More Than Agreement

Founding principles in a local decision

USG.2.5 "Explain how a shared American civic identity is grounded in Founding Era principles and values such as liberty, equality, justice, popular sovereignty, individual rights, and representative democracy."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Circle two Founding Era principles in the passage, underline a detail from the library meeting that shows each one, and draw a line connecting each principle to its detail.

Who Gets a Say?

1 On a Tuesday evening, the town council considers cutting evening hours at the public library. A student who works after school says later hours let her borrow books and use a computer. A retiree argues that the town should spend its limited money on road repairs instead. Both speak during the public comment period, and elected council members listen before voting. The speakers disagree about a budget, but neither has to prove that a particular opinion is popular before being heard. Their exchange raises a larger question: What principles make people with different needs members of the same political community?

2 The Founding Era offered an answer built around principles rather than a shared religion or family history. The Declaration of Independence asserted that people possess equal rights and that governments gain their authority from the consent of the governed. The Constitution established a system in which voters choose lawmakers to make public decisions. The First Amendment later protected speech and the right to petition the government. These commitments connect the library debate to liberty, equality, individual rights, popular sovereignty, and representative democracy. They do not require the speakers to reach the same conclusion about library hours.

3 Those ideals were not fully honored at the founding. Enslaved people were denied freedom, most women were denied the vote, and many Native people were excluded from political power. Later generations challenged such gaps between promises and practice, including through constitutional amendments and civil rights laws. At the library meeting, the council posts its budget figures, applies the same time limit to every speaker, and explains its final vote in public. Those practices cannot guarantee that everyone gets the outcome they want. They can, however, help residents judge whether a decision treats people fairly and remains accountable to the public.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How does hearing both speakers, despite their disagreement, put liberty and equality into practice?

2. How does the council's decision-making connect popular sovereignty with representative democracy?

3. Why might the council's posted figures, equal speaking times, and public explanation matter for justice even if some residents dislike the vote?

4. What gap between a founding promise and its practice does the passage identify? How have later generations responded to such gaps?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a 75 to 100 word public comment to an elected council about a proposed bus-route change that would end service to a neighborhood. Explain how two Founding Era principles support a fair decision, suggest one concrete action for the council, and acknowledge that neighbors may disagree.

ANSWER KEY

More Than Agreement

HIGH SCHOOL · USG.2.5

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Circle two Founding Era principles in the passage, underline a detail from the library meeting that shows each one, and draw a line connecting each principle to its detail. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How does hearing both speakers, despite their disagreement, put liberty and equality into practice?	**Each speaker is free to express an opinion, and each gets a chance to be heard without having to hold the popular view.**
2	How does the council's decision-making connect popular sovereignty with representative democracy?	**The council members are elected, so their authority comes from voters. They make the public decision by voting on the budget.**
3	Why might the council's posted figures, equal speaking times, and public explanation matter for justice even if some residents dislike the vote?	**These practices let residents assess the evidence, give speakers the same opportunity to speak, and make the council explain its decision. A just process does not guarantee everyone's preferred outcome.**
4	What gap between a founding promise and its practice does the passage identify? How have later generations responded to such gaps?	**The Declaration asserted equal rights, yet enslaved people were denied freedom. Later generations challenged gaps between ideals and practice through constitutional amendments and civil rights laws.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Council members, I ask you to delay the proposed bus cut until riders can describe how it would affect their trips to work and school. Liberty includes the chance to speak about a decision that shapes daily life, even when others support saving money. Popular sovereignty means your authority comes from the people who elected you, so please hold a public hearing at a time riders can attend. Some neighbors may prefer lower costs, and their concerns deserve attention too. After hearing both sides, publish your reasons for the final vote.

Accept other accurate links between passage details and Founding Era principles. For the public comment, check for two explained principles, a concrete council action, acknowledgment of disagreement, and 75 to 100 words.