

Ideas That Endure

Compare how major U.S. documents develop civic responsibility.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.9 "Analyze seminal U.S. documents of historical and literary significance (e.g., Washington's Farewell Address, the Gettysburg Address, Roosevelt's Four Freedoms speech, King's "Letter from Birmingham Jail")."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline each document's central claim about citizenship or rights, circle the historical context linked to it, and number the documents 1–4 in the order they appear so you can compare how one shared concern changes.

Four Voices, Related Ideals

- ① Seminal U.S. documents often return to the question of what holds a nation together. In his 1796 Farewell Address, George Washington warned that political factions and lasting foreign alliances could weaken the republic. He urged citizens to protect the Union because shared interests and liberty depended on it. During the Civil War, Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address also treated the nation as endangered, but he focused on equality. Lincoln presented the war as a test of whether a government based on human equality could survive. Both speakers connect national unity to self-government, although Lincoln makes equality central to that unity.
- ② Franklin D. Roosevelt's 1941 Four Freedoms speech moves the discussion beyond U.S. borders. As World War II threatened democratic nations, Roosevelt named freedom of speech, freedom of worship, freedom from want, and freedom from fear as rights for people everywhere. He argued that protecting these freedoms would make the United States safer. In his 1963 "Letter from Birmingham Jail," Martin Luther King Jr. also defends liberty and human dignity, but he addresses segregation inside the United States. Writing to clergymen who criticized protests, King justifies direct action by showing that waiting had repeatedly failed Black Americans. Roosevelt imagines universal rights; King demands that the nation fulfill its stated ideals.
- ③ Historical context shapes each document's idea of civic responsibility. Washington spoke as a retiring president of a young republic; Lincoln spoke at a battlefield while the country was divided by war. Roosevelt called Americans to defend freedoms while global conflict spread, and King wrote from jail during a campaign against segregation in Birmingham. Together, the documents show that citizenship can require preserving a union, honoring equality, defending human rights, or confronting injustice. Their shared concern is not simple agreement. Each speaker asks people to act for a principle that extends beyond private interest.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 How do Washington and Lincoln connect national survival to different central ideas?

2 How do Roosevelt and King differ in the scope and method of their arguments about liberty?

3 How does historical context help explain why Washington urges citizens to protect the Union while King justifies direct action?

4 What larger idea about citizenship emerges when all four documents are considered together?

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Choose two documents from the passage. In 4 or 5 sentences, compare how they address one related concept, use one specific detail from each document, and explain how each speaker's historical situation shapes the difference between their arguments.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline each document's central claim about citizenship or rights, circle the historical context linked to it, and number the documents 1–4 in the order they appear so you can compare how one shared concern changes. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How do Washington and Lincoln connect national survival to different central ideas?	Washington argues that protecting the Union preserves shared interests and liberty. Lincoln argues that the nation's survival tests whether a government based on human equality can endure.
2	How do Roosevelt and King differ in the scope and method of their arguments about liberty?	Roosevelt presents universal freedoms for people everywhere and links them to U.S. security. King focuses on segregation in the United States and defends direct action because waiting had failed Black Americans.
3	How does historical context help explain why Washington urges citizens to protect the Union while King justifies direct action?	Washington spoke as a retiring leader of a young republic, so he stresses preserving unity. King wrote from jail during a Birmingham anti-segregation campaign, so he argues that immediate action is necessary against injustice.
4	What larger idea about citizenship emerges when all four documents are considered together?	Citizenship requires acting for principles beyond private interest, though the action may mean preserving unity, honoring equality, defending rights, or confronting injustice.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Lincoln and King both connect the nation's ideals to equality, yet their situations lead them to different demands. At Gettysburg, Lincoln describes the Civil War as a test of whether a government based on equality can survive. From a Birmingham jail, King argues that Black Americans cannot wait any longer for those ideals to be honored. This difference matters because Lincoln asks listeners to understand the war's purpose, while King presses readers to support immediate action against injustice.

Accept accurate paraphrases that compare claims, context, and related concepts using passage details. For the open response, accept any two documents if the student includes a shared concept, relevant evidence from each, and a clear explanation of how context shapes the comparison.