Relief and Rights

How constitutional powers and limits work during a crisis

USG.C.1.3.C "Explain how the Constitution of the United States of America reflects a balance between a concern for the public good and a concern for the protection of individual rights."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline actions meant to help the public, then circle the three named amendments. Number each circled amendment and write the same number beside one government action that amendment limits.

After the Flood

1. After a major flood, residents gather outside a federal office to demand faster help. Roads are broken, and families need safe drinking water. The Constitution gives Congress power to collect taxes and spend money for the general welfare. Congress could use that power to fund emergency supplies and repairs. That power serves a shared need, but it does not erase constitutional limits on government. Even during a crisis, officials must consider the rights of people who challenge the response. The question is not whether safety or liberty matters more in every case. It is how government can protect both.

2. At the gathering, the First Amendment protects speech, peaceful assembly, and petitions to government. Residents can criticize the relief plan and ask Congress to change it. Officials cannot forbid the gathering simply because its message embarrasses them. Yet rescue vehicles must reach the office. A rule keeping every group out of the vehicle lane, regardless of its views, could protect access while leaving people a place to speak. Whether a restriction is lawful depends on how it works in practice, not just on a safety label. The goal is safe access without silencing dissent.

3. Suppose officials suspect that someone at the gathering stole relief supplies. The Fourth Amendment protects people against unreasonable searches and seizures. A protester's criticism alone does not justify searching that person's bag for stolen goods. Officials can investigate actual evidence of theft, but they must obey constitutional rules for any search. The Fifth Amendment also says the federal government cannot take a person's life, liberty, or property without due process of law. It cannot skip fair legal procedures simply to punish a suspected thief quickly. These protections may slow an investigation, but they help ensure that emergency powers do not become tools for arbitrary punishment.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How could Congress use a constitutional power to meet a shared need after the flood, and what limit must officials still respect?

2. How could officials keep a lane open for rescue vehicles without violating the protesters' First Amendment rights?

3. Officials want to investigate stolen supplies. How does the Fourth Amendment allow that public purpose while limiting a search?

4. Why might the Fifth Amendment slow the response to a suspected thief, and how does that limit protect individuals?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Congress funds a voluntary flood-warning app that asks residents to share their locations. In five sentences, explain how the app could serve the public good, how officials could protect a constitutional right named in the passage, and one cost or limit that protection would create.

ANSWER KEY

Relief and Rights

HIGH SCHOOL · USG.C.1.3.C

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline actions meant to help the public, then circle the three named amendments. Number each circled amendment and write the same number beside one government action that amendment limits. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How could Congress use a constitutional power to meet a shared need after the flood, and what limit must officials still respect?	**Congress could use tax money to fund supplies and repairs for the general welfare. Officials must still respect constitutional rights.**
2	How could officials keep a lane open for rescue vehicles without violating the protesters' First Amendment rights?	**They could keep every group out of the vehicle lane, regardless of its views, while leaving people a place to speak.**
3	Officials want to investigate stolen supplies. How does the Fourth Amendment allow that public purpose while limiting a search?	**Officials can investigate evidence of theft, but they must follow constitutional search rules. Criticism alone does not justify searching a protester's bag.**
4	Why might the Fifth Amendment slow the response to a suspected thief, and how does that limit protect individuals?	**Due process requires fair legal procedures before the federal government takes a person's liberty or property. That limit helps prevent arbitrary punishment.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

A flood-warning app could alert residents when rising water threatens their area. Location data could help officials send alerts to the people most at risk. The Fourth Amendment's protection against unreasonable searches matters when officials seek personal location data. Officials could ask residents to share their locations voluntarily instead of collecting the data without their permission. This choice might leave officials with less complete information, but it would help protect residents' privacy.

Accept other passage-supported examples of public needs and constitutional limits. For the open task, look for a specific use of the app, a named right, and a realistic cost of protecting that right.