

Three Documents, Big Ideas

Find each document's purpose, meaning, and lasting importance.

4.13.C "identify the intent, meaning, and importance of the Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution, and the Bill of Rights (Celebrate Freedom Week)."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the sentence that states the intent of each document. Circle words or sentences that tell why each document is important.

Words That Shaped a Nation

- ① In 1776, the Declaration of Independence announced that the thirteen colonies were leaving British rule. Its intent was to explain why the colonies believed they could form a new country. It said people have rights, including life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. It also said governments get their power from the people they govern. The Declaration mattered because it gave reasons for American independence.
- ② After the Revolution, leaders needed a plan for running the new nation. The U.S. Constitution, written in 1787, established the national government. Its intent was to set rules for government and divide power among three branches. The Constitution describes how laws are made and explains that no branch should have all the power. It is important because it remains the highest law of the land.
- ③ The Bill of Rights is the first ten amendments to the Constitution. Added in 1791, its intent was to protect individual freedoms from government power. It protects freedoms such as speaking, writing, practicing religion, and having a fair trial. These amendments are important because they limit government and help protect people's rights today. Together, the three documents explain independence, organize government, and guard freedoms.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 What was the intent of the Declaration of Independence?

2 What does the Constitution mean when it divides power among three branches?

3 Why is the U.S. Constitution important today?

4 What was the intent of the Bill of Rights, and why is it important?

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Create a Classroom Freedom Rule. Write exactly three sentences that state its intent, explain what it means, and tell why it is important.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline the sentence that states the intent of each document. Circle words or sentences that tell why each document is important. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What was the intent of the Declaration of Independence?	Its intent was to explain why the colonies believed they could form a new country.
2	What does the Constitution mean when it divides power among three branches?	Power is shared among three branches, so no one branch has all the power.
3	Why is the U.S. Constitution important today?	It remains the highest law of the land.
4	What was the intent of the Bill of Rights, and why is it important?	Its intent was to protect individual freedoms from government power. It is important because it limits government and helps protect people's rights.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Our Classroom Freedom Rule gives each student a chance to share an idea during class meetings. It means students may speak politely and listen when others speak. This rule is important because everyone can help make classroom decisions.

Accept responses that include all three parts: an intent, a clear meaning, and an importance statement. The student may create any reasonable classroom rule that protects fairness, participation, or respectful treatment.