

Power With Purpose

How American government was designed to protect rights and limit power.

SS.8.CG.1 "Demonstrate an understanding of the origins and purposes of government, law, and the American political system."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline statements that explain why government exists. Circle statements that show how the American political system divides or limits power.

From Complaints to a Constitution

- ① In 1776, many colonists argued that government should rest on the consent of the governed. The Declaration of Independence said people have rights, including life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. It listed grievances against King George III, such as imposing taxes without colonial representation. These complaints reflected a larger purpose for government: to protect rights and serve the people. After independence, the states first used the Articles of Confederation, a plan that gave the national government too little power to solve common problems.
- ② In 1787, delegates met at the Constitutional Convention to revise the Articles. They instead drafted a new Constitution, which created a stronger national government while preserving state governments. This federal system divides power between national and state levels. It also separates national power among Congress, the president, and the federal courts. Congress makes laws, the president carries out laws, and courts interpret laws. Each branch can limit the others in certain ways, so no single person or group should control all government power.
- ③ The Constitution also includes methods for change and protection. The Bill of Rights, added in 1791, limits government power and protects freedoms such as speech, religion, and a fair trial. Under the rule of law, officials and citizens must follow the law, and laws should be applied fairly. Courts can decide whether laws follow the Constitution. Citizens influence the political system by voting, speaking to representatives, serving on juries, and using peaceful methods to seek changes, including constitutional amendments.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 What two ideas in the Declaration of Independence helped explain why the colonists wanted a different government?

2 Why did delegates meet at the Constitutional Convention in 1787?

3 How does the Constitution divide government power in two different ways?

4 According to the passage, how do the rule of law and courts help protect people?

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Imagine that a new community is creating its government. Write exactly four sentences that explain one right the government will protect, one law it will make, and how two parts of government will keep one person or group from controlling all power.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline statements that explain why government exists. Circle statements that show how the American political system divides or limits power. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What two ideas in the Declaration of Independence helped explain why the colonists wanted a different government?	Government should rest on the consent of the governed, and it should protect people's rights.
2	Why did delegates meet at the Constitutional Convention in 1787?	They met to revise the Articles of Confederation because it gave the national government too little power to solve common problems. They ultimately drafted a new Constitution.
3	How does the Constitution divide government power in two different ways?	It divides power between national and state governments and separates national power among Congress, the president, and the federal courts.
4	According to the passage, how do the rule of law and courts help protect people?	The rule of law requires officials and citizens to follow laws that are applied fairly. Courts can decide whether laws follow the Constitution.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

In Riverbend, people elect a council to make laws because government should serve the people. The community protects the right to speak at public meetings. A law requires public water to be tested each month so residents are safe. A separate local court can decide whether council laws follow the community charter, which limits the council's power.

Accept equivalent wording that accurately connects consent, rights, limited government, federalism, separated powers, rule of law, courts, and citizen participation to their purposes. For the open response, check that all four required sentences include a right, a law, and a realistic limit on power involving two government parts.