

## American Government Preamble to the United States Constitution

*“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 words written in italics above are the **Preamble**<sup>1</sup> to the Constitution of the United States. The Constitution is the document that defines our American democracy. It sets forth the nation’s laws. It also spells out the rights and liberties of the American people.

The preamble, or introduction, tells why people wrote the Constitution. The first three words are, “We the People.” At the time, these words were **revolutionary**<sup>2</sup>. Before the United States was established, the 13 colonies were part of England. Their ruler was the king of England. The colonists had no say over what happened to them.

When the colonists established their own government, they wanted it to be “by the people, for the people, and of the people.” They wanted the Constitution to create a democracy. In a democracy, the people elect, or vote for, whom they want to run their government. The government’s power comes from the people. The government cannot exist without the **consent**<sup>3</sup> of the **majority**<sup>4</sup> of its people. If the government fails to protect the people, then the people can use their voting power to abolish the government and establish a new one.

What should the government do for the people? The preamble answers part of this question. It says that the government should be just, or fair with its people. It should ensure tranquility by working to solve problems within the

<sup>1</sup> **preamble** – introduction to a speech or piece of writing

<sup>2</sup> **revolutionary** – bringing or causing great changes

<sup>3</sup> **consent** – agreement, permission, or approval

<sup>4</sup> **majority** – more than half of a group of people or things

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 democratic goals and **methods**<sup>5</sup> 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.

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<sup>5</sup> **methods** – ways of doing something

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

1. What is the author's purpose for writing this passage about the Constitution?
  - a. The author wants to entertain the reader with funny stories about the Constitution.
  - b. The author wants to warn people about the dangers of allowing the King of England's rule over America.
  - c. The author wants to educate the reader about the Constitution of the United States
  - d. The author wants to educate the reader about the colonies.
  
2. In the last paragraph, the phrase "stood the test of time" means
  - a. That the Constitution has not changed since it was written
  - b. That the Constitution has lasted throughout the years
  - c. That the Constitution defines American democracy
  - d. That the Constitution was written 100 year ago
  
3. What is the main idea of the second paragraph?
  - a. That the power in the U.S government comes from the people.
  - b. That the Constitution gives a king power.
  - c. That the people of the United States enjoy arguing.
  - d. We are a part of England.
  
4. What detail is NOT stated in the passage about the Preamble?
  - a. That the Preamble introduces the Constitution
  - b. That it tells why the people wrote the Constitution
  - c. That the government should be just
  - d. That the government should have a king
  
5. If the government fails to protect the people, what can the people do?
  - a. Use their voting power to bring in a new government
  - b. Defend themselves against England's army and navy
  - c. Find a king to rule over the United States instead of a democracy
  - d. Ask the Kind of England what they should do

6. How did many of the colonists feel about being ruled by a king?

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7. Before the United States was created, who had control over the people living in the American Colonies?

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8. The question below is an incomplete sentence. Choose the word or phrase that best completes the sentence.

If the government fails to protect the people \_\_\_\_\_ the people can use their voting power to abolish the government and establish a new one.

- a. after
- b. while
- c. unless
- d. then

9. Answer the following questions based on the sentence below.

The Constitution was written in 1787 in order to improve the lives of the people.

What? The Constitution

(was) What? \_\_\_\_\_

When? \_\_\_\_\_

Why? \_\_\_\_\_

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

Use the vocabulary word in a sentence: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Teacher Guide and Answers

**Passage Reading Level:** Lexile 860

**Featured Text Structure:** Descriptive – the writer explains, defines or illustrates a concept or topic

**Passage Summary:** This passage explains what the Constitution is, why it was written, and the relationship between the people of the United States and their government.

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6. How did many of the colonists feel about being ruled by a king?

**Suggested answer:** The colonists didn't like being ruled by a king, and wanted to rule themselves. That's why they created the United States Constitution "by the people, for the people, and of the people." [paragraph 4].

7. Before the United States was created, who had control over the people living in the American Colonies?

**Suggested answer:** Before the United States was created, the King of England had control over the people living there. [paragraph 3]

8. The question below is an incomplete sentence. Choose the word or phrase that best completes the sentence.

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9. Answer the following questions based on the sentence below.

The Constitution was written in 1787 in order to improve the lives of the people.

What? **The Constitution**

(was) What? **was written**

When? **in 1787**

Why? **to improve the lives of the people**

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

Use the vocabulary word in a sentence: answers may vary.