Two Paths to Liberty

Compare how two foundational documents challenge a ruler.

11-12.RI.9 "Analyze foundational U.S. and British/global documents of historical and literary significance. Evaluate the approaches of two or more authors for their central ideas, purposes, and rhetorical features."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline each document's central claim, circle details about its purpose, and number the rhetorical features each uses to persuade readers. Use your marks to compare the authors' approaches.

Limits and Independence

1. In 1689, England's Parliament adopted the Bill of Rights after James II fled and William and Mary took the throne. In 1776, delegates to the Continental Congress approved the Declaration of Independence, announcing that thirteen colonies were breaking from Britain. Both texts challenge a ruler's authority, but they speak from different political positions. One addresses how a monarchy should operate; the other explains why people may replace a government. Reading them together reveals that liberty can be argued through legal rules or public principles.

2. The English Bill of Rights lists abuses attributed to James II, then states rules for future rulers. It declares that a monarch cannot suspend laws without Parliament's consent and that elections to Parliament should be free. Its repeated claims about what is lawful turn protest into limits on royal power. Parliament addresses the crown from inside an existing system, defending its own authority rather than calling for an end to monarchy. Yet its protections did not grant everyone a vote; free elections did not mean universal suffrage.

3. The American Declaration of Independence starts with a broader claim: people have rights, and governments receive power from the consent of the governed. It then lists charges against George III before announcing political separation. This sequence asks a wider public to judge whether revolution is justified, not merely whether a king has broken a rule. Its language of human equality gives the argument moral force, although slavery persisted and women lacked political equality. Unlike Parliament's bill, the declaration uses principles to defend creating a new nation.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How do the documents' central ideas differ on what should happen to government?

2. How does each document's political position shape its purpose?

3. Compare how the two documents use lists to make their cases.

4. How do the documents' claims about liberty compare with the limits on liberty described in the passage?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

A museum can feature only one document at the entrance to an exhibit called "How to Challenge a Ruler." Write a four- or five-sentence label choosing one document, using a detail from each, and explaining why your choice is the stronger opening for today's visitors.

Two Paths to Liberty

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline each document's central claim, circle details about its purpose, and number the rhetorical features each uses to persuade readers. Use your marks to compare the authors' approaches. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How do the documents' central ideas differ on what should happen to government?	**The Bill of Rights seeks limits on a continuing monarchy; the Declaration argues that people may replace a government and justifies separation from Britain.**
2	How does each document's political position shape its purpose?	**Parliament works within the monarchy to defend its authority and set rules. The colonial delegates defend a break from Britain to a wider public.**
3	Compare how the two documents use lists to make their cases.	**The Bill of Rights moves from abuses to rules limiting royal power. The Declaration lists charges after stating broad principles to justify independence.**
4	How do the documents' claims about liberty compare with the limits on liberty described in the passage?	**The Bill of Rights calls for free parliamentary elections but not universal voting rights. The Declaration invokes human equality, although slavery persisted and women lacked political equality.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Place the Declaration of Independence at the entrance because its claim that government depends on consent gives visitors a question to carry through the exhibit: who has the right to rule? Its list of charges against George III shows how its writers justified a break. The Bill of Rights offers concrete limits, including Parliament's control over suspended laws, but it assumes the monarchy will remain. The Declaration makes the stakes of challenging authority immediately clear, even as its equality claim exposes a gap between principle and practice.

Accept either choice in Part 3 if the response uses an accurate detail from each document and evaluates their effectiveness for the stated audience.