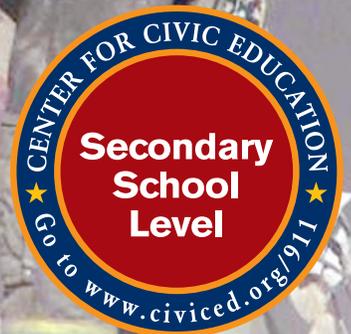
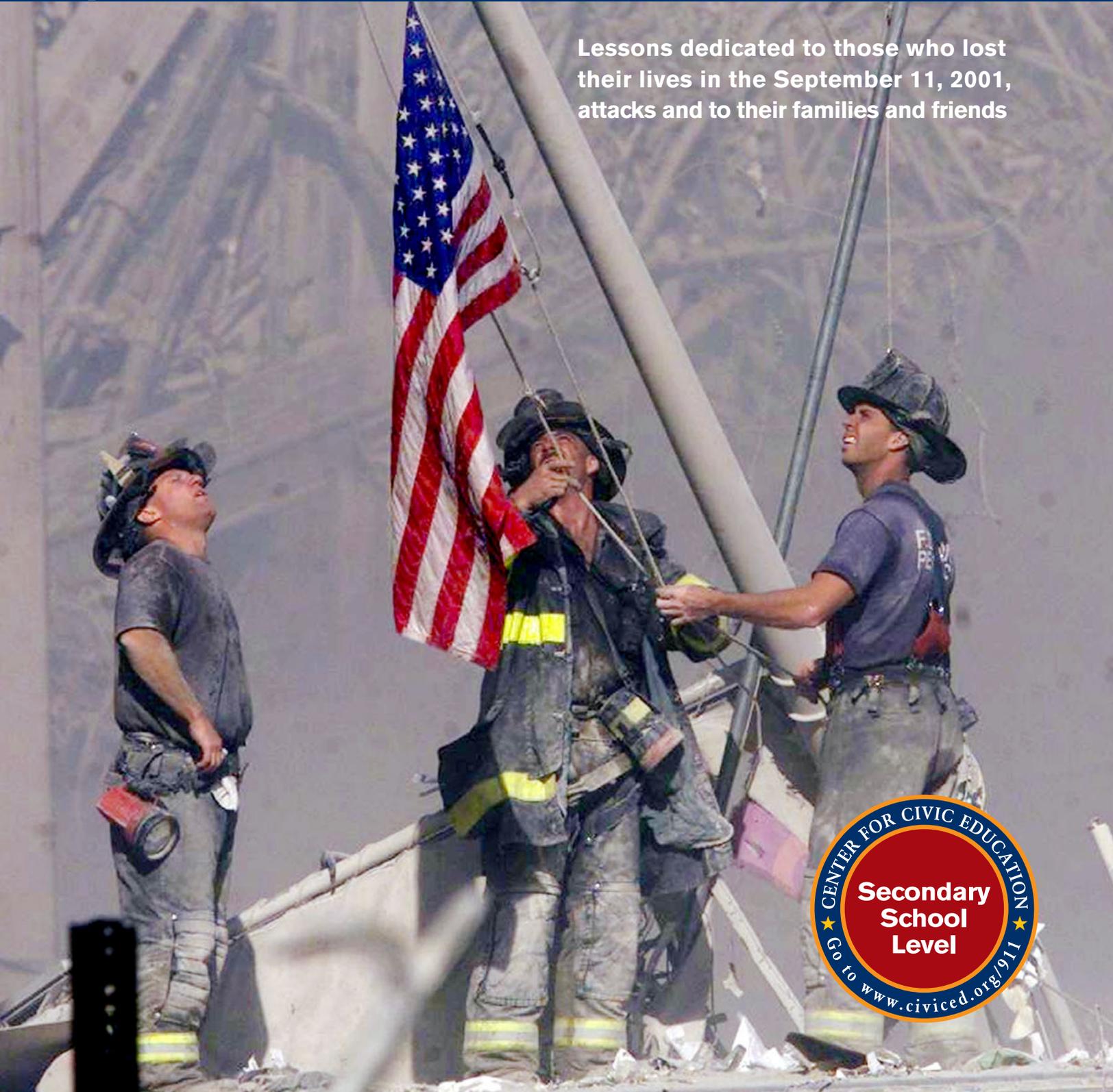


We the People 9/11 and the Constitution

Lessons dedicated to those who lost their lives in the September 11, 2001, attacks and to their families and friends





**On American
identity, diversity,
and common
ground**



The anniversaries of the terrorist attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001, and the signing of the Constitution on September 17, 1787, provide us an opportunity to

- reflect upon who we are as Americans,
- examine our most fundamental values and principles and affirm our commitment to them, and
- evaluate progress toward the realization of American ideals and propose actions that might narrow the gap between these ideals and reality.

INTRODUCTION FOR TEACHERS

The anniversary of the attacks of September 11, 2001, coincides with Constitution and Citizenship Day, which commemorates the signing of the Constitution on September 17, 1787. The juxtaposition of these anniversaries provides an opportunity to reflect upon who we are as Americans, examine our fundamental ideals and principles, evaluate our nation's progress toward realization of our shared ideals, and propose actions to narrow the gap between these ideals and our daily lives.

The following introduction and four lessons are designed to accomplish these goals.

Introduction

Students are introduced to the 9/11 attacks and learn that the nation's response created tension between the need for security and America's tradition of liberty. They are then introduced to the Declaration of Independence and Preamble to the U.S. Constitution and learn that these documents describe fundamental values and principles that characterize the American political culture.

Lesson 1 What is an American?

Students learn that to be an American is to share certain fundamental ideas, values, and principles with other Americans. Students are asked to read and put into their own words quotations that include some of the fundamental ideas shared by Americans. They are then asked to reflect upon whether they agree with and share the ideas expressed by the quotations.

Finally they are asked to write a response to the question, "What does it mean to be an American?"

Lesson 2 What fundamental ideas about government do Americans share?

Students are asked to examine some of the fundamental ideas about government that are contained in the Declaration of Independence and the Preamble to the U.S. Constitution. They then identify which of the ideas they agree with. Next, they determine the ideas the class as a whole holds in common. Finally, if students agree with these fundamental ideas, they are given an opportunity to visit the Center's website and add their signatures to those of the Founders who signed the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution.

Lesson 3 How well is the American government serving its purposes?

Students are asked to fill out a questionnaire indicating to what degree they think the American government is fulfilling its purposes as they are set forth in the Preamble to the Constitution. Students are then asked to take the questionnaire and use it to survey adults in their community.

Lesson 4 How can the American government better fulfill its purposes?

Students are asked to tally adult responses to the questionnaire, identify areas of agreement and disagreement, and attempt to explain why differences might exist. They then evaluate,

take, and defend positions on how well they think American government is serving its purposes as they are set forth in the Preamble. Next, they propose remedies to the shortcomings of government they identify. Finally, they are asked to compare their results with results from across the nation.

Website

Please visit www.civiced.org/911 to access the online version of these lessons. The website includes a downloadable pdf of the lessons, a signable Declaration of Independence and Constitution, and an online version of the questionnaire, among other features.

Terms to know

For easy reference, the website for the lessons includes a section that provides background on the meaning of the following ideas: self-evident truths, “all Men are created equal,” unalienable rights, pursuit of happiness, justice, domestic tranquility, and the general welfare.

Contact us

We at the Center for Civic Education hope you find these lessons useful. We are very interested in hearing comments and suggestions from teachers and students who review and use the lessons. We will take them into account in periodic revisions. Please send your comments to editorial@civiced.org.



INTRODUCTION



“Our history has shown us that insecurity threatens liberty. Yet, if our liberties are curtailed, we lose the values that we are struggling to defend.”

THE NATIONAL COMMISSION ON TERRORIST
ATTACKS UPON THE UNITED STATES

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

9/11: The Terrorist Attacks of September 11, 2001

On the morning of September 11, 2001, nineteen members of the terrorist organization al-Qaeda hijacked four commercial airliners. Two of the planes were flown directly into the twin towers of New York City’s World Trade Center, both of which collapsed within hours. A third was

smashed into the Pentagon, near Washington, D.C. The fourth crashed in a Pennsylvania field after passengers and flight crew, having learned via cell phone of the hijackings, wrestled with the terrorists for control of the plane whose target was purportedly either the U.S. Capitol or the White House. Nearly 3,000 people, including the terrorists, died in these attacks.

The planners justified these lethal attacks as reactions to American foreign policy in the Middle East: the presence of American troops in the region, especially near holy Muslim sites in Saudi Arabia; American support for Israel; and U.S.-supported sanctions against Iraq, to name a few. In 1998, citing these grievances, al-Qaeda chief Osama bin Laden issued a religious order stating that killing “Americans and their allies—civilians and military—is an individual duty for all Muslims.” Attacks soon followed on U.S. embassies in Africa, killing hundreds, and on a U.S. Navy ship off the coast of Yemen, killing seventeen sailors. Bin Laden himself was tracked and killed by American forces in Pakistan on May 1, 2011.

The response to 9/11, to subsequent terrorist attacks throughout the world (thwarted or successful), and to the threat of new attacks required a worldwide effort that has drawn heavily upon American and other nations’ resources and has changed lives in many ways. Some of these changes, such as curtailment of certain privacy rights, have led to tensions between security and America’s dedication to liberty. These changes lead us to focus in the following lessons on the fundamental principles that underlie our system of government and way of life.

THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE AND PREAMBLE TO THE U.S. CONSTITUTION

A Focus on First Principles

That no free government, or the blessings of liberty, can be preserved to any people, but by... frequent recurrence to fundamental principles.

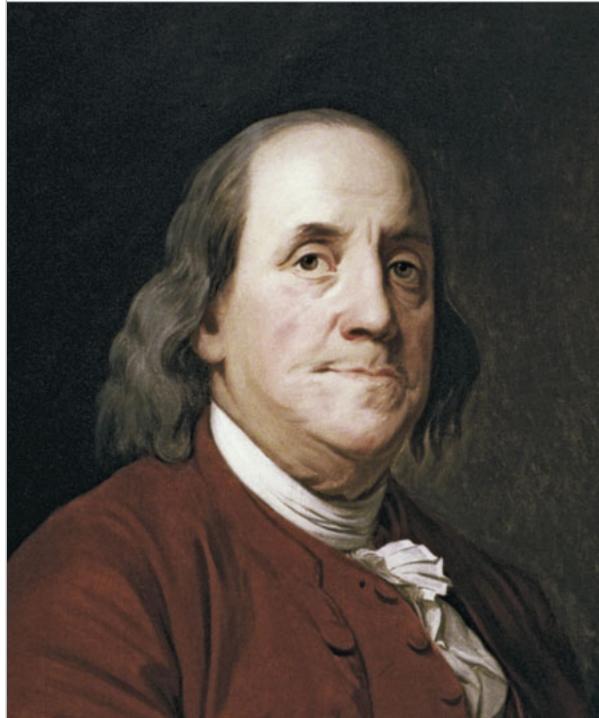
VIRGINIA DECLARATION OF RIGHTS (1776)

The United States faces continuing terrorist threats. In light of the possibility of another attack, we suggest taking the time to examine and reaffirm our commitment to the values and principles on which our nation is founded.

To do so, we look back to July 4, 1776, when a group of leading American colonists gathered in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. They met to sign a “Declaration of Independence” announcing Britain’s American colonies to be free and independent states, no longer subject to British rule. The Declaration contains some of the most important and influential ideas in history.

Less than eleven years later, on May 14, 1787, representatives of the newly independent states again met in Philadelphia, this time to draft a new constitution for the nation. When completed on September 16, 1787, the Constitution began with a Preamble setting forth its purposes. Both the Declaration and the Preamble include fundamental values and principles that characterize us as a free nation and a free people. Although the application of these values and principles has often been controversial, the principles themselves have been cherished by Americans since first presented to the world so long ago.

How successful has our nation been in realizing these values and principles? Do we still believe in all of them? How can they be adequately preserved in an age of terrorism? In the lessons that follow, you will examine these ideas, their meanings, and their contemporary relevance.



“Those who would give up essential Liberty, to purchase a little temporary Safety, deserve neither Liberty nor Safety.”

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN, 1755

LESSON 1



WHAT IS AN AMERICAN?

Purpose of the Lesson

In contrast to people in many other nations, to be an American does not mean one is a member of a particular racial, religious, or ethnic group. To be an American is to share certain fundamental ideas, values, and principles with other Americans. What are the ideas that we all share? When you have finished this lesson, you should be able to describe some of the ideas shared by all Americans.

What important ideas do Americans have in common?

Let us try to identify some of the important ideas Americans share by examining the following quotations. Working in groups of two or three, read and discuss these quotations and then, in your own words, write the main idea addressed in each. Use what you have written to answer the questions in the Class Activity.

- “Americanism is a matter of mind and heart; Americanism is not, and never was, a matter of race and ancestry. A good American is one who is loyal to his country and to our creed of liberty and democracy.”

PRESIDENT FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT

- “We now have a comfortable dwelling and two acres of ground planted with potatoes, Indian corn, melon, etc. I have 2 hogs, 1 ewe and a lamb; cows in the spring were as high as 33 dollars, but no doubt I shall have one by fall. I am living in God’s noble and free soil, neither am I slave to others... I have now been on American soil for two and a half years and I have not been compelled to pay for the privilege of living. Neither is my cap worn out from lifting it in the presence of gentlemen.”

PHILIP TAYLOR, COLONIAL FARMER

- “Let me be a free man, free to travel, free to stop, free to work, free to trade where I choose, free to choose my own teachers, free to follow the religion of my fathers,

free to think and talk and act for myself and I will obey every law, or submit to the penalty.”

CHIEF JOSEPH OF THE NEZ PERCE

- “America is woven of many strands; I would recognize them and let it so remain. Our fate is to become one and yet many.”

RALPH ELLISON

- “I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.”

MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.



- “In view of the Constitution, in the eye of the law, there is in this country no superior, dominant, ruling class of citizens. There is no caste here. Our Constitution is color-blind, and neither knows nor tolerates classes among citizens. In respect of civil rights, all citizens are equal before the law. The humblest is the peer of the most powerful.”

JOHN MARSHALL HARLAN

Class activity

Each group should take turns sharing the ideas they have identified. The ideas should be written on chart paper or a white board. As each idea is listed, write the words *Agree* and *Disagree* next to it and leave space for a tally. See the example below.

People should be judged by the content of their character, not by the color of their skin.

_____ **Agree** _____ **Disagree**

After listing all of the ideas the groups have identified, the class should show by a vote of hands which of the ideas they agree or disagree with and tally the results in the spaces provided.

Finally, a class discussion should focus on the following questions.

- Which ideas, if any, do you all agree upon?
- On which ideas, if any, are there disagreements? What are the reasons for the disagreements? After discussing the reasons for disagreements, students may change their votes and the resulting tally.
- Do the ideas on which you all agree have anything to do with what it means to be an American? Why or why not?

Concluding activity

Suppose that a news reporter has asked you what it means to be an American. Write your response to the question.

LESSON 2



WHAT FUNDAMENTAL IDEAS ABOUT GOVERNMENT DO AMERICANS SHARE?

Purpose of the Lesson

In this lesson, you will examine some of the fundamental ideas about government that are contained in the Declaration of Independence and the Preamble to the U.S. Constitution. When you have completed this lesson, you should be able to explain those ideas and identify which ideas the class holds in common. If you support these ideas, you will be given an opportunity to go online and add your signature to those of the Founders of our nation who signed the original documents.

Terms to Know

Definitions of each of the terms listed below can be found at www.civiced.org/911, or by clicking on the individual term.

- domestic tranquility
- equality
- general welfare
- justice
- pursuit of happiness
- self-evident
- unalienable rights

What fundamental ideas about government are contained in our founding documents?

The second paragraph of the Declaration of Independence and the Preamble to the Constitution contain some of the most fundamental ideas underlying our American constitutional democracy. The following exercises provide you with an opportunity to examine these ideas. They also provide an opportunity to add your name to an online list of the original cosigners of the documents.

PART 1

Excerpt from the Declaration of Independence

Working with two or three other students, read and discuss the following excerpts from the Declaration of Independence. As a group, put the ideas in these excerpts into your own words and use what you have written in the Class Activity that follows.

You will find that most of the ideas are clear and easily understood. However, others are not so clear and you might need to research what scholars think the Founders meant when they wrote them. For example, what did they mean when they wrote that they held “**these Truths to be self-evident**,” “**all Men are created equal**,” “**unalienable rights**,” and the “**Pursuit of Happiness**”? Some information on these phrases is included in the **Terms to Know** section of the website for this lesson. You might also want to research information—in a library or online—about the meaning of these words or alternative interpretations of their meaning.

- “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal...”
- “...That they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness;”
- “That to secure these Rights, Governments are instituted among Men...”
- “...deriving their just Powers from the Consent of the Governed...”
- “...that whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these Ends it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its Foundation on such Principles, and organizing its Power in such Form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness.”

Class activity

Each group should take turns sharing ideas they have identified and writing them on chart paper or a white board. As each idea is listed, place the words *Agree* and *Disagree* next to it and leave space for a tally. See the example below.

Government is responsible for making the rights of the people secure.

_____ **Agree** _____ **Disagree**

After listing all of the ideas the groups have identified, the class should show by a vote of hands which of the ideas they agree or disagree with and tally the results in the spaces provided.

Finally, a class discussion should focus upon the following questions.

- Which ideas, if any, do you all agree upon?
- On which ideas, if any, are there disagreements? What are the reasons for the disagreements? After discussing the reasons for disagreements, students may change their votes and the resulting tally.
- Do the ideas on which you all agree have anything to do with what it means to be an American? Why or why not?

PART 2

Preamble to the U.S. Constitution

Like the Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution contains some of the most fundamental ideas upon which our constitutional democracy is based. The Preamble to the U.S. Constitution sets forth six general purposes of the Constitution and responsibilities of the government it creates.

Just as in the Declaration, you will find that some of the ideas are clear and easily understood. However, others are not so clear and you might need to research what scholars think the Founders meant when they wrote them. For example, what did they mean when they used the terms *justice*, *domestic Tranquility*, and the *general Welfare*? You can find information about these words and phrases in the [Terms to Know](#) section of the website for this lesson. You might also want to research information—in a library or online—about the meaning of these words and alternative interpretations of their meaning.

Work with two or three other students. Read and discuss the different purposes of government in the Preamble as they are listed below. Then work together to put each purpose in

your own words in preparation for the Class Activity that follows. For each purpose, complete the following sentence: “The Preamble to the U.S. Constitution says the People have established the government in order to _____.” Fill in the blank for each purpose listed in the Preamble as they are set forth below.

“We the People of the United States, in Order to

- form a more perfect Union,
- establish Justice,
- insure domestic Tranquility,
- provide for the common defence,
- promote the general Welfare, and
- secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity,

do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.”

Class activity

Each group should take turns sharing its wording of the purposes. The class should work together to agree upon the best statements of the purposes of government. Each of the six statements agreed upon should be entered on chart paper or a white board. As each purpose is listed, place the words *Agree* and *Disagree* next to it and leave space for a tally. See the example below.

The Preamble to the Constitution says one purpose of government is to _____

_____ **Agree** _____ **Disagree**

After listing all of the purposes the groups have identified, the class should show by a vote of

hands which purposes they agree or disagree with and tally the results in the spaces provided.

Finally, a class discussion should focus upon the following questions.

- Which purposes, if any, do you all agree upon?
- On which purposes, if any, are there disagreements? What are the reasons for the disagreements? After discussing the reasons for disagreements, students may change their votes and the resulting tally.
- Are any disagreements you might have about the purposes in general or how they should be interpreted and applied? How do you think such disagreements should be managed? What do your agreements and disagreements say about what it means to be an American?
- What other purposes, if any, do you think should be added? Why should they be added?

Signing the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution

Visit this lesson’s website at www.civiced.org/911 to add your name to the online list of signers of the [Declaration of Independence](#) and [Constitution](#) if you are in general agreement with the ideas contained in these founding documents.

LESSON 3



HOW WELL IS THE AMERICAN GOVERNMENT SERVING ITS PURPOSES?

Purpose of the Lesson

In Lesson 2, you studied the purposes of the American government as they were set forth by the Founders in the Preamble to the Constitution. This lesson calls for you to survey adults in your community to find out to what degree they think the American government is fulfilling those purposes.

How well is the American government serving its purposes as they are set forth in the Preamble to the Constitution?

Acting individually or in small groups, use copies of the questionnaire found at the end of these lessons to survey at least three adults

in your community regarding the degree to which they think the American government is fulfilling the purposes set forth in the Preamble to the Constitution. You can also ask adults to complete the questionnaire online at www.civiced.org/911/questionnaire. Be prepared to report your findings to your class.

Practice using the questionnaire

To prepare for using the questionnaire with adults, take turns using it with each other and record the responses for later comparison with the responses from adults.

Introducing yourself

Introduce yourself and inform the person you are speaking to that as part of a class assignment, you are interviewing adults to see to what degree they think the U.S. government is achieving the purposes of government set forth in the Preamble to the Constitution. To remind them of those purposes, have them briefly read the Preamble included at the beginning of the questionnaire.

Inform the person that you are going to ask questions on the meaning of specific phrases of the Preamble and each of the purposes it sets forth. Record their answers.

Online questionnaire

As an alternative, you may wish to ask adults in your community to complete the questionnaire online. To do so, ask them to visit this website and follow the directions on the page: www.civiced.org/911/questionnaire. Ask them to print out the results and return them to you.

LESSON 4



HOW CAN THE AMERICAN GOVERNMENT BETTER FULFILL ITS PURPOSES?

Purpose of the Lesson

In this lesson, you will be asked to tally and analyze the responses to the questionnaires you have gathered. You will then be asked to evaluate, take, and defend positions on how well you think the American government is fulfilling its responsibilities as set forth in the Preamble. Finally, you will be asked to propose actions that the government should undertake to remedy what you consider to be shortcomings in the fulfillment of its purposes.

Comparing responses

Bring your completed questionnaires to class and tally the responses to the questions. Then take the following steps.

- 1 Identify the questions on which there was general agreement.
- 2 Identify the questions on which there was no general agreement.
- 3 Work as a class to
 - list explanations for why there was general agreement on some questions, and
 - list explanations for why there was no general agreement on other questions.

Taking a position

Working alone or with a small group, write a brief statement explaining how well you think the American government is fulfilling its purposes as set forth in the Preamble. Be prepared to present and defend your essay in class and to evaluate the other presentations.

Proposing remedies

If you have identified any shortcomings in how well the American government is fulfilling its purposes, select one and write a brief statement proposing what you think the government should do to better fulfill the purpose. Be prepared to present and discuss your statement with your class.

Concluding activity

Visit www.civiced.org/911/results to learn how other Americans throughout the nation answered the questionnaire. Compare your class's results with the national results. Why might they be different? Why might they be the same?

CREDITS

About Constitution Day

In 1952, President Harry S. Truman signed a bill that moved I Am an American Day from the third Sunday in May to September 17. Truman did so in order for the holiday to coincide with the date of the signing of the U.S. Constitution in 1787. Congress renamed the holiday Citizenship Day. A joint resolution passed in 1956 requested that the president proclaim the week beginning September 17 and ending September 23 each year as Constitution Week.

In 2004, Senator Robert C. Byrd of West Virginia entered an amendment to the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2005 to change the name of the September 17 holiday to Constitution Day and Citizenship Day. The purpose of Constitution Day and Citizenship Day is to commemorate the creation and signing of the supreme law of the land and to honor and celebrate the privileges and responsibilities of U.S. citizenship for both native-born and naturalized citizens.

Byrd's amendment, known as Public Law 108-477, requires that all schools receiving federal funds hold an educational program for their students on September 17 of each year. These lessons were designed to assist schools and federal agencies to meet the requirements of the law.

American Association of School Administrators

This Constitution and citizenship lesson is cosponsored by The American Association of School Administrators. AASA, founded in 1865, is the professional organization for more than 14,000 educational leaders across America and in many other countries. AASA's mission is to support and develop effective school system leaders who are dedicated to the highest quality public education for all children. AASA's major focus is standing up for public education. For more information, visit www.aasa.org.

Center for Civic Education

The Center for Civic Education is a nonprofit, nonpartisan educational organization dedicated to fostering the development of informed, responsible participation in civic life by citizens committed to the values and principles fundamental to American constitutional democracy. The Center specializes in civic and citizenship education and international education exchange programs for developing democracies. For additional information on the Center's programs and curricula, visit www.civiced.org.

We the People

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QUESTIONNAIRE

Questionnaire on the Preamble to the Constitution of the United States

WE THE PEOPLE of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.

Directions For each of the sections below, read the statement that begins the section aloud to the adult you are interviewing. Then read the quotation from the Preamble and ask the questions that follow. Record the answers by circling the appropriate responses. Please record comments in the spaces provided.

1

“I would like to ask your opinions on the following phrases contained in the Preamble to the U.S. Constitution.”

“We the People of the United States...”

1 The phrase “We the People” refers to (circle all that apply)

- a** the people who wrote and ratified the Constitution.
- b** all citizens of the United States today.
- c** legal immigrants to the United States.
- d** undocumented immigrants to the United States.

What comments, if any, do you have about this question?

2 The fact that “We the People” established the U.S. Constitution means that (circle all that apply)

- a** the people are the source of the authority of their government.
- b** the government is supposed to be the servant of the people, not their master.
- c** the people can change their government if they wish.
- d** once the people delegated power to their government, they cannot take it away or change it.

What comments, if any, do you have about this question?

2

“The next phrases refer to the purposes of the government created by the Constitution.”

“...in order to form a more perfect Union...”

1 To what extent do you think the United States today is “a more perfect Union” compared to what it was in the past?

Low extent 1 2 3 4 5 High extent

2 To what extent do you believe that United States’ society today is divided in an unhealthy way?

Low extent 1 2 3 4 5 High extent

3 If the nation could be perfectly united in all ways, would this be a good or bad thing?

Good Bad

4 Would an absolutely united nation be a free country?

Yes No

What comments, if any, do you have about these questions?

3

“The next purpose of government is to...”

“...establish justice...”

1 To what extent did the Constitution establish a just society after it was put into practice?

Low extent 1 2 3 4 5 High extent

2 To what extent do we have a just society today?

Low extent 1 2 3 4 5 High extent

3 To what extent do all people have equal opportunities today?

Low extent 1 2 3 4 5 High extent

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE >

“...establish justice...” (cont.)

4 To what extent are the benefits and burdens of society distributed fairly among people?

a To what extent is each of the following benefits of society distributed fairly?

- education Low extent 1 2 3 4 5 High extent
- housing Low extent 1 2 3 4 5 High extent
- employment Low extent 1 2 3 4 5 High extent
- income Low extent 1 2 3 4 5 High extent
- political rights (such as voting) Low extent 1 2 3 4 5 High extent
- health care Low extent 1 2 3 4 5 High extent
- child care Low extent 1 2 3 4 5 High extent
- elderly care Low extent 1 2 3 4 5 High extent

b To what extent is each of the following burdens of society distributed fairly?

- taxes (such as income,
property, and sales taxes) Low extent 1 2 3 4 5 High extent
- jury duty Low extent 1 2 3 4 5 High extent
- military service Low extent 1 2 3 4 5 High extent

5 To what extent are the procedures used by government to gather information and make decisions reasonable and fair?

Low extent 1 2 3 4 5 High extent

6 To what extent does the government respond reasonably and fairly in dealing with people responsible for wrongs or injuries?

Low extent 1 2 3 4 5 High extent

What comments, if any, do you have about these questions?

4

“The next purpose of government is to...”

“...insure domestic Tranquility...”

1 To what extent do you think the government has succeeded in ensuring “domestic Tranquility”?

Low extent 1 2 3 4 5 High extent

2 Would you expect a perfectly tranquil country today to be a free country?

Yes No

What comments, if any, do you have about these questions?

5

“The next purpose of government is to...”

“...provide for the common defence...”

1 To what degree do you think the government has succeeded in providing for the “common defence”?

Low 1 2 3 4 5 High

2 To what degree do you think the government’s involvement in the following actions is necessary to provide for the common defense?

a the war on terror Low 1 2 3 4 5 High

b Iraq Low 1 2 3 4 5 High

c Afghanistan Low 1 2 3 4 5 High

d Libya Low 1 2 3 4 5 High

What comments, if any, do you have about these questions?

“The next purpose of government is to...”

“...secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity...”

1 Which of the following would you consider to be a blessing of liberty? The right to (circle all that apply)

- a** freedom of belief and religion
- b** freedom of expression by such means as speaking, writing, or demonstrating
- c** associate with whomever you wish
- d** petition your government
- e** fair procedures in the making of decisions
- f** equality of opportunity
- g** pursue happiness as you wish
- h** own property

2 To what extent do you think the government has succeeded in securing the blessings of liberty?

Low extent 1 2 3 4 5 High extent

3 In your opinion, are Americans today too concerned with their own liberties and not concerned enough with the liberties of future generations? (circle one)

- a** They are too concerned with their own liberties.
- b** They are adequately concerned with the liberties of future generations.

What comments, if any, do you have about these questions?

Promoting the Principles and Practice of Democracy



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