Words for Everyone

Find democratic ideas in state and national documents

4.P.2.1.A "Explain democratic principles in historic documents by identifying examples of civic virtues and principles at work in state and national settings."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline one phrase from each historic document that shows an idea about government, then circle words that show how people can help their community.

Who Is Government For?

1. A historic document can tell us what people wanted their government to do. A democratic principle is an idea about how people should be governed. A civic virtue is a way people act to help their community. In 1780, Massachusetts adopted a state constitution. It says government is for the "common good," not for the private gain of one person or family.

2. The United States Constitution begins with the words "We the People." Its opening, called the Preamble, lists goals such as "establish Justice" and "promote the general Welfare." These goals are for the whole nation. The phrase "We the People" places the people at the start of the government's plan. At the time, however, many people, including women and enslaved people, could not vote.

3. A third document, the Declaration of Independence, was adopted in 1776. It says governments get their "just powers from the consent of the governed." Consent means agreement. These words gave a reason for government to listen to the people. Documents cannot make a community fair by themselves. People must make choices, such as listening when neighbors speak and thinking about how decisions affect others.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Which words from the Massachusetts Constitution show whose needs government should serve? What principle do they suggest?

2. What do the words "We the People" suggest about who government belongs to?

3. Which goal in the Preamble could guide leaders to treat people fairly? What civic virtue from the passage could help them meet that goal?

4. What does the Declaration of Independence say gives governments their powers? How could people act to support that idea?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Your town must decide how to use an empty lot. Write three sentences that propose a use, connect it to a principle in one document from the passage, and explain a civic virtue people should show while deciding.

ANSWER KEY

Words for Everyone

GRADE 4 · 4.P.2.1.A

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline one phrase from each historic document that shows an idea about government, then circle words that show how people can help their community. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Which words from the Massachusetts Constitution show whose needs government should serve? What principle do they suggest?	**"Common good" shows that government should serve the whole community, not just one person or family.**
2	What do the words "We the People" suggest about who government belongs to?	**They suggest that government belongs to the people.**
3	Which goal in the Preamble could guide leaders to treat people fairly? What civic virtue from the passage could help them meet that goal?	**"Establish Justice" is the goal. Listening when neighbors speak could help leaders make fair decisions.**
4	What does the Declaration of Independence say gives governments their powers? How could people act to support that idea?	**Governments get their powers from the consent of the governed. People could listen to others' views before making a decision.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Our town should turn the empty lot into a garden that everyone can use. The Massachusetts Constitution's goal of the common good fits a garden open to all neighbors. Residents should listen respectfully to different ideas before they decide, so more people can help shape the plan.

Accept other accurate links between a quoted document idea and a democratic principle. For the open task, look for a proposed use, a correct document connection, and a civic virtue tied to the town's decision.