Six Shared Aims

Read the Preamble's purposes through choices a government might face.

USG.C.3.1.A "Identify and describe the purposes for government as stated by the Framers in the Preamble to the Constitution of the United States of America."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the six purposes from the Preamble as they appear in the passage. Number them 1 through 6 in the order you find them so you can track what each purpose seeks.

What Should Government Seek?

(1) In 1787, delegates met in Philadelphia to design a new national government. The Constitution they produced begins with a brief introduction called the Preamble. It speaks in the name of "We the People" and lists aims for the government they were creating. One aim, "form a more perfect Union," points to stronger cooperation among the states, which had struggled to act together under the Articles of Confederation. Another, "establish Justice," calls for a system in which laws and decisions are fair. The Preamble names goals, not detailed instructions for how officials must achieve them.

(2) The Framers also wrote of "insure domestic Tranquility" and "provide for the common defence." These aims both involve safety, but their focus differs. Domestic tranquility concerns peace and order within the country, such as when violence disrupts a town. Common defense concerns protecting the country from threats beyond its borders. The wording matters: a conflict among residents is not the same as an attack by another country. By placing both aims in the Preamble, the Framers showed that a national government should be able to respond to dangers at home and dangers from abroad.

(3) Two more aims reach beyond immediate safety. To "promote the general Welfare" is to advance the well-being of the country as a whole, rather than serve only one person or state. To "secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity" is to protect freedom for people living then and for future generations. Imagine a public decision that helps many communities today but limits the choices of people decades from now. The Preamble invites citizens to consider more than one aim when judging such a decision. Its six purposes describe what government should seek, not a promise that every policy will succeed.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Identify the two purposes in the first paragraph. What does each seek?

2. Which purpose fits a violent dispute within a city, and which fits an attack from another country? Describe the difference.

3. Why does a plan that serves many states fit the purpose of promoting the general Welfare more clearly than a plan that serves only one state?

4. Which purpose asks people to consider future generations? What does that purpose seek to protect?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine a proposed national rule that would help stop a dangerous disease from spreading across state lines but would temporarily restrict travel between states. In 4 to 5 sentences, identify and describe two Preamble purposes that could guide the debate, and explain how they might pull decision-makers in different directions.

ANSWER KEY

Six Shared Aims

HIGH SCHOOL · USG.C.3.1.A

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the six purposes from the Preamble as they appear in the passage. Number them 1 through 6 in the order you find them so you can track what each purpose seeks. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Identify the two purposes in the first paragraph. What does each seek?	**Form a more perfect Union seeks stronger cooperation among the states. Establish Justice seeks fair laws and decisions.**
2	Which purpose fits a violent dispute within a city, and which fits an attack from another country? Describe the difference.	**Domestic Tranquility concerns peace and order within the country. Common defence concerns protection from threats beyond its borders.**
3	Why does a plan that serves many states fit the purpose of promoting the general Welfare more clearly than a plan that serves only one state?	**The general Welfare concerns the well-being of the country as a whole, not just one state.**
4	Which purpose asks people to consider future generations? What does that purpose seek to protect?	**Securing the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity seeks to protect freedom for people now and in future generations.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The rule could promote the general Welfare by helping protect health across several states. It could also affect the goal of securing the Blessings of Liberty for people now and in the future. Restricting travel may slow the disease, but it limits people's choices about where they can go. Decision-makers would need to weigh both purposes when deciding how broad and how long the rule should be.

Accept accurate paraphrases of the six purposes. For Part 3, accept any two relevant purposes if the response describes each and explains a plausible tension between them.