Purposes in Practice

Read the Preamble as a guide to the goals of government.

USG.1.3 "Interpret and analyze the constitutional purposes and functions of government found in the Preamble of the United States Constitution."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the six phrases in the Preamble that name goals of government. Circle the words that identify who establishes the Constitution.

What Is Government For?

1. The Preamble opens the Constitution by naming its source of authority and the purposes of the new government. It reads: "We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America." Those words describe broad aims, not a list of agencies or laws. Their wording helps readers judge which goal a proposed government action would serve.

2. The six goals name different kinds of work. A more perfect Union points toward stronger cooperation among states. Justice concerns fair treatment under law, while domestic Tranquility concerns peace and order within the country. Common defence concerns dangers from outside the country. General Welfare concerns the well-being of the public as a whole rather than a benefit reserved for a few. The Blessings of Liberty refer to freedoms that people should be able to keep. The phrase "ourselves and our Posterity" extends that concern to people who will live in the future.

3. These purposes can overlap without becoming identical. A law may aim to protect both peace and freedom, yet people can disagree about whether it succeeds. The Preamble gives reasons for having a national government, but it does not, by itself, grant a specific power to pass any particular law. The rest of the Constitution sets out institutions, powers, and limits. When evaluating a government proposal, first identify the goal its supporters claim, then consider whether the proposal might undermine another goal. A purpose explains what government seeks to achieve; it does not settle every argument about how to achieve it.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Several states agree to share responsibility for cleaning a river that crosses their borders. Which Preamble purpose best fits their cooperation, and why?

2. A proposal would make court hearings fairer for people accused of crimes. Which Preamble purpose most directly supports it? Explain your choice.

3. An angry crowd blocks streets in one town, while a foreign army threatens the country. Which different Preamble purposes fit these two problems? Explain the difference.

4. Lawmakers propose protecting freedom of expression for people who will live decades from now. Which Preamble goal and which words about time support their argument?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Propose a government action not used in the questions. In three or four sentences, explain how it could serve one Preamble purpose but put a different purpose at risk.

Purposes in Practice

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the six phrases in the Preamble that name goals of government. Circle the words that identify who establishes the Constitution. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Several states agree to share responsibility for cleaning a river that crosses their borders. Which Preamble purpose best fits their cooperation, and why?	**Forming a more perfect Union best fits because the states are cooperating on a shared problem.**
2	A proposal would make court hearings fairer for people accused of crimes. Which Preamble purpose most directly supports it? Explain your choice.	**Establish Justice, because fair treatment under law includes fair court hearings.**
3	An angry crowd blocks streets in one town, while a foreign army threatens the country. Which different Preamble purposes fit these two problems? Explain the difference.	**Domestic Tranquility fits the blocked streets because it concerns peace within the country. Common defence fits the foreign army because it concerns an outside threat.**
4	Lawmakers propose protecting freedom of expression for people who will live decades from now. Which Preamble goal and which words about time support their argument?	**Securing the Blessings of Liberty supports protecting freedom of expression. "Ourselves and our Posterity" extends that goal to future generations.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

A government could require permits for large public marches so emergency vehicles can pass. This could support domestic Tranquility by reducing blocked streets during emergencies. Yet a permit rule that is too strict could threaten the Blessings of Liberty by making peaceful protest harder.

For Part 1, accept the six goal phrases from "form a more perfect Union" through "secure the Blessings of Liberty," and "We the People" as the source of authority. For the open task, accept a plausible original action with a clear explanation of two distinct purposes and the tension between them.