Published in 1651, Thomas Hobbes’s book *Leviathan* discusses the structure of society and legitimate government. In this excerpt from the book, Hobbes describes his idea of “a commonwealth” and the purpose it serves in a society.

**CHAPTER XVII: OF THE CAUSES, GENERATION, AND DEFINITION OF A COMMONWEALTH**

The only way to erect such a common power, as may be able to defend them from the invasion of foreigners, and the injuries of one another, and thereby to secure them in such sort as that by their own industry and by the fruits of the earth they may nourish themselves and live contentedly, is to confer all their power and strength upon one man, or upon one assembly of men, that may reduce all their wills by plurality of voices, unto one will: which is as much as to say, to appoint one man, or assembly of men, to bear their person; and every one to own and acknowledge himself to be author of whatsoever he that so beareth their person shall act, or cause to be acted, in those things which concern the common peace and safety; and therein to submit their wills, every one to his will, and their judgements to his judgement. This is more than consent, or concord; it is a real unity of them all in one and the same person, made by covenant of every man with every man, in such manner as if every man should say to every man: I authorise and give up my right of governing myself to this man, or to this assembly of men, on this condition; that thou give up, thy right to him, and authorise all his actions in like manner. This done, the multitude so united in one person is called a COMMONWEALTH; in Latin, CIVITAS. This is the generation of that great LEVIATHAN, or rather, to speak more reverently, of that mortal god to which we owe, under the immortal God, our peace and defence. For by this authority, given him by every particular man in the Commonwealth, he hath the use of so much power and strength conferred on him that, by terror thereof, he is enabled to form the wills of them all, to peace at home, and mutual aid against their enemies abroad.

And in him consisteth the essence of the Commonwealth; which, to define it, is: one person, of whose acts a great multitude, by mutual covenants one with another, have made themselves every one the author, to the end he may use the strength and means of them all as he shall think expedient for their peace and common defence.
And he that carryeth this person is called **SOVEREIGN**, and said to have sovereign power; and every one besides, his **SUBJECT**. . . .

**CHAPTER XVIII: OF THE RIGHTS OF SOVEREIGNS BY INSTITUTION**

A **COMMONWEALTH** is said to be instituted when a multitude of men do agree, and covenant, every one with every one, that to whatsoever man, or assembly of men, shall be given by the major part the right to present the person of them all, that is to say, to be their representative; every one, as well he that voted for it as he that voted against it, shall authorize all the actions and judgements of that man, or assembly of men, in the same manner as if they were his own, to the end to live peaceably amongst themselves, and be protected against other men. . . .

. . . [To the Sovereignty,] is annexed to the sovereignty the whole power of prescribing the rules whereby every man may know what goods he may enjoy, and what actions he may do, without being molested by any of his fellow subjects: and this is it men call propriety. For before constitution of sovereign power, as hath already been shown, all men had right to all things, which necessarily causeth war: and therefore this propriety, being necessary to peace, and depending on sovereign power, is the act of that power, in order to the public peace. These rules of propriety (or meum and tuum) and of good, evil, lawful, and unlawful in the actions of subjects are the civil laws; that is to say, the laws of each Commonwealth in particular. . . .
Around 54 BC, Roman philosopher and politician Marcus Tullius Cicero composed a treatise on Roman politics called On the Commonwealth. In this excerpt from that treatise, Cicero introduces the concept of “the commonwealth” and weighs the benefits and drawbacks of different forms of government.

XXV. Well, then, said Africanus, a commonwealth is a constitution of the entire people. But the people is not every association of men, however congregated, but the association of the entire number, bound together by the compact of justice, and the communication of utility. The first cause of this association is not so much the weakness of man as a certain spirit of congregation which naturally belongs to him. For the human race is not a race of isolated individuals, wandering and solitary, but it is so constituted that even in the affluence of all things [and without any need of reciprocal assistance, it spontaneously seeks society].

XXVI. [It is necessary to presuppose] these original seeds, as it were, since we cannot discover any primary establishment of the other virtues, or even of a commonwealth itself. These unions, then, formed by the principle which I have mentioned, established their headquarters originally in certain central positions, for the convenience of the whole population; and having fortified them by natural and artificial means, they called this collection of houses a city or town, distinguished by temples and public squares. Every people, therefore, which consists of such an association of the entire multitude as I have described, every city which consists of an assemblage of the people, and every commonwealth which embraces every member of these associations, must be regulated by a certain authority, in order to be permanent.

This intelligent authority should always refer itself to that grand first principle which established the Commonwealth. It must be deposited in the hands of one supreme person, or intrusted to the administration of certain delegated rulers, or undertaken by the whole multitude. When the direction of all depends on one person, we call this individual a king, and this form of political constitution a kingdom. When it is in the power of privileged delegates, the State is said to be ruled by an aristocracy; and when the people are all in all, they call it a democracy, or popular constitution. And if
the tie of social affection, which originally united men in political associations for the sake of public interest, maintains its force, each of these forms of government is, I will not say perfect, nor, in my opinion, essentially good, but tolerable, and such that one may accidentally be better than another: either a just and wise king, or a selection of the most eminent citizens, or even the populace itself (though this is the least commendable form), may, if there be no interference of crime and cupidity, form a constitution sufficiently secure.

XXVII. But in a monarchy the other members of the State are often too much deprived of public counsel and jurisdiction; and under the rule of an aristocracy the multitude can hardly possess its due share of liberty, since it is allowed no share in the public deliberation, and no power. And when all things are carried by a democracy, although it be just and moderate, yet its very equality is a culpable levelling, inasmuch as it allows no gradations of rank. . . .

There is a fourth kind of government, therefore, which, in my opinion, is preferable to all these: it is that mixed and moderate government which is composed of the three particular forms which I have already noticed.

Questions Posed to You on the Test:


20. How are Cicero's and Hobbes' definitions of a commonwealth similar? Support your answer with evidence from the texts. (8–10 sentences recommended)
**Essay Question:**

**Directions for Part 2**

You will now review your sources, take notes using the notepad icon, and plan, draft, revise, and edit your article. You may use your notes and refer to the sources. Now read your assignment and the information about how your explanatory article will be scored; then begin your work.

**Your Assignment:**

In your government class, a student notes that the United States is not a democratic commonwealth as described by Cicero and Hobbes because every person does not have an equal share in government. He suggests that this form of government would be an ideal system because everyone would be more motivated to participate. Your teacher explains that this is not a new argument, and many historical figures have debated the pros and cons of different forms of government. To respond to your classmate, write a multi-paragraph article synthesizing information from the two sources to show 1. what a commonwealth is, 2. why, historically, it has been seen as necessary, and 3. how it can best be implemented. Your article will be read by the students in your class and your teacher. In your article, clearly state your topic and controlling idea. Support and develop your controlling idea with relevant details, examples, and quotations from the sources you have read.

**Explanatory Scoring:**

Your article will be scored using the following:

1. **Statement of Purpose/Focus:** How well did you state your controlling idea and support it with relevant details, examples, and quotations from the sources? How well were your ideas developed from beginning to end?

2. **Organization:** How logically did your ideas flow from the introduction to the conclusion? How effectively did you use transitions and syntax to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships among complex
ideas? How well does each new element build on that which precedes it to create a unified whole?

3. **Elaboration of Evidence**: How well did you integrate relevant and specific information from the sources? Did you select the most significant and relevant information and examples appropriate to the audience's knowledge of the topic? How well did you elaborate on your ideas? Did your conclusion support the information presented?

4. **Language and Vocabulary**: How clearly and precisely did you state ideas, and is your language appropriately complex for the topic? Did you establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone while attending to the norms and conventions of an informational article?

5. **Conventions**: How well did you follow the rules of grammar usage, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling?

**Now begin work on your explanatory article.** Manage your time carefully so that you can plan, write, revise, and edit the final draft of your article. Write your response in the space provided.