Who Holds Power?

Compare political ideals with the people they included.

MWH.P.2.1.A "Evaluate various significant documents from the United States of America and other nations to compare civic virtues and principles of political systems."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline one phrase in each paragraph that shows how people should have a voice in government. Circle one civic principle in each paragraph, then number the two examples of an ideal that did not include everyone.

Three Documents, Three Tests of Power

(1) Imagine three crowds asking a government to explain its power. In 1776, representatives of thirteen British colonies issued the U.S. Declaration of Independence. It argues that governments gain their just powers from the "consent of the governed" and that people may change a government that persistently violates their rights. Its list of complaints about King George III gives reasons for separation, rather than setting rules for elections. The document prizes political consent and resistance to abuse. Yet its claim that "all men are created equal" did not bring equal political rights to enslaved people or women.

(2) In 1789, amid revolution, France's National Assembly adopted the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen. It states that law expresses the "general will" and that citizens may help make law, personally or through representatives. It also says citizens are equally eligible for public positions according to their talents and virtues. Unlike the U.S. declaration's argument for breaking from a ruler, this document sketches principles for a new political order. It values participation, equal standing before the law, and public service based on merit. In practice, French women did not gain equal voting rights from this declaration.

(3) In 1996, South Africa adopted a constitution after apartheid, a system that had denied most Black South Africans political power. Its preamble calls for a society based on "democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights." The constitution guarantees every adult citizen the right to vote and requires regular elections. It also protects equality before the law and prohibits unfair discrimination, including discrimination based on race or sex. Like the French declaration, it treats political participation as a principle; unlike that 1789 declaration, it explicitly protects voting for adult citizens regardless of sex. Its written protections offer standards for judging whether government actions match its promises.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How do the U.S. and French declarations each describe the people's role in political power? Give one detail from each.

2. Compare what the French declaration and South African constitution say about participation. What difference does the passage identify about women's voting rights?

3. How could a person use either the U.S. declaration or South African constitution to challenge a government's actions? Use a principle from each document.

4. Which document connects public office to merit? Explain how its focus differs from one principle in each of the other two documents.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write four sentences proposing a student council charter that combines a different principle from each of two documents in the passage. Name both documents, give one specific council rule, and explain how that rule would prevent exclusion or abuse.

ANSWER KEY

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HIGH SCHOOL · MWH.P.2.1.A

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline one phrase in each paragraph that shows how people should have a voice in government. Circle one civic principle in each paragraph, then number the two examples of an ideal that did not include everyone. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How do the U.S. and French declarations each describe the people's role in political power? Give one detail from each.	**The U.S. declaration says government gets its just powers from the people's consent. The French declaration says citizens may help make law directly or through representatives.**
2	Compare what the French declaration and South African constitution say about participation. What difference does the passage identify about women's voting rights?	**Both value participation, but the French declaration did not give women equal voting rights. South Africa's constitution explicitly protects voting for every adult citizen regardless of sex.**
3	How could a person use either the U.S. declaration or South African constitution to challenge a government's actions? Use a principle from each document.	**A person could use the U.S. declaration's principle of consent to challenge a government that abuses its power. A person could use South Africa's constitutional protections to challenge unfair discrimination or a denial of voting rights.**
4	Which document connects public office to merit? Explain how its focus differs from one principle in each of the other two documents.	**The French declaration connects eligibility for public positions to talents and virtues. The U.S. declaration focuses on consent and the right to change an abusive government, while South Africa's constitution protects voting and equality.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The U.S. Declaration of Independence suggests that our council should get its authority from students' consent. South Africa's constitution supports giving every eligible person a vote. Our charter will require an annual election in which every enrolled student can vote for council representatives. This rule would keep council members from choosing their own successors and excluding other students.

Accept other comparisons supported by accurate details in the passage. For Part 3, look for two distinct, correctly attributed principles and a specific rule linked to preventing exclusion or abuse.