Three Public Purposes

Examine government actions through the Preamble's goals.

USG.C.1.1 "Examine the purposes and functions of government, including the establishment of justice, promotion of general welfare, and liberty as stated in the Preamble to the Constitution of the United States."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline one action that helps establish justice, circle one that promotes the general welfare, and write L beside one action that exercises liberty. Use your marks to compare the three purposes.

Who Gets Clean Water?

1. After a storm damages a town's drinking-water system, residents argue about what help the federal government should provide. Some want funding to replace broken pipes. Others worry that officials might give aid to favored neighborhoods first. At a public meeting, people challenge the plan without asking anyone's permission. These concerns point to three aims named in the Constitution's Preamble: establish Justice, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty. The Preamble states purposes for forming a government, but it does not, by itself, grant officials a power or decide a lawsuit.

2. Congress might authorize federal funds to repair water systems after disasters. A federal agency could then distribute money under the law Congress passed. Repairing a system that supplies safe water to many residents serves the general welfare, even though each household may benefit in a different way. Establishing justice asks a different question: Are the rules applied fairly and according to law? If an agency denies a neighborhood aid for an unlawful reason, affected residents may challenge its decision in court. Courts decide cases under the law, rather than simply choosing the most popular plan.

3. Residents can also speak at the meeting, publish criticism, and petition federal officials to change the aid rules. These activities connect to liberty because the First Amendment protects speech and the right to petition the government. Liberty does not guarantee that a person will win every policy debate; it protects room to make arguments without government punishment for a viewpoint. The three purposes can overlap. A fair aid process may help more people get clean water while preserving their ability to object. To judge a government action, ask what it does, whose needs it addresses, and which freedoms it respects.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How could federal funding for pipe repairs promote the general welfare? Use a detail from the passage.

2. Why would a challenge to an unlawful aid decision concern justice, not just the need for clean water?

3. How can residents exercise liberty even if federal officials do not change the aid rules?

4. The passage says the three purposes can overlap. Explain how a fair aid process could connect justice, general welfare, and liberty.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine Congress is planning a federal program to help communities during extreme heat. Propose one program action or rule, then explain how it could serve general welfare and justice while respecting liberty. Use an example other than the town's water system.

ANSWER KEY

Three Public Purposes

HIGH SCHOOL · USG.C.1.1

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline one action that helps establish justice, circle one that promotes the general welfare, and write L beside one action that exercises liberty. Use your marks to compare the three purposes. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How could federal funding for pipe repairs promote the general welfare? Use a detail from the passage.	**It could help repair a system that supplies safe water to many residents.**
2	Why would a challenge to an unlawful aid decision concern justice, not just the need for clean water?	**Justice concerns whether officials apply aid rules fairly and according to law. Residents could challenge an unlawful decision in court.**
3	How can residents exercise liberty even if federal officials do not change the aid rules?	**They can speak, publish criticism, and petition officials. Liberty protects those activities, not a guaranteed policy victory.**
4	The passage says the three purposes can overlap. Explain how a fair aid process could connect justice, general welfare, and liberty.	**Applying aid rules fairly supports justice. Helping more people get clean water promotes the general welfare, and allowing residents to object respects liberty.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Congress could fund cooling centers in towns with dangerous heat. A rule could award funds using published heat and income data rather than officials' personal preferences, which supports justice through fair treatment. Cooling centers promote the general welfare by giving many residents a safer place during heat waves. People could choose whether to use the centers and could publicly criticize their locations without losing access, which respects liberty.

Accept other plausible connections between government actions and the three Preamble purposes. For Part 3, look for a proposed federal action and a distinct explanation of justice, general welfare, and liberty.