

Voices That Matter

How free speech and a free press support self-government

8.21.B “describe the importance of free speech and press in a constitutional republic; and”

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline each reason free speech or a free press matters in a constitutional republic, and circle each example of citizens or journalists using those freedoms to help the public evaluate government.

Public Questions, Public Knowledge

- ① In a constitutional republic, people choose representatives, but the Constitution also limits government power. Free speech lets citizens state opinions, criticize leaders, and argue for changes without needing official permission. Free press lets reporters gather information and publish news for the public. These freedoms matter because voters need more than campaign promises. They need competing ideas and reliable reporting before they decide whom to support. When citizens can speak and journalists can investigate, elected officials face public questions about their decisions.
- ② Consider a town council considering a plan to close the public library on Saturdays. At a meeting, residents may explain how the closure would affect students, workers, and families. A local newspaper may report the plan, quote supporters and critics, and check whether the council's budget claim is accurate. The report can reach people who missed the meeting. Readers can compare claims, contact council members, and discuss the issue. This exchange helps representatives hear the community and helps the community judge whether representatives are acting responsibly.
- ③ These freedoms do not mean that every statement is protected in every situation. Laws may address true threats, defamation, or speech that directly causes certain harms, and reporters must follow laws such as those protecting private medical records. Still, officials cannot silence a newspaper simply because its reporting is embarrassing or stop peaceful criticism because they dislike it. Courts can review disputes when government actions may violate constitutional rights. Free speech and press protect the public's ability to question power, learn facts, and take part in self-government.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 Why do voters need free speech and a free press before deciding whom to support?

2 How can newspaper coverage of the library plan help people who did not attend the council meeting?

3 How do residents speaking at the meeting and journalists checking the budget claim help hold representatives accountable?

4 Name one type of speech or reporting that may be limited by law. Then name one action officials may not take simply because they dislike criticism.

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Imagine that a county board proposes a rule requiring local news websites to get official approval before publishing articles about board meetings. Write exactly four sentences explaining how the rule could harm free speech and free press, how it could affect citizens' ability to hold representatives accountable, and what constitutional safeguard should be considered.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline each reason free speech or a free press matters in a constitutional republic, and circle each example of citizens or journalists using those freedoms to help the public evaluate government. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Why do voters need free speech and a free press before deciding whom to support?	Voters need competing ideas and reliable reporting, not only campaign promises, so they can make informed choices.
2	How can newspaper coverage of the library plan help people who did not attend the council meeting?	The report can tell them about the plan and the different claims. They can compare claims, contact council members, and discuss the issue.
3	How do residents speaking at the meeting and journalists checking the budget claim help hold representatives accountable?	Residents can explain the effects of a decision, while journalists can investigate whether an official claim is accurate. Together, they help the public question and judge representatives' decisions.
4	Name one type of speech or reporting that may be limited by law. Then name one action officials may not take simply because they dislike criticism.	Answers may name true threats, defamation, speech that directly causes certain harms, or reporting that violates laws protecting private medical records. Officials may not silence a newspaper because reporting embarrasses them or stop peaceful criticism because they dislike it.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

This rule could prevent residents from sharing criticism of board decisions online. It could also block reporters from publishing information that the public needs. Without independent reporting and open discussion, people may not learn enough to question or evaluate their representatives. A court should consider whether the rule improperly restricts constitutional protections for free speech and press.

Accept clear explanations that connect open criticism and independent reporting to informed citizens and accountable representatives. For the open response, accept any accurate four-sentence explanation that addresses both freedoms, public oversight, and constitutional review or protection.