

Changing the Framework

Read how amendments respond to major national needs and reshape rights.

8.16 "Government. The student understands the purpose of changing the U.S. Constitution and the impact of amendments on American society. The student is expected to: summarize the purposes for amending the U.S. Constitution..."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline each statement that explains a purpose for amending the Constitution. Then circle the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments and write 1, 2, or 3 beside each impact described.

Amendments and Reconstruction

- ① Constitutions provide a framework for government, but the United States has a process for changing its Constitution when the nation needs a lasting change. An amendment can correct a serious problem, protect rights, or respond to changes in society. To propose an amendment, Congress usually needs a two-thirds vote in both houses. Then three-fourths of the states must ratify it. These demanding steps prevent quick changes based only on a temporary public mood, while still allowing the Constitution to address major national issues.
- ② After the Civil War, the Reconstruction Amendments changed the Constitution to rebuild the nation and expand freedom. The Thirteenth Amendment, ratified in 1865, abolished slavery and involuntary servitude, except as punishment for a crime. It ended the legal system that had treated enslaved people as property. Its impact was enormous, although ending slavery did not end discrimination or create equal treatment immediately. Later laws and court cases were needed as Americans continued to debate how freedom should work in daily life.
- ③ The Fourteenth Amendment, ratified in 1868, made people born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to its jurisdiction, citizens. It required states to provide equal protection of laws and due process, meaning legal procedures. The Fifteenth Amendment, ratified in 1870, said that the right to vote could not be denied because of race, color, or previous condition of servitude. Together, these amendments gave African Americans constitutional claims to citizenship, legal equality, and voting. However, discrimination, violence, and state laws blocked many people from using those rights for decades.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 What are three purposes for amending the U.S. Constitution?

2 How did the Thirteenth Amendment change American society? Include one limit on its immediate impact.

3 How did the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments expand rights in different ways?

4 Why does the amendment process require large votes in Congress and the states?

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Choose a modern, lasting issue not named in the passage. Write five sentences proposing a constitutional amendment: explain why it is needed, name the right or protection it would address, describe the proposal and ratification steps, and predict one impact on society.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline each statement that explains a purpose for amending the Constitution. Then circle the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments and write 1, 2, or 3 beside each impact described. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What are three purposes for amending the U.S. Constitution?	To correct a serious problem, protect rights, and respond to changes in society.
2	How did the Thirteenth Amendment change American society? Include one limit on its immediate impact.	It abolished slavery and involuntary servitude, except as punishment for a crime, ending the legal system that treated enslaved people as property. It did not immediately end discrimination or create equal treatment.
3	How did the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments expand rights in different ways?	The Fourteenth Amendment established citizenship for people born or naturalized in the United States and required equal protection and due process. The Fifteenth Amendment protected voting rights from denial based on race, color, or previous condition of servitude.
4	Why does the amendment process require large votes in Congress and the states?	The demanding process prevents quick changes based only on a temporary public mood, while allowing lasting changes for major national issues.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

An amendment protecting personal digital data could be needed because technology has changed how private information is collected. It could state that people have a right to control access to their personal data. Congress would need a two-thirds vote to propose it. Three-fourths of the states would need to ratify it. The amendment could limit unfair data use and give people a constitutional protection.

Accept equivalent summaries that connect amendments to correcting problems, protecting rights, or responding to social change. For the open response, accept reasonable modern issues if the student includes all required elements and predicts a plausible impact.