Rights in Action

Read how government actions can protect individual rights.

8.C.1.5.C "Identify the purpose of government as the protection of unalienable individual rights and liberties."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the sentence that states why governments are created, circle two actions that protect a right or liberty, and number two actions that would violate one.

What Is Government For?

1 On a rainy Tuesday, neighbors crowd into a library to discuss a dangerous crossing near their school. Their concerns raise a larger question: Why does a government exist? In the Declaration of Independence, the founders argued that people have unalienable rights, including life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Unalienable means these rights are not gifts a government can simply take back. The Declaration says governments are created to secure these rights and get their just powers from the consent of the governed. Protecting people, not merely giving orders, is the central purpose described there.

2 At the library meeting, residents ask the town council to add a crossing guard. One student says the street feels unsafe, while another suggests changing the traffic lights. The council lets both speak and accepts a petition signed by families. Allowing peaceful discussion and petitions respects their liberties. The council studies traffic before making a plan. If officials add a guard to reduce the risk of injury, they will act to help protect people's lives. Residents and officials may disagree about the best plan, but the government must take their rights seriously.

3 The purpose of protecting rights reaches beyond town meetings. Imagine a public school principal orders every student to join a religious prayer. A government-run school must not force students to practice a religion, because doing so violates their religious liberty. In another case, a person accused of breaking a law must receive fair legal procedures, not punishment based only on an official's anger. Constitutional protections place limits on what officials may do, even when those officials believe they have good reasons. A government serves its purpose when its actions respect the rights of each person.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. According to the Declaration of Independence, why are governments created?

2. How does the council protect liberties at the library meeting?

3. Why would the principal's order fail to protect an individual liberty?

4. How do fair legal procedures help government serve its purpose?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

A city wants to ban all peaceful gatherings in its parks because some visitors leave trash. In three sentences, propose a better response, identify the liberty it protects, and explain how your response serves government's purpose.

ANSWER KEY

Rights in Action

GRADE 8 · 8.C.1.5.C

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the sentence that states why governments are created, circle two actions that protect a right or liberty, and number two actions that would violate one. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	According to the Declaration of Independence, why are governments created?	**Governments are created to secure people's unalienable rights, including life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.**
2	How does the council protect liberties at the library meeting?	**It lets students speak and accepts a petition, respecting peaceful discussion and petitions.**
3	Why would the principal's order fail to protect an individual liberty?	**Forcing students to join a religious prayer violates their religious liberty.**
4	How do fair legal procedures help government serve its purpose?	**They protect an accused person's rights by preventing punishment based only on an official's anger.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The city should add trash bins and enforce rules against littering instead of banning peaceful gatherings. This response protects people's liberty to gather peacefully. It addresses the trash problem while allowing people to exercise a liberty the government should protect.

For the marking job, accept the Declaration sentence about securing rights, any two clearly protective actions, and the forced prayer and punishment without fair procedures as violations. For Your Turn, accept other practical responses that address trash without banning peaceful gatherings.