Who Holds Power?

Read the Declaration's ideas about rights and government.

5.C.3.4 "Explain the meaning of the key ideals expressed in the Declaration of Independence, drafted by Thomas Jefferson and the Committee of Five, adopted July 4, 1776, including natural, unalienable rights, such as life, liberty..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the claim about equality and the descriptions of rights, circle phrases that explain a government's job and where its power comes from, and number three complaints about British rule.

Ideas Behind Independence

1. In 1776, many colonists asked a hard question: What makes a government fair? Thomas Jefferson wrote the first draft of a statement for the Committee of Five. Congress adopted it on July 4, 1776, as the Declaration of Independence. It said all people are created equal and have natural, unalienable rights. These rights belong to people from birth and cannot rightfully be taken away: life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

2. The Declaration says governments are made to protect those rights. They get their just power from the consent of the governed, meaning people agree to be governed. This makes self-rule a key idea: a government's authority comes from the people, not a king's birth. If a government becomes destructive of these purposes, the people have the right to change or replace it.

3. The writers listed reasons they believed British rule had failed. They accused King George III of imposing taxes without their consent and taking away trial by jury in many cases. Colonists claimed these protections as rights of British citizens. They also said the king had dissolved colonial lawmaking assemblies. The Declaration called for independence, yet its promise of equality was not honored for enslaved people or women.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What does the Declaration mean by natural, unalienable rights? Name two rights it gives as examples.

2. How does the idea that all people are created equal challenge rule based only on a king's birth?

3. What is a government's job, where does its power come from, and what may people do if it becomes destructive of that job?

4. Choose two complaints about British rule from the passage. Explain how each conflicts with a right or idea in the passage.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine a new island community is choosing its rules. Write a message to its leaders that names one right, explains how leaders should get power, describes what people may do if leaders become destructive of the government's purpose, and gives one way to treat everyone equally.

ANSWER KEY

Who Holds Power?

GRADE 5 · 5.C.3.4

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the claim about equality and the descriptions of rights, circle phrases that explain a government's job and where its power comes from, and number three complaints about British rule. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What does the Declaration mean by natural, unalienable rights? Name two rights it gives as examples.	**They belong to people from birth and cannot rightfully be taken away. Examples include life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.**
2	How does the idea that all people are created equal challenge rule based only on a king's birth?	**If people are equal, a king's birth does not give him a greater claim to power. Government authority should come from the people.**
3	What is a government's job, where does its power come from, and what may people do if it becomes destructive of that job?	**Its job is to protect rights. Its just power comes from the consent of the governed. People may change or replace it if it becomes destructive of that purpose.**
4	Choose two complaints about British rule from the passage. Explain how each conflicts with a right or idea in the passage.	**Taxes without consent denied colonists a say in government. Taking away trial by jury denied them a protection they claimed as British citizens.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Every person in our island community should have the right to speak freely as part of liberty. Our leaders should get power through elections in which every adult has a vote. If leaders become destructive of the government's job of protecting rights, people should be able to change the government. Rules must protect everyone equally, including people who disagree with the leaders.

Accept other passage-supported complaints and explanations. For the island message, accept a different right or plan for self-rule if the response explains consent, protects equality, and allows people to change a government that becomes destructive of its purpose.