Rights on Paper

Read how a declaration turned principles into demands.

8.C.10.4.C "Identify the ideals, democratic principles, and demands expressed in the Declaration of Sentiments."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline one ideal, circle one democratic principle, and number at least three demands in the passage so you can see how its claims lead to calls for change.

A Declaration for Change

1 In July 1848, people gathered in Seneca Falls, New York, to debate the rights of women. Elizabeth Cady Stanton helped write the Declaration of Sentiments for the meeting. Its opening echoed the Declaration of Independence but made a striking change: "all men and women are created equal." This claim was an ideal, a belief about how people should be treated. The authors argued that women were not naturally less capable than men and deserved equal rights. Their words challenged a society that gave men far more power in public life.

2 The declaration also used a democratic principle: governments receive their "just powers from the consent of the governed." In other words, people affected by laws should have a voice in making them. Yet women could not vote in elections. The authors called this denial of the "elective franchise" a serious injustice and demanded that women gain the right to vote. This was more than a request for a new rule. It asked the nation to apply its own ideas about representative government to women as well as men.

3 Voting was not the declaration's only concern. It described laws that gave a married woman's husband control over her property and the wages she earned. It also criticized barriers that kept women from higher education and many professions. The authors demanded changes to these laws and opportunities, along with a stronger voice for women in the church. Each demand named a specific barrier to equality. Together, the complaints showed how the declaration's ideals and democratic principles could guide changes in everyday life, from earning money to taking part in public decisions.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What ideal did the declaration express by changing a familiar line from the Declaration of Independence?

2. What democratic principle did the declaration use to argue that women should have a voice in making laws?

3. Which voting right did the authors demand, and why did they consider its denial unjust?

4. What change did the authors demand concerning a married woman's property and wages?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a four-sentence letter to an 1848 neighbor who thinks voting is the only issue. Name an ideal and a democratic principle from the declaration, identify a demand about education or work, and explain how that demand would help put the ideal into practice.

ANSWER KEY

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GRADE 8 · 8.C.10.4.C

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline one ideal, circle one democratic principle, and number at least three demands in the passage so you can see how its claims lead to calls for change. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What ideal did the declaration express by changing a familiar line from the Declaration of Independence?	**Women and men are created equal and deserve equal rights.**
2	What democratic principle did the declaration use to argue that women should have a voice in making laws?	**Governments get their just powers from the consent of the governed, so people affected by laws should have a voice in making them.**
3	Which voting right did the authors demand, and why did they consider its denial unjust?	**They demanded the right to vote for women because women were governed by laws but had no vote in elections.**
4	What change did the authors demand concerning a married woman's property and wages?	**They wanted laws changed so a husband would not control his wife's property and earned wages.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Dear neighbor, the Declaration of Sentiments says women and men are created equal. It also says governments get their just powers from the consent of the governed. Women need access to higher education, not just the ballot. Opening colleges to women would give them a fairer chance to use their abilities and take part in public life.

Accept accurate paraphrases of equality, consent of the governed, and the demands. For the letter, look for four sentences that connect an education or work demand to the ideal of equality.