A Promise Revisited

Trace founding ideas through statements of belief.

SS24.6.7e "Define the key principles contained in the Declaration of Independence, including inalienable rights, equality, and social contract, and explain how they have been presented in significant statements of belief throughout United States..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the passage's explanations of equality, inalienable rights, and the social contract. Number the three later statements of belief in the order they appear to track how people have used those ideas.

What Does the Promise Mean?

1. In 1776, the Declaration of Independence explained why the thirteen colonies were breaking from Britain. It said that people are created equal and have rights that cannot rightly be taken away, including life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. These are called inalienable rights. Governments get their just powers from the consent of the governed, meaning people agree to be governed. This idea is part of a social contract: government should protect people's rights, and people may change or replace a government that does not. Yet the new nation did not treat everyone equally.

2. In 1848, women meeting at Seneca Falls, New York, issued the Declaration of Sentiments. It echoed the Declaration's words but stated that "all men and women are created equal." Its writers argued that women should have the right to vote. In 1963, Martin Luther King Jr. spoke at the March on Washington. He argued that children should be judged by their character, not their skin color, and that America had not kept its founding promise to Black Americans. Both statements used founding ideas to demand change rather than claim equality was already real.

3. Today, the statement "Black lives matter" is used by people who protest unfair treatment of Black people, including police violence. It insists that the nation's promise of equality must apply in real life, not just in old words. The three statements do not ask for exactly the same changes: the Seneca Falls writers sought women's voting rights, King demanded an end to racial injustice, and today's protesters call for fair treatment and accountability. Each shows how a belief from 1776 can be used to judge whether a government protects people's rights.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What are inalienable rights? Name two that the Declaration lists.

2. How did the Seneca Falls statement use the Declaration's idea of equality to argue for change?

3. What does the social contract mean in the passage? What may people do if a government does not protect their rights?

4. How does “Black lives matter” apply a founding principle today? Name the principle and a problem the statement challenges.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a present-day statement of belief about how a government should treat people. In three sentences, define the Declaration principle it uses and explain how your statement and King's 1963 message put that principle to work.

ANSWER KEY

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GRADE 6 · SS24.6.7e

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the passage's explanations of equality, inalienable rights, and the social contract. Number the three later statements of belief in the order they appear to track how people have used those ideas. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What are inalienable rights? Name two that the Declaration lists.	**They are rights that cannot rightly be taken away. Accept any two: life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.**
2	How did the Seneca Falls statement use the Declaration's idea of equality to argue for change?	**It stated that men and women are created equal and argued that women should have the right to vote.**
3	What does the social contract mean in the passage? What may people do if a government does not protect their rights?	**People agree to be governed, and government should protect their rights. People may change or replace a government that does not.**
4	How does "Black lives matter" apply a founding principle today? Name the principle and a problem the statement challenges.	**It applies equality by insisting that Black people receive fair treatment. It challenges unfair treatment, including police violence.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I believe public schools must treat students of every race fairly. This uses the Declaration's principle of equality, which says people are created equal. Like King's 1963 message about judging children by character rather than skin color, my statement calls for that belief to shape how people are treated today.

For Part 3, accept a different present-day issue if the statement clearly applies a Declaration principle and accurately connects it to King's message. Students may express the principle in their own words.