to another room to ponder what the lamb would like for dinner.

#3: Show your family this picture and ask the two wolves, “What do you think the wolves are thinking about having for dinner?!”



#4: Invite the lamb back into the room. Ask the Lamb what it would like for dinner. Then ask the Wolves what they would like for dinner. Invite the Lamb and Wolves to exercise the element of democracy by taking a vote:

- *How many vote for what the Lamb wants for dinner?*
- *How many vote for what the Wolves want for dinner?*
Who wins?

Ask and discuss:

- “Wolves, how do you feel about the outcome of the vote?”
- “Lamb, how do you feel about the outcome of the vote?”
- “Everyone, all three exercised the element of *Democracy* and voted, but what is about to happen to Lamb’s unalienable right of Life, Liberty, and ability to pursue Happiness?”

Explain: *Democracy* means *the people rule or govern*. In a democracy, the people vote for what or who they want and the people with the majority of the votes win. This sounds fair, doesn’t it?

However, what if 51% of the people – the majority – do not like you, your race, or your beliefs? As we can see from the example of the Wolves and the Lamb, the majority of the people could vote to take away your life, liberty, property, and/or ability to pursue happiness.

Ask your family:

- If the Wolves had elected someone to represent them, and the Lamb had also elected someone to represent him or her, and the two representatives voted on behalf of the Wolves’ and Lamb’s choice for dinner, how might the outcome have changed in the previous activity? Why?
- How might the outcome have changed if the two representatives had taken an oath to protect both the Wolves and Lamb’s lives, liberty, property, and ability to pursue happiness?



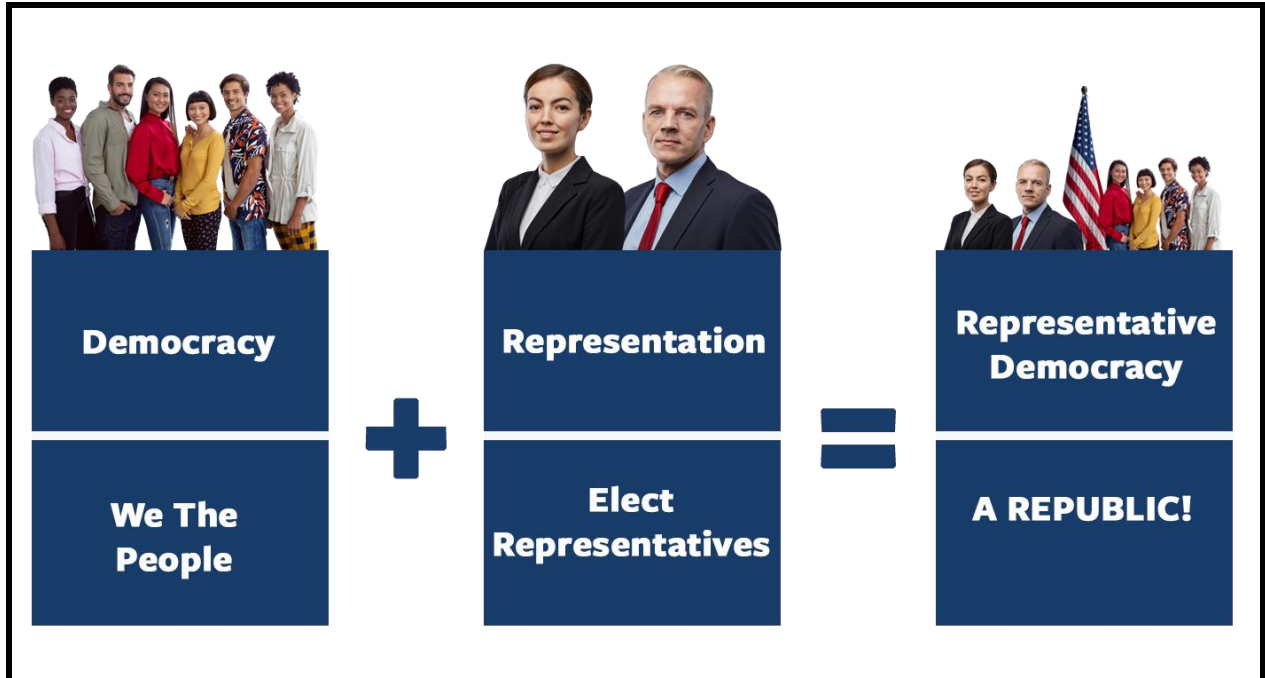
Step 2: GET SET...

Lesson: “We Are a **Constitutional Republic!**”

Explain: Hopefully, we can now see how the element of representation can “check” the element of democracy from sliding into majority rule – or Wolves rule – AND also protect the unalienable rights of the Lamb or the minority!

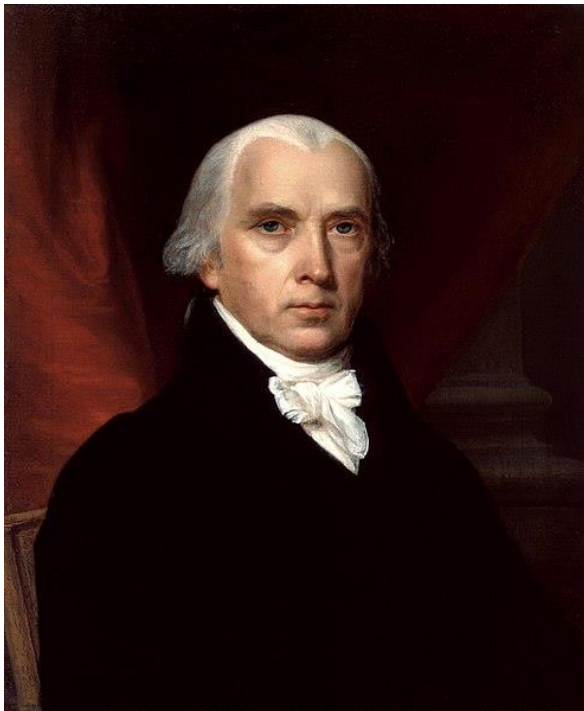
A *Republic* is created when the elements of *Democracy* and *Representation* are combined like this:

Show your family this picture.



Choose someone to show your family this painting (below) and read:

In other words, a *Republic* is another way of saying *Representative Democracy*. (It's just shorter!)



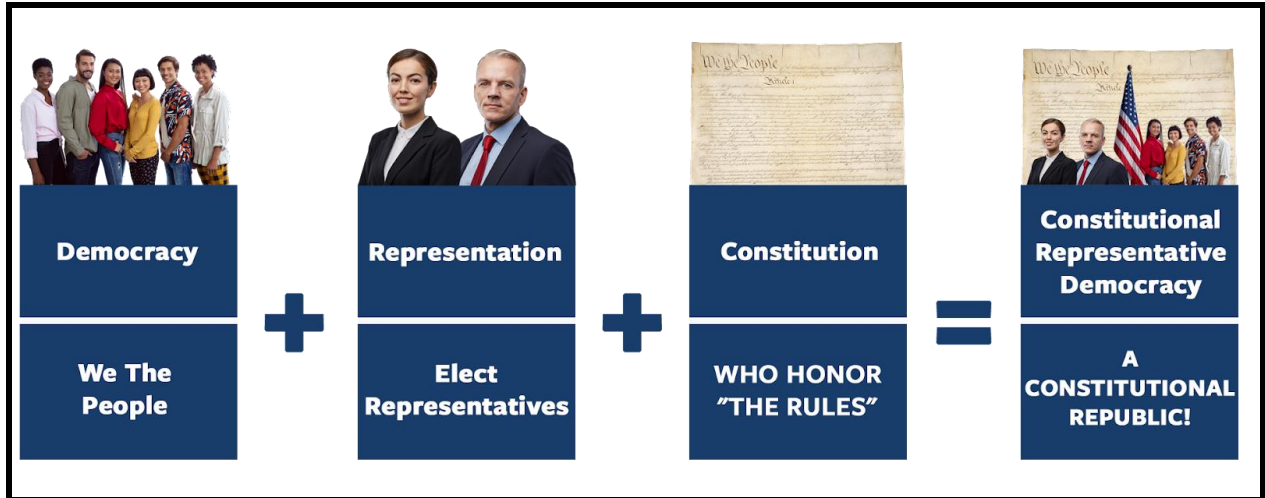
This is a painting of **James Madison** (1751 – 1836) who was a signer of the *U.S. Constitution* and the 4th President of the United States of America. He included both elements of *Democracy* and *Representation* in his definition of a *Republic*.

“A Republic...a Government in which the scheme of representation takes place...the delegation of the Government, ...to a small number of citizens elected by the rest.”¹

James Madison by John Vanderlyn, 1816
Public domain; Wikimedia Commons²

Did you know... The word *democracy* is not found anywhere in *The Declaration of Independence*, the *U.S. Constitution*, or the constitutions of our fifty states? Clearly, America's founders wanted and established a Republic!

Show your family this concluding picture.



When we combine the elements of *Democracy* and *Representation* with the element of a *written Constitution*, we have a form of government called a *Constitutional Representative Democracy* or a **Constitutional Republic!**

Ask and Discuss:

- How can having a constitution – written rules that our elected representatives take an oath or promise to follow – protect us from our representatives misusing the limited power we give them and governing us in a cruel or oppressive way?
- Which of the 3 important key elements of America's republican form of government are missing if we say the United States of America is "a democracy"? (Refer to the picture above.)
- Which key element is missing if we say America is "a constitutional democracy"?
- Why is it important that all three of these elements are included in America's form of government?

Now we know that the form of government we have in the United States of America is a *Constitutional Republic* carefully designed to prevent those in power in our government from taking away the unalienable rights of life, liberty, property, and the ability of the American people to pursue happiness!



Step 3: GO!!!

What YOU Can DO!

- ✓ **Explore** together the official U.S. federal government [voter registration website](#). Discover how to find voter registration deadlines, voter guides, sample ballots, check your existing voter registration, register after you've moved, and more!
 - ✓ **Experience one of the “The EXTRA Mile” activities together!**
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The EXTRA Mile...

- ✓ Watch: [“Overview of America”](#) (View from 0:00 to 18:18 at the conclusion of what a republic is and how ancient Rome lost theirs), John Birch Society
- ✓ Read: [“A Government of Laws, Not of Rulers”](#) (Just one paragraph & 1 quote), National Center for Constitutional Studies
- ✓ (Did you already do this one in the previous lesson?!)
Watch: [“Street Smarts: Elections in the U.S.”](#) (13:28 - Prager U Kids) and see how many questions you and your family can answer correctly!
- ✓ *Watch for another Dinner Table Lesson in an upcoming email from LovingLiberty.net!*

REFERENCES

1. Hamilton, Alexander; Madison, James; Jay, John. “The Federalist #10” in [The Federalist Papers](#). New York, NY: Bantam Dell, 2003, p 55.
2. Portrait of James Madison by John Vanderlyn, 1816. Oil on canvas; White House Collection. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:James_Madison.jpg