

Ideas Into Institutions

Trace Enlightenment principles from political theory to constitutional protections.

12.G1a "Enlightenment ideas such as natural rights, the social contract, popular sovereignty, and representative government greatly influenced the framers of the Constitution and Bill of Rights."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Label examples: NR for natural rights, SC for social contract, PS for popular sovereignty, and RG for representative government.

From Enlightenment Thought to American Government

- ① Enlightenment thinkers challenged unlimited political authority. John Locke argued that people possess natural rights, including life, liberty, and property, independently of government. Government should protect these rights. Social-contract theories explained legitimate authority through agreement rather than a ruler's inherited entitlement. Thinkers differed about the agreement's terms. The Declaration of Independence drew on consent and rights in 1776, but constitutional designers debated how to turn such principles into institutions.
- ② Popular sovereignty locates political authority in the people. The Constitution's opening, "We the People," expresses this principle. Representative government allows voters to choose officials who deliberate and make laws instead of having every voter decide every law. Elections provide accountability, and the amendment process permits constitutional change through specified procedures. These ideals did not mean equal participation at the founding: slavery and restrictions on voting excluded many people from political power.
- ③ The Bill of Rights, ratified in 1791, originally limited federal power. The First Amendment protects speech, religion, assembly, and petition; the Fourth guards against unreasonable searches and seizures. Rights limit officials even when they claim to act for the public good. Most Bill of Rights protections later became enforceable against state and local governments through the Fourteenth Amendment. In social-contract terms, authorizing government does not grant unlimited power. Courts and citizens continue to debate how rights and public responsibilities apply in particular situations.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

- 1** A governor claims that laws are legitimate only because a king approves them. Which Enlightenment principle from the passage challenges this claim, and why?

- 2** A voter elects a legislator who later helps write a transportation law. How does this situation show representative government as described in the passage?

- 3** How do social-contract ideas and the Fourth Amendment challenge a claim that officials have unlimited search powers?

- 4** Why does the amendment process support the passage's claim that government is created by people rather than fixed beyond their control?

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

An elected council proposes banning rallies that criticize city policy. In four sentences, use two Enlightenment ideas and one named amendment to explain how residents could respond.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Label examples: NR for natural rights, SC for social contract, PS for popular sovereignty, and RG for representative government. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	A governor claims that laws are legitimate only because a king approves them. Which Enlightenment principle from the passage challenges this claim, and why?	Popular sovereignty, or consent of the governed, challenges the claim because political authority comes from the people, not a monarch.
2	A voter elects a legislator who later helps write a transportation law. How does this situation show representative government as described in the passage?	The voter chooses a representative, and that representative deliberates and makes laws while the public retains control through elections.
3	How do social-contract ideas and the Fourth Amendment challenge a claim that officials have unlimited search powers?	Social-contract ideas require government to respect limits on delegated authority. The Fourth Amendment guards against unreasonable searches and seizures; public authority is not unlimited.
4	Why does the amendment process support the passage's claim that government is created by people rather than fixed beyond their control?	It allows the Constitution to be changed through lawful public processes, showing that people can alter their government.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Popular sovereignty means the council's authority comes from the people. The social contract does not give elected officials unlimited power. Residents could invoke the First Amendment's speech and assembly protections to challenge the proposed ban. They could petition representatives, organize opposition, or seek judicial review.

Accept equivalent explanations that accurately connect authority from the people, rights, limits on government, elections, amendments, or representation to the scenario. For the open response, require two named Enlightenment ideas, one accurately identified Bill of Rights protection, and a reasoned connection to the proposed policy.