Ideas That Matter

Read and explain the Declaration's main ideas

4.C.1.1.E "Explain basic principles expressed in the Declaration of Independence."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two ideas about people's rights, circle the sentence about where a government gets its power, and write 1 beside what people may do if a government keeps harming their rights.

Why Write a Declaration?

1. In 1776, leaders from thirteen British colonies faced a hard choice. They wanted to break away from Britain, but they needed to explain why. The Declaration of Independence gave their reasons. It declared that people are created equal. This did not mean everyone had the same talents. It meant no person was born with a greater right to rule over others.

2. The Declaration also said that people have rights that cannot be taken away just because a ruler wishes it. It named life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Life means being able to live safely. Liberty means freedom to make choices. The pursuit of happiness means having the chance to seek a good life. According to the Declaration, governments are formed to protect these rights.

3. Imagine a town where a leader makes rules but never listens to the people. The Declaration says a government's power comes from the consent, or agreement, of the people it governs. If a government keeps harming people's rights, the people may change or replace it. In 1776, these ideas were not applied equally to everyone. Enslaved people, women, and many others were denied rights.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What does it mean to say that people are created equal?

2. What are governments formed to protect? Name one example from the passage.

3. What does consent of the people mean for a government's power?

4. According to the Declaration, when may people change or replace a government? Explain why.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine a town council tells people what jobs they must do and refuses to listen to them. In three sentences, explain how two principles from the Declaration apply and what residents could do.

ANSWER KEY

Ideas That Matter

GRADE 4 · 4.C.1.1.E

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two ideas about people's rights, circle the sentence about where a government gets its power, and write 1 beside what people may do if a government keeps harming their rights. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What does it mean to say that people are created equal?	**No person is born with a greater right to rule over others.**
2	What are governments formed to protect? Name one example from the passage.	**Governments are formed to protect people's rights, such as liberty.**
3	What does consent of the people mean for a government's power?	**It means the government's power comes from the agreement of the people it governs.**
4	According to the Declaration, when may people change or replace a government? Explain why.	**They may change or replace it if it keeps harming their rights, because governments are formed to protect those rights.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Forcing people to take certain jobs takes away their liberty to make choices. The council also ignores the idea that its power comes from the people's consent when it refuses to listen to them. Residents could ask for new rules or work to replace the council if it keeps harming their rights.

Accept accurate explanations in students' own words. For Part 3, look for two distinct principles applied to the town council and an action residents could take.