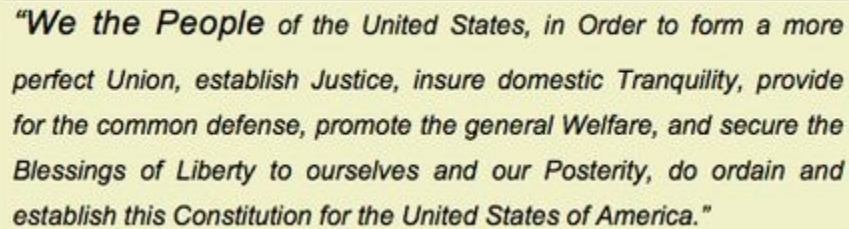


American Government - Preamble to the United States Constitution

by ReadWorks



"We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, 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."

the preamble to the United States Constitution

The United States Constitution is the document that defines America's government. It sets forth the nation's laws. It also spells out the rights and liberties of the American people.

The beginning of the Constitution is the preamble, which explains why the Constitution was written. The first three words are, "We the People." At the time, these words were revolutionary. Before the United States was established, there were 13 colonies. They were part of England, and their ruler was the king of England. The colonists had no say in the British government over what happened to them.

When America's founding fathers established the country's government, they wanted the citizens of the United States to have a say and elect the people who run the government. In turn, the founding fathers wanted the government to protect the people's rights.

What else should the government do for the people? The preamble says that the government should provide justice, or fairness. It should ensure tranquility, or peace, by working to solve problems within the country when they arise. The government should also defend the country when necessary. It should care for the general well-being of the people. Finally, it should provide liberty for all.

The Constitution - with its many goals and methods to reach them - has stood the test of time. It was written in 1787. More than 200 years later, this document still works for the people of the United States.

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. What is the document that defines America's government?

- A. the preamble to the United States Constitution
- B. "We the People"
- C. the United States Constitution
- D. America's founding fathers

2. Why does the author describe the way England ruled the American colonies?

- A. to illustrate why the colonies wanted to take over England
- B. to show how England helped the United States in writing their own Constitution
- C. to provide background information about how Americans used to be governed
- D. to explain why the colonists wanted a government just like England's

3. Read these sentences from the text.

When America's founding fathers established the country's government, they wanted the citizens of the United States to have a say and elect the people who run the government. In turn, the founding fathers wanted the government to protect the people's rights.

Based on the text, how might U.S. citizens have the power to make sure the principles of the Constitution are followed?

- A. Citizens can elect new people to the government if the people running the government do not uphold the Constitution.
- B. Citizens create a new Constitution every few years to make sure that the government reflects their values.
- C. The government cannot take any actions unless the citizens specifically give their consent.
- D. The Constitution forbids the government from having any power so that only the citizens have any power.

4. Read this sentence from the text.

[The government] should ensure tranquility, or peace, by working to solve problems within the country when they **arise** .

Based on the text, what is the meaning of the word "**arise**"?

- A. get stronger
- B. disappear
- C. go to war
- D. start happening

5. What is the main idea of this text?

- A. As defined by the United States Constitution, America's government should protect its citizens and their rights, and the citizens have power by electing the people who run the government.
- B. The United States Constitution was written in 1787, and it is a document that explains America's laws as well as the rights and liberties of American citizens.
- C. The founding fathers of the United States are the people who established the country's government, and they wrote the United States Constitution, the document that defines America's government.
- D. Before the 13 colonies created their own nation and government, they were ruled by the king of England. However, they had no say in the British government even though they were a part of England.

6. What is the purpose of the preamble to the United States Constitution?

7. Why might the author have stated that the United States Constitution "has stood the test of time"? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

8. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence.

America's founding fathers wanted a government where the American people have a say, _____ they wrote the United States Constitution to define that the power comes from the people.

- A. yet
- B. earlier
- C. although
- D. so

9. **Vocabulary Word:** *revolutionary*. causing great changes in the way something is done or made.

Use the word "revolutionary" in a sentence.
