Ideas Into Government

Connect the Declaration's principles to constitutional rules.

8.C.3.2.A "Identify the relationship between the principles established in the Declaration of Independence and the government created by the Constitution of the United States of America."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two principles stated in the Declaration. Number each one, then put the same number beside a feature of the Constitution that puts that principle into practice.

From Principles to Rules

1. Imagine residents of a new nation asking two questions: Why may a government rule, and how should it work? In 1776, the Declaration of Independence answered the first question as the colonies broke from Britain. It said people have rights, including life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Governments receive their rightful power from the consent of the governed and exist to secure those rights. If a government becomes destructive of that purpose, the people may change or replace it. These claims gave a standard for judging any government.

2. After independence, the states needed a national government that could act but could not rule without limits. The Constitution, written in 1787, begins with "We the People" and sets up a House of Representatives whose members voters elect. At first, however, states decided who could vote, and many people were excluded. The Constitution also divides federal power among Congress, the president, and the courts. Each branch has ways to limit the others. These rules make leaders answer to institutions rather than giving any one person unchecked power.

3. The Constitution did not list every protection when it was first written. In 1791, the Bill of Rights added amendments protecting freedoms such as speech and religion. The First Amendment also protects the right to ask the government to correct a problem. The Constitution provides a process for adding amendments, so its rules can change without replacing the whole government. The Declaration stated that people are equal, yet slavery remained legal under the original Constitution. After the Civil War, the Fourteenth Amendment required states to provide equal protection of the laws.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How does electing members of the House of Representatives put a Declaration principle into practice?

2. Which Declaration principle is supported by the First Amendment protections in the passage? Explain the connection.

3. The Declaration says people may change a government that fails its purpose. How does the Constitution provide a way to change its rules?

4. How does the Fourteenth Amendment address a gap between the Declaration's claim of equality and the original Constitution?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine you are designing a constitution for a new country. In four sentences, name one Declaration principle from the passage, invent a rule that puts it into action, and compare your rule with a related feature of the U.S. Constitution, including one difference.

ANSWER KEY

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GRADE 8 · 8.C.3.2.A

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two principles stated in the Declaration. Number each one, then put the same number beside a feature of the Constitution that puts that principle into practice. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How does electing members of the House of Representatives put a Declaration principle into practice?	**Elections let voters choose representatives, putting the principle that government gets its power from the consent of the governed into practice.**
2	Which Declaration principle is supported by the First Amendment protections in the passage? Explain the connection.	**The Declaration says governments exist to secure people's rights. The First Amendment protects rights such as speech, religion, and asking the government to correct a problem.**
3	The Declaration says people may change a government that fails its purpose. How does the Constitution provide a way to change its rules?	**Its amendment process allows people to change constitutional rules without replacing the whole government.**
4	How does the Fourteenth Amendment address a gap between the Declaration's claim of equality and the original Constitution?	**Slavery remained legal under the original Constitution despite the Declaration's claim of equality. The Fourteenth Amendment later required states to provide equal protection of the laws.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The Declaration says government receives power from the consent of the governed. In my new country, citizens could remove the head of government through a recall vote if enough voters sign a petition. The U.S. Constitution gives voters a voice by requiring elections for the House of Representatives. My rule allows a direct vote to remove a leader between elections, unlike the House election rule.

Accept other accurate links between a Declaration principle and a constitutional feature named in the passage. For Your Turn, the invented rule must be distinct from the U.S. feature the student compares it with.