Who Holds Power?

Compare civic principles across three national documents

TOT.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 statement in each paragraph that shows where political power comes from or how people participate. Circle one civic value or principle in each paragraph so you can compare the documents.

Three Documents, Three Turning Points

1. In 1776, delegates from thirteen British colonies adopted the U.S. Declaration of Independence to explain their break with Britain. The document says people are created equal and possess rights that governments must protect. It argues that governments gain their rightful power from the consent of the governed. If a government repeatedly violates those rights, the people may change or replace it. The delegates listed abuses they attributed to King George III, including taxes imposed without colonial consent. Their appeal to equality and public consent challenged inherited rule, although slavery continued and most women were excluded from voting in the new nation.

2. In 1789, amid the French Revolution, France's National Assembly adopted the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen. It says sovereignty rests in the nation, not in a monarch who rules by birth. The law should express the general will, and citizens have the right to take part in making it, directly or through representatives. It also declares that citizens are equal before the law and that public offices should be open according to ability. These principles reject legal privilege based on birth. Yet its language and political practice did not give women the same political rights as men.

3. After decades of apartheid, South Africa adopted a new Constitution in 1996. Its preamble calls for healing past divisions and building a society based on democratic values, social justice, and fundamental human rights. The Constitution says every citizen is equally protected by law. It establishes universal adult voting rights, regular elections, and a multiparty system to ensure accountability and openness. These rules make participation part of an ongoing political system, not just a call for change. Apartheid law had separated people by race and denied most Black South Africans the vote. The new Constitution promises equal standing to citizens of every race.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Compare the U.S. and French declarations. Where does each say rightful political power comes from?

2. How does each document from France and South Africa provide for political participation? Name one detail that differs.

3. What principle about equality appears in all three documents? What limits to equality does the passage describe for the United States and France?

4. How does South Africa's Constitution make a civic principle part of an ongoing political system, while the U.S. Declaration uses a principle to justify change?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write four sentences proposing one rule for a new student council. Compare ideas from two of the documents, explain how your rule puts those ideas into practice, and identify an exclusion described in the passage that the rule would avoid.

ANSWER KEY

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HIGH SCHOOL · TOT.P.2.1.A

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline one statement in each paragraph that shows where political power comes from or how people participate. Circle one civic value or principle in each paragraph so you can compare the documents. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Compare the U.S. and French declarations. Where does each say rightful political power comes from?	**The U.S. declaration says government gets its rightful power from the consent of the governed. The French declaration says sovereignty rests in the nation, and citizens may take part in making laws.**
2	How does each document from France and South Africa provide for political participation? Name one detail that differs.	**The French declaration gives citizens a role in lawmaking, directly or through representatives. South Africa's Constitution establishes universal adult voting rights and regular elections.**
3	What principle about equality appears in all three documents? What limits to equality does the passage describe for the United States and France?	**All three support equality. Slavery continued and most women could not vote in the early United States; the French declaration and political practice did not give women the same political rights as men.**
4	How does South Africa's Constitution make a civic principle part of an ongoing political system, while the U.S. Declaration uses a principle to justify change?	**South Africa's Constitution establishes regular elections, universal adult voting rights, and a multiparty system to support participation and accountability. The U.S. Declaration argues that people may replace a government that repeatedly violates their rights.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The U.S. Declaration of Independence says political power needs the consent of the governed, while South Africa's Constitution supports participation through regular elections and universal adult voting. Our student council should hold elections each semester in which every enrolled student can vote. This rule gives students repeated chances to choose representatives and makes the council answerable to them. It also avoids an exclusion described in the passage, when most women could not vote in the early United States.

Accept accurate paraphrases grounded in the passage. For Part 3, look for a comparison of two documents, one workable council rule, an explanation of its effect, and a relevant example of exclusion.