# Power and Permission

Read how consent gives government authority and sets limits on its power.

**8.C.1.5.D** "Explain how a social contract exists between citizens and their government, requiring the consent of the governed, as well as the right of citizens to alter their governments when abusive."

NAME _____ DATE _____

## 1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

**YOUR JOB** Underline the sentence that explains where government authority comes from, circle two colonial complaints that show a loss of consent, and box the words that explain when people may change their government.

### When Government Loses Consent

1. In 1776, American colonists argued about who had the right to govern them. The Declaration of Independence drew on an idea called the social contract: people allow a government to exercise power in exchange for protecting their rights. This is not a paper each person signs. Consent of the governed means that a government's authority depends on the people's agreement, rather than a ruler's claim to own power. People can express consent through representatives they choose and rules they have a voice in shaping.

2. Colonists said Britain had broken that agreement. In the Declaration, they complained that the king had dissolved representative legislatures and that taxes were imposed without their consent. Those complaints were about more than money or a meeting schedule. If people cannot choose lawmakers who can act, or influence the taxes they must pay, their voice in government is weakened. The colonists argued that a government taking power while shutting out the people had lost the consent that made its authority legitimate in the first place.

3. The Declaration also says people have the right to alter or abolish a government that destroys their rights. It warns that governments should not be changed for small or short-lived problems. The colonists described a long pattern of abuses, then declared independence and set out to form a new government. In a democracy today, citizens may seek change by organizing, petitioning, voting, and working to change laws or leaders. These actions connect the right to alter government to its basic purpose: serving people, not ruling without their consent.

## 2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Under the social contract, why does a government need the people's consent to have authority?

2. Choose one colonial complaint from the passage. How did it show that colonists had less say in their government?

3. Why does the passage distinguish a long pattern of abuses from small or short-lived problems when discussing the right to change a government?

4. How could voting and organizing help citizens alter an abusive government while keeping its power tied to consent?

## 3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine a town government repeatedly ignores a serious problem you invent and blocks residents from having a say. In five or six sentences, explain what the government owes residents under a social contract, how its actions weaken consent, and one peaceful way residents could alter their government.

ANSWER KEY

# Power and Permission

GRADE 8 · 8.C.1.5.D

## PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the sentence that explains where government authority comes from, circle two colonial complaints that show a loss of consent, and box the words that explain when people may change their government. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

## PART 2 · ANSWERS

| # | QUESTION | ANSWER |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Under the social contract, why does a government need the people's consent to have authority? | **People allow a government to exercise power in exchange for protecting their rights. Its authority depends on their agreement, not a ruler's claim to power.** |
| 2 | Choose one colonial complaint from the passage. How did it show that colonists had less say in their government? | **The king dissolved representative legislatures, weakening the colonists' voice through lawmakers they chose. Accept the complaint about taxes imposed without their consent with an explanation of their lack of influence.** |
| 3 | Why does the passage distinguish a long pattern of abuses from small or short-lived problems when discussing the right to change a government? | **The right to alter or abolish a government responds to serious, lasting abuses that destroy rights, not every temporary problem or disagreement.** |
| 4 | How could voting and organizing help citizens alter an abusive government while keeping its power tied to consent? | **Citizens can organize to demand change and vote for different leaders. Their participation helps make government answer to the people whose consent gives it authority.** |

## PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

A town council repeatedly refuses to fix unsafe drinking water and stops residents from speaking at public meetings. Under a social contract, the council should protect residents and listen to the people who give it authority. Blocking public input weakens consent because residents cannot help shape decisions that affect them. Residents could organize and vote for new council members who promise open meetings and a safe water plan. That change would put government power back in the hands of the people it serves.

Accept other passage-based explanations that connect authority to consent and the right to change government to serious abuses. For Part 3, look for an invented problem, a clear link between blocked participation and weakened consent, and a peaceful path to change.