

Constitution Topic Sheet

Topic	Content	Understood?		
		Red	Ambe	Green
Purpose of Constitution;	Why do constitutions exist? What do they serve to protect? Who does a constitution bind?			
Different types of Constitution;	What are the different types of constitutions and how do they work? * Codified Constitutions * Uncodified Constitutions * Unitary Constitutions * Federal Constitutions * Rigid Constitutions * Flexible Constitutions *			
Sources of the UK Constitution	Where does the power of the UK constitution come from? What gives it the power to govern our government? * Parliamentary Statutes * Constitutional Conventions * Historical Principle * Common Law * Tradition * Works of Constitutional Authority * EU Laws and Treaties *			
Features and Principles of the UK Constitution	What are the practices and features of the UK constitution that makes it unique? * Parliamentary Sovereignty * Rule of Law * Parliamentary Government * Constitutional Monarchy * EU Membership *			
Development of the UK Constitution	Magna Carta * Bill of Rights * Act of Settlement * Act of Union * Parliament Acts * 1972 European Communities Act			
Parliamentary Sovereignty	The absolute and unlimited legal authority of Parliament to make laws. * Limits on Parliamentary Sovereignty * Definition * Legal Sovereignty * Political Sovereignty *			
Reforms under New Labour	The ways that the 'New' Labour government of 1997-2013 reformed and tried to reform the constitution. * Principles of Reform * Commons Reform * Lords Reform * Human Rights Reform * Electoral Reform * Freedom of Information * Local Government * Devolution * Judicial Reforms * Criticisms of Labour's Reforms * Gordon Brown's Reforms *			
Reforms under the Coalition	The ways and attempts that the Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition made to change the constitution. * Parliamentary Reforms * Electoral Reform * Lords Reform * Human Rights * Europe * Devolution *			
Devolution	The granting of powers away from central government to other bodies. * Different Types * Demand for Devolution * Arguments For Devolution * Arguments Against Devolution *			
Devolution in Scotland	The reasons for and details of devolution in Scotland. * The Scottish Parliament * Powers and Functions * Constraints * The Scottish Executive * West Lothian Question *			
Devolution in Wales	The reasons for and details of devolution in Wales. * The Welsh Assembly * Powers and Functions * The Welsh Executive *			
Devolution in Northern Ireland	The reasons for and details of devolution in Northern Ireland. * Powers * Electoral System * Legislation *			
Codification	The arguments for and against a written constitution with rigidly defined powers and roles. Arguments For: * Clear Rules * Limited Government * Neutral Interpretation * Protecting Rights * Education and Citizenship * Legal System * EU * Arguments Against: * Rigidity * Judicial Tyranny * Legalistic * Political Bias * Unnecessary *			

Key Questions:

Evaluate the view that the UK constitution is no longer fit for purpose.

Evaluate the view that reforms of the constitution since 1997 have succeeded.

Evaluate the view that devolution has had a successful impact on the UK.

Evaluate the view that there is no need for a bill of rights in Britain.

Key Vocabulary:

Constitution	A set of laws and guidelines that establish how politics and the government works.
Unentrenched	This is when a law is easy to change. Flexible.
Entrenched	This is when a law is difficult to change. Rigid.
Uncodified	When a constitution is not in one single authoritative document and all laws have the same value.
Codified	This means that a constitutional law has higher status than normal laws and it is an a single authoritative document.
Unitary	This means that all power is held at the centre.
Federal	This is when power is shared between different institutions.
Parliamentary Sovereignty	This is the idea that parliament is legally the most powerful institution in Britain.
Rule of Law	This means that the law applies to all people equally.
Statute Law	This is a law that is passed by the Houses of Parliament. Also called Acts of Parliament.
Common Law	Laws made by judges when the law is unclear or doesn't exist.
Conventions	Traditions that don't exist in law but are binding as it is the way it has always happened.
Authoritative Works	Books written by experts explaining how a political system or constitution works.
Devolution	When power is given to another, normally smaller, institution.
West Lothian Question	This is the question of whether Scottish MP's should be allowed to vote on English laws.
Devo Max	This is the suggestion that the devolved parliament should have the independence to make all laws and raise their own taxes.
Elective Dictatorship	This is the idea that the government has too much power and can make all decisions without scrutiny.