Words With Purpose

Read the Preamble as a statement of government goals.

5.C.1 "Understand the principles and purposes of government as stated in the Preamble to the United States Constitution."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the words that show where the government's authority comes from. Then circle the six phrases that name goals for the government.

Why Begin With a Preamble?

1. When the Constitution was written in 1787, the first words of its Preamble were "We the People." A preamble is an introduction that tells why a document was written. These words say that the government's authority comes from the people, not from a king. The Preamble then lists goals for the new national government. It does not list detailed laws for reaching those goals.

2. Imagine two states arguing over the use of a river. The Preamble calls for "a more perfect Union," meaning a stronger connection among the states. It also calls for "establish Justice," so people should be treated fairly under the law. To "insure domestic Tranquility" means to seek peace within the country. These goals help explain why a national government would need ways to settle conflicts.

3. The Preamble also calls for "provide for the common defence," protecting the country from outside threats, and "promote the general Welfare," helping the country as a whole do well. Its final goal is to "secure the Blessings of Liberty" for people living then and for "our Posterity," or future generations. The Preamble states purposes, but the rest of the Constitution explains powers and rules of government.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. A leader says the government's authority comes from the army. Which words in the Preamble challenge that claim? Explain.

2. A law treats one group of people unfairly. Which Preamble goal speaks to this problem, and why?

3. A threat comes from outside the country. Which Preamble goal fits this situation? Explain.

4. Why does the Preamble mention “our Posterity” when it describes liberty?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Think of a problem not mentioned in the passage or questions. In three sentences, describe the problem and explain how two different Preamble goals could guide a government response.

ANSWER KEY

Words With Purpose

GRADE 5 · 5.C.1

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the words that show where the government's authority comes from. Then circle the six phrases that name goals for the government. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	A leader says the government's authority comes from the army. Which words in the Preamble challenge that claim? Explain.	**"We the People" challenges the claim because the government's authority comes from the people, not the army.**
2	A law treats one group of people unfairly. Which Preamble goal speaks to this problem, and why?	**"Establish Justice" speaks to the problem because people should be treated fairly under the law.**
3	A threat comes from outside the country. Which Preamble goal fits this situation? Explain.	**"Provide for the common defence" fits because it calls for protecting the country from outside threats.**
4	Why does the Preamble mention "our Posterity" when it describes liberty?	**It shows that securing liberty is a goal for future generations as well as for people living when the Constitution was written.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

A new illness spreads across several states. To promote the general Welfare, the national government could share health information so communities can make safer choices. To build a more perfect Union, it could help states work together on a response instead of acting alone.

Accept explanations that connect a Preamble goal to the situation using the passage's meaning. For Part 3, look for an original problem, two distinct goals, and a plausible response for each goal.