

Finding Answers with Founding Documents...

The Preamble to the U.S. Constitution

by Gouverneur Morris (principal author)

Social Studies: 10th Grade United States History/ 12 Grade Government

Essential Questions:

- How does the Preamble represent both an American “mission statement” and a collection of the ideals that bind us together?
- How were the ideals/principles that were introduced within the Preamble brought to life within the articles and amendments of the U.S. Constitution?

Standards:

1. ACOS 10th Grade U.S. History I, Standard #4

- Describe the political system of the United States based on the Constitution of the United States.
 - Interpreting the Preamble to the Constitution of the United States; separation of powers; federal system; elastic clause; the Bill of Rights; and the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, Fifteenth, and Nineteenth Amendments as key elements of the Constitution of the United States

2. ACOS 12th Grade U.S. Government, Standard #3

- Analyze major features of the Constitution of the United States and the Bill of Rights for purposes, organization, functions, and principles, including rule of law, federalism, limited government, popular sovereignty, judicial review, separation of powers, and checks and balances.

3. ACOS Appendix C, Literacy Standards #1, #2, #4, and #5

- Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information.
- Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.
- Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary describing political, social, or economic aspects of history/social studies.
- Analyze how a text uses structure to emphasize key points or advance an explanation or analysis.

Objectives:

1. Identify and reflect on the ideals and principles introduced within the Preamble.
2. Consider the rights and responsibilities of “the People” of the United States.
3. Evaluate articles and amendments of the U.S. Constitution to determine whether they promote the ideals and principles expressed within the Preamble.

Materials:

1. Bell Ringer Activity: Printed or projected copy of the Preamble annotated document page.
2. Before Activity: Printed copies of “We the People...” activity sheets.
3. During Activity: Printed copies of “Our Government Report Card” activity sheets.
4. After Activity: Printed copies of “Preamble Debrief” activity sheet.

Procedures:

1. Bell Ringer strategy: Bell Ringer Question based on The Preamble of the United States document
 - a. Students will analyze the text and annotations from the Preamble document and answer the question at the top: “How does the Preamble represent both an American ‘mission statement’ and a collection of the ideals that bind us together?”
2. Before strategy: “We the People...”
 - a. After studying the content of the document on the Bell Ringer sheet, students should read the directions at the top and reflect on the idea that our government is founded upon the will of the people. However, students need to understand that a more perception union can only be realized if the people exercise their rights AND fulfill their responsibilities as citizens.
 - b. Briefly review the categories below and describe them as some of the major themes through which we often organize events, developments, trends, and history. Consider posting or projecting the information below:
 1. Political: anything related to governing and policy-making
(a)examples include voting, the roles and responsibilities of political officials, political parties, legislative bills and laws from every level of government, reforms, courts and judicial rulings, etc.
 2. Social: anything related to society, social classes, social trends, social norms, issues of social equality or inequality, and social activities centered around the interaction of people
(a)examples include issues related to social responsibilities, rights, and any issues influenced or closely related to race, gender, and social class
 3. Cultural: anything related to our cultural values, traditions, and practices

- (a) examples include religious organizations/beliefs, language, holidays and celebrations, and any acknowledgement of a people's history and identity
 - 4. Economic: anything related to the economy, economic principles/theories, and economic activities
 - (a) examples include paying taxes, balancing budgets, paying for monthly expenses, saving money, banking practices, the use of government revenue, and economic trends and fluctuations
 - c. Then, direct students to the circle divided into "pieces" for each of those four major themes. Make sure the students understand that the top half of the circle below should focus on the political, social, cultural, and economic rights of the people. The bottom half is reserved for the political, social, cultural, and economic responsibilities of the people.
 - d. Direct students to record at least THREE generic or specific examples of rights or responsibilities (depending on which half of the circle is being completed) within every space/piece of the circle. The three examples should be related to the theme/area defined by each piece (political, social, cultural, or economic).
 - e. A sheet with possible answers has been provided for teachers. Consider sharing an example or two to help students get started.
3. During strategy: "Our Government Report Card" activity
- a. The teacher should read the directions at the top of the first "During Activity" handout page:
 - 1. "The table below contains several excerpts/summaries from articles and amendments found within the Constitution, including the Bill of Rights. These have been recorded in the first column. To save time and focus on the legal considerations at the time the Preamble was written, subject matter from Amendments XI-XVII were not included but

would make for great additional study since the Preamble is our timeless, constitutional ‘mission statement.’ The remaining columns consist of headings which are composed of the FIVE objectives identified in the Preamble document that were deemed essential in forming a more perfect union.”

- b. Then, the students should be directed to read each article or amendment and consider (using their own rationale and background knowledge) whether it meets each of the five objectives (establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, etc.)
- c. If the article/amendment meets an objective, the students should place a check mark in the box. If not, the students should simply leave the box blank. Some areas will be subjective and up for debate.
- d. The first two rows have been completed to provide students with examples and to demonstrate how different the number of checks may be depending on the context of the articles or amendment.
- e. This activity may be completed as an individual activity or students may partner up and complete this in pairs. If time is short, consider assigning this as a jigsaw for groups of 4-5 students in which the articles/amendments are equally divided for each member of the group to complete individually before sharing his/her findings to help all group members complete the table.

4. After strategy: “Preamble Debrief”

- a. Instruct the students to review their findings from the During Activity and look for overall trends in the location of their check marks.
- b. The students should use the “data” (checkmarks) they collected as the basis for their answers to the six questions for debrief.

- c. Students should be told that each questions can be written in the space provided under each question. Each free-response answer should be around 1-2 sentences in length (except for #1)

Background Information

The Preamble to the U.S. Constitution

"In that instrument I hold there is neither warrant, license, nor sanction of the hateful thing; but, interpreted as it ought to be interpreted, the Constitution is a glorious liberty document. Read its preamble, consider its purposes. "

—Frederick Douglass

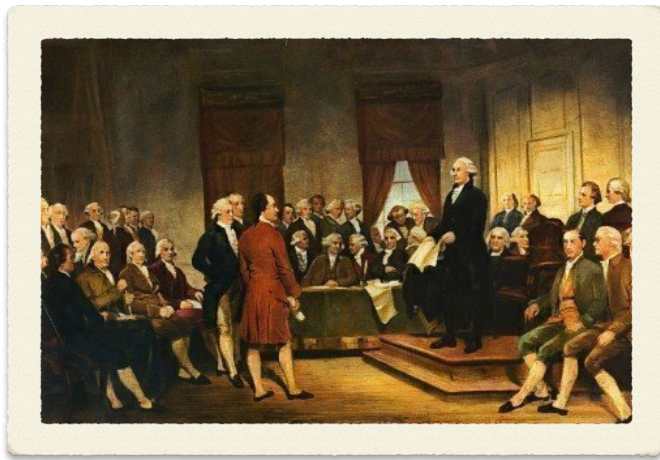
Throughout history, government documents and political decrees have often begun with an introductory statement or statement of purpose. The Founding Fathers continued this practice when they drafted the Declaration of Independence ("When in the course of human events..."), the Articles of Confederation, and a series of state constitutions. The central and most important binding document of this nation would be no different. When the Constitutional Convention took place in the summer of 1787, delegate Edmund Randolph of Virginia suggested that the drafting of a preamble seemed "proper" for the purpose of acknowledging the insufficiency of the Articles of Confederation and articulating why it was necessary to establish "a supreme legislative, executive, and judiciary."



On August 6, 1787, the Committee of Detail released the initial draft of the Preamble: "We the People of the States of New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia, do ordain, declare and establish the following Constitution for the Government of Ourselves and our Posterity." Thankfully, the draft then passed to the Committee of Style where Pennsylvania delegate Gouverneur Morris was prepared to make the lasting edits and timeless phrases. Morris was a lawyer from New York who served in the Continental Congress and was a signatory of the Articles of Confederation. He later moved to Philadelphia and represented

Pennsylvania as a delegate to the Constitutional Convention. At the convention, he became an outspoken supporter of central government. Morris, along with James Madison, became two of the most influential and principal writers of the U.S. Constitution.

To begin with, Morris believed the opening phrase should acknowledge that all governing power, even within a stronger central government, still came from the consent of the governed. Although some delegates wanted “We the States...” to signify the ongoing authority of state governments, Morris convinced the delegates that “We the People...” would initiate this binding document with the



most important proclamation of all: government power would never be greater than the will of the people. Morris also asserted that the purpose or mission statement of the Constitution was to “form a more perfect Union,” thus deviating from the failures of the Articles of Confederation. In order to form a more perfect Union, Morris identified five goals of the supreme law of the land: 1) establish justice, 2) insure

domestic tranquility, 3) provide for the common defense, 4) promote the general welfare, and 5) secure the blessings of liberty. As the United States grew in size and diversity, these goals evolved to become common and binding principles that even the most diverse population could agree on and share. At the end of the day, all Americans want fairness, peace, security, the common good that comes from economic stability, and freedom. Finally, in concluding with the statement, “...to ourselves and out posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America,” Morris placed the seal of time to consecrate this binding document for generations to come. There is no record of any objections or attempts to change Morris’ version which was endorsed by the Convention.

Ultimately, the Preamble was viewed as a foundational introduction for the legally binding document that followed. Nevertheless, the debates that followed during the ratification process would often cite language from the Preamble as Federalists highlighted the overarching goal of improving the state of the nation

for the benefit of all while Anti-Federalists claimed the words represented a federal power grab from all inferior state and local governments. The Preamble to the United States Constitution remains OUR founding mission statement as both a collection of the values we cherish and the high expectations we should always hold for our governing officials.

This is the justification statement or the introductory/preliminary statement to the U.S. Constitution.

Bell Ringer:

How does the Preamble represent both an American “mission statement” and a collection of the ideals that bind us together?



The Preamble to the U.S. Constitution (1787)


by Gouverneur Morris (principal author)

The Constitution BEGINS by recognizing popular sovereignty...government serves the will of the citizens.

Founding Father who played a significant role in drafting the U.S. Constitution.



Articles of Confederation had to be replaced, not with perfection, but with a “more” perfect model to create a more perfect union of the states.

1  “We the People of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union, establish *justice*¹, insure *domestic tranquility*², provide for the *common defense*³, promote the *general welfare*⁴, and secure the *blessings of liberty*⁵ to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.”



The Constitution would be a timeless document for the present and future.

decree, install, or consecrate

The Preamble lists 5 objectives that bind together a diverse population as a common set of principles we ALL share and expect government to protect: 1) justice—**fairness**, 2) domestic tranquillity—**peace**, 3) common defense—**security**, 4) general welfare—**common good/economic interests**, and 5) blessings of liberty—**freedom**



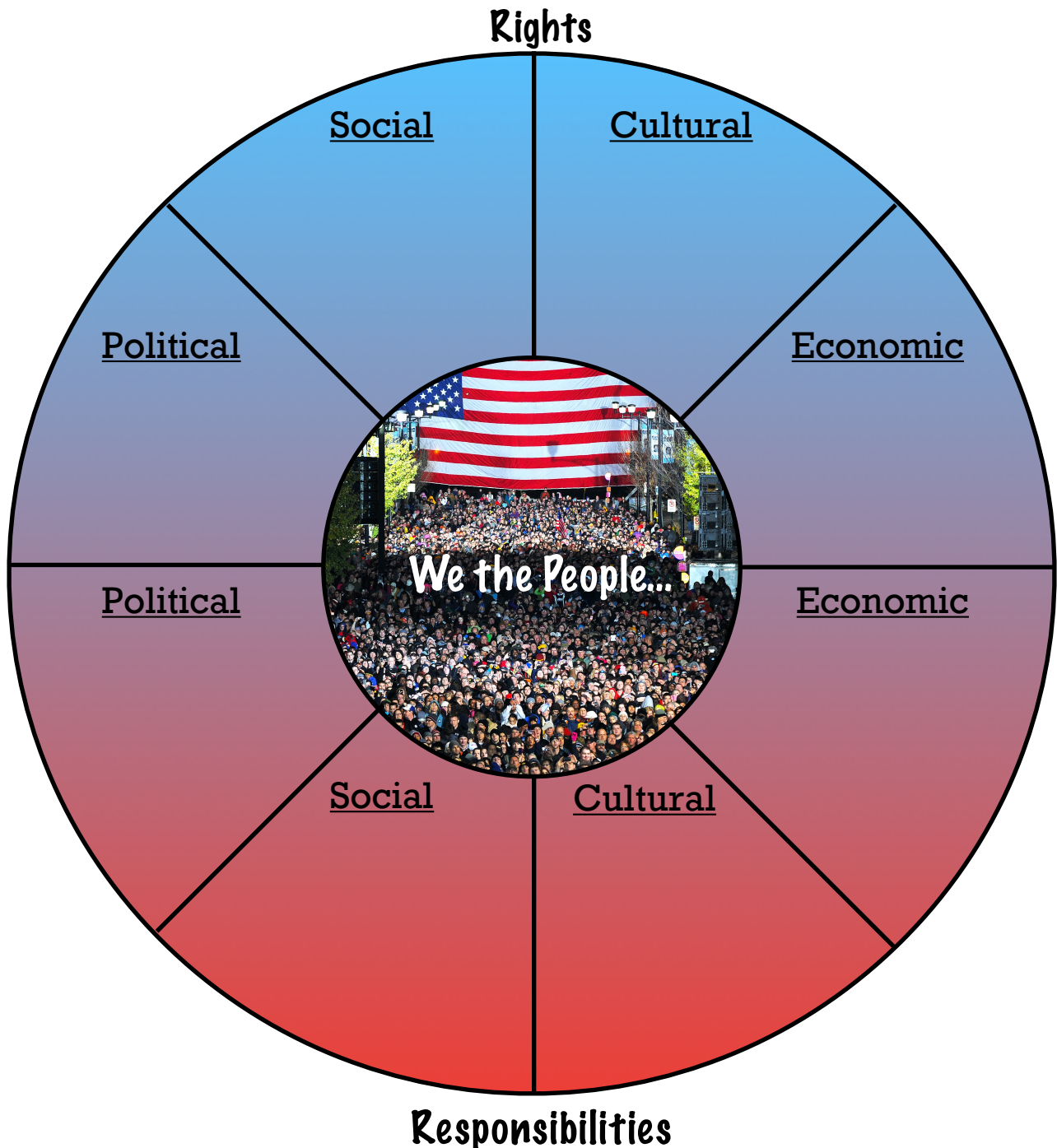
Suggested Answers:

The Bell Ringer and Opening Activity responses will be varied but here's some possible answers:

Bell Ringer—The Preamble serves as a statement of purpose or reason the delegates have decided to trash the Articles of Confederation and replace them with a new system under the Constitution. In identifying the founding principles needed to form a more perfect union, these principles became, to an extent, the objectives for the U.S. Constitution and the nation in general to follow in the larger collection of articles, and eventually amendments, that followed the Preamble. Furthermore, in spite of our differences, Americans are brought together with a shared belief in the government's duty to protect, promote, and secure these principles.

Before Activity: “We the People...”

Directions: As stated in the Preamble, this nation is founded on the will of the people. Thus, in order to form a more perfect union, we the people must exercise our rights AND fulfill the responsibilities of citizenship. We all have political, social, cultural, and economic privileges and duties. These four areas serve as categories for each “piece” of the circle below. The top half of the circle below should focus on the political, social, cultural, and economic rights of the people. The bottom half is reserved for the political, social, cultural, and economic responsibilities of the people. In each piece, record at least THREE examples of either the rights or responsibilities we have within those areas.



During Activity: Our Government Report Card

Directions: The table below contains several excerpts/summaries from articles and amendments found within the Constitution, including the Bill of Rights, and recorded in the first column. To save time and focus on the legal considerations at the time the Preamble was written, subject matter from Amendments XI-XVII were not included but would make for great additional study since the Preamble is our timeless, constitutional “mission statement.” The remaining columns consist of headings which are composed of the FIVE objectives identified in the Preamble document that were deemed essential in forming a more perfect union.

- Read each article or amendment and consider (using your own rationale and background knowledge) whether it meets each of the five objectives.
- If the article/amendment meets an objective, simply place a check mark (✓) in the box. If not, simply leave the box blank. **Some areas will be subjective and up for debate.**
- The first two rows have been completed for you. Notice, electing (choosing) representatives technically covers all areas, but removal following impeachment is mainly about justice.

Constitutional Articles and Amendments	Establish <u>Justice</u>	Insure <u>Domestic Tranquility</u>	Provide for the <u>Common Defense</u>	Promote the <u>General Welfare</u>	Secure the <u>Blessings of Liberty</u>
The People of the several States shall choose the Members of the House (Art. I, Section 2)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Senate has the sole power of removal following impeachment by House (Art. I, Section 3)	✓				
The Congress shall have the Power to lay and collect taxes... and provide for the common Defense and general Welfare of the United States (Art. I, Sect. 8)					
The Congress may borrow Money on the credit of the United States (Art. I, Section 8)					
The Congress may establish rules and laws for obtaining Citizenship and declaring Bankruptcy (Art. I, Section 8)					
The Congress may coin Money, regulate the Value thereof...and fix the Standard of Weights and Measures (Art. I, Section 8)					
The Congress may establish Post Offices and post Roads (Art. I, Section 8)					
Congress may create laws to protect copyrights and patents (Art. I, Section 8)					

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Congress may define and punish Piracies and Felonies committed on the high Seas, and Offenses against the Law of Nation (Art. I, Section 8)					
Congress has the power to declare War (Art. I, Sect. 8)					
Congress has the power to raise and support Armies and a Navy (Art. I, Section 8)					
Congress may call forth the Militia to execute the laws of the Union, suppress Insurrections, and repel Invasions (Art. I, Section 8)					
The Privilege of the Writ of Habeas Corpus (right to petition against unlawful imprisonment) shall not be suspended (Art. I, Section 9)					
No Tax or Duty shall be laid on Articles exported from any State; No preference shall be given by any Regulation of Commerce or Revenue to the Ports of one State over those of another (Art. I, Section 9)					
No Money shall be drawn from the Treasury, but in Consequence of Appropriations made by Law; a regular Statement and Account of Receipts and Expenditures of all public Money shall be published from time to time (Art. I, Sect. 9)					
No Title of Nobility shall be granted by the U.S. (Art. I, Section 9)					
No State shall, without the Consent of the Congress, lay any Imposts or Duties on Imports or Exports, except that may be absolutely necessary for executing its inspection Laws (Art. I, Section 10)					
The President shall take the Oath to “preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution” (Art. II, Sect. 1)					

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The President shall be Commander in Chief of the Army and Navy (Art. II, Sect. 2)					
The President shall give to the Congress Information of the State of the Union and recommend important measures to be taken (Art. II, Section 3)					
The President, Vice President and all civil Officers of the U.S., shall be removed from Office on Impeachment for, and Conviction of, Treason, Bribery, or other high Crimes and Misdemeanors (Art. II, Section 4)					
The judicial Power of the United States, shall be vested in one supreme Court, and in such inferior Courts as the Congress may from time to time ordain and establish (Art. III, Section 1)					
The Trial of all Crimes, except in Cases of Impeachment; shall be by Jury; and such Trial shall be held in the State where the said Crimes shall have been committed (Art. III, Section 2)					
The Citizens of each State shall be entitled to all Privileges and Immunities of Citizens in the several States (Art. IV, Section 2)					
The Congress...shall propose Amendments to this Constitution, or, on the Application of the Legislatures of two thirds of the several States, shall call a Convention for proposing Amendments (Article V)					
Freedom of Religion, Speech, the Press, and Peaceful Assembly (Amendment I)					
Right to Bear Arms (Amend. II)					
No Quartering of Troops in Private Homes during Peacetime (Amendment III)					

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No unlawful Search and Seizure (Amendment IV)					
Right to a Grand Jury, protection against Self-Incrimination and Double Jeopardy (Amendment V)					
Rights to a speedy Public Trial, receive legal Counsel, impartial Jury, and knowledge of Accusers, Charges, and Evidence against you (Amendment VI)					
Right to civil Jury Trials in Federal Courts (Amendment VII)					
Protection from excessive Bail, excessive Fines, and from cruel and unusual Punishment (Amendment VIII)					
All rights not listed in the Constitution belong to the People, not the government (Amend. IX)					
Federal Government only has powers delegated in the Constitution (Amend. X)					



After Activity: Preamble Debrief

Directions: Use the results from your “Our Government Report Card” to answer the following questions. Suggested response lengths will vary based on the question.

1. Tally the number of checks you recorded for each of the objectives and write them below:

1. Justice: _____
2. Domestic Tranquility: _____
3. Common Defense: _____
4. General Welfare: _____
5. Blessings of Liberty: _____

2. Which objective received the most checks? Why do you think this was the result?

3. Which objective received the least checks? Why do you think this was the result?

4. Share your answers with a classmate. Did he/she have results similar to yours or were they significantly different? If they were different, briefly describe how they were different.

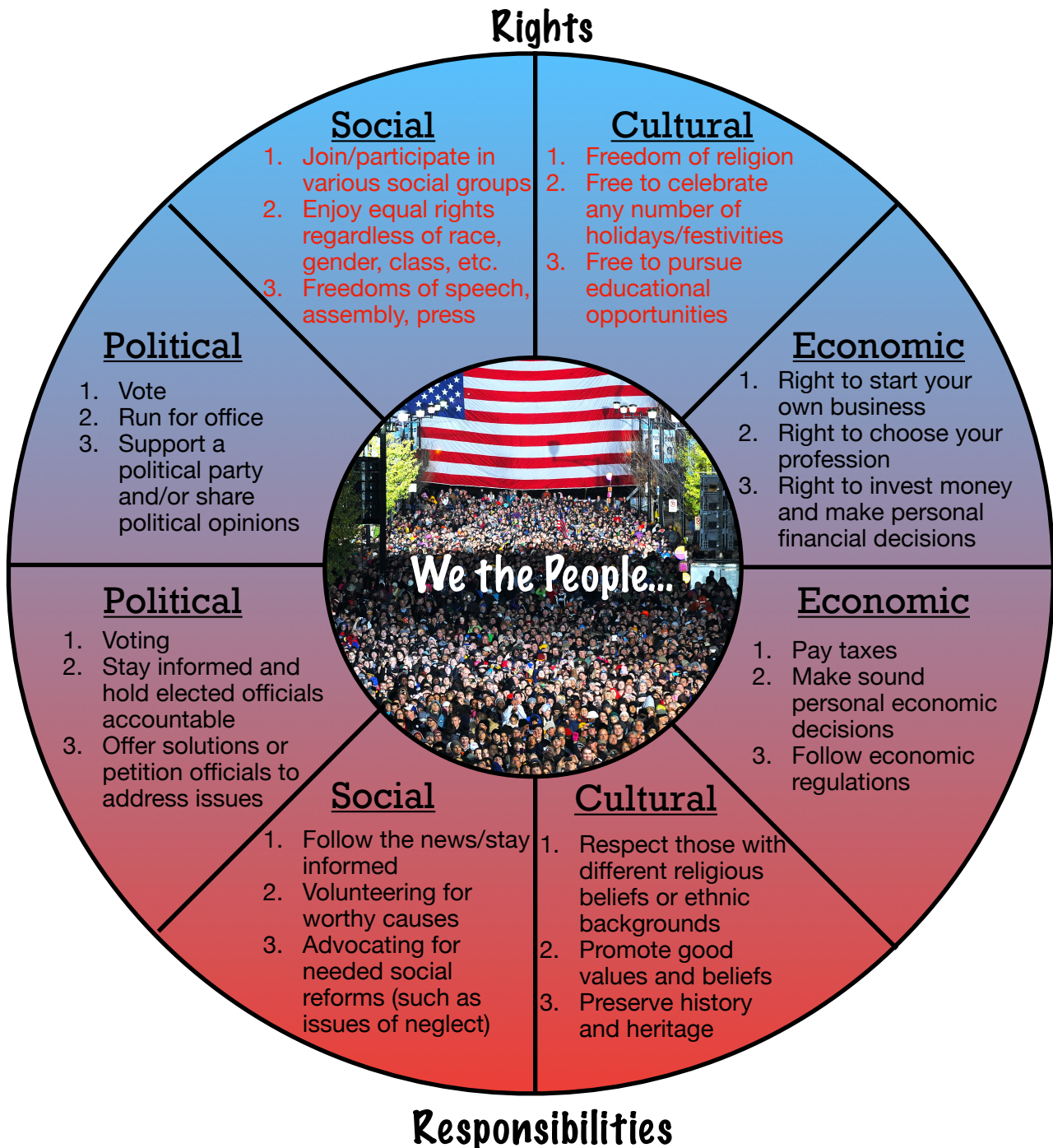
5. Do you think the addition of the Bill of Rights (yellow rows) significantly increased the total tallies for any of the objectives? If so, which objective(s)?

6. Considering America is a nation of diverse citizens, how do these objectives/principles from the Preamble help to unify us as ONE United States?



Before Activity: “We the People...”

Directions: As stated in the Preamble, this nation is founded on the will of the people. Thus, in order to form a more perfect union, we the people must exercise our rights AND fulfill the responsibilities of citizenship. We all have political, social, cultural, and economic privileges and duties. These four areas serve as categories for each “piece” of the circle below. The top half of the circle below should focus on the political, social, cultural, and economic rights of the people. The bottom half is reserved for the political, social, cultural, and economic responsibilities of the people. In each piece, record at least **THREE** examples of either the rights or responsibilities we have within those areas.

































During Activity: Our Government Report Card


Directions: The table below contains several excerpts/summaries from articles and amendments found within the Constitution, including the Bill of Rights, and recorded in the first column. To save time and focus on the legal considerations at the time the Preamble was written, subject matter from Amendments XI-XVII were not included but would make for great additional study since the Preamble is our timeless, constitutional “mission statement.” The remaining columns consist of headings which are composed of the FIVE objectives identified in the Preamble document that were deemed essential in forming a more perfect union.

- Read each article or amendment and consider (using your own rationale and background knowledge) whether it meets each of the five objectives.
- If the article/amendment meets an objective, simply place a check mark (✓) in the box. If not, simply leave the box blank. **Some areas will be subjective and up for debate.**
- The first two rows have been completed for you. Notice, electing (choosing) representatives technically covers all areas, but removal following impeachment is mainly about justice.

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The People of the several States shall choose the Members of the House (Art. I, Section 2)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Senate has the sole power of removal following impeachment by House (Art. I, Section 3)	✓				
The Congress shall have the Power to lay and collect taxes... and provide for the common Defense and general Welfare of the United States (Art. I, Sect. 8)	✓	✓	✓	✓	
The Congress may borrow Money on the credit of the United States (Art. I, Section 8)				✓	
The Congress may establish rules and laws for obtaining Citizenship and declaring Bankruptcy (Art. I, Section 8)				✓	✓
The Congress may coin Money, regulate the Value thereof...and fix the Standard of Weights and Measures (Art. I, Section 8)	✓	✓		✓	
The Congress may establish Post Offices and post Roads (Art. I, Section 8)		✓		✓	✓
Congress may create laws to protect copyrights and patents (Art. I, Section 8)	✓	✓		✓	

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Congress may call forth the Militia to execute the laws of the Union, suppress Insurrections, and repel Invasions (Art. I, Section 8)					
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No Money shall be drawn from the Treasury, but in Consequence of Appropriations made by Law; a regular Statement and Account of Receipts and Expenditures of all public Money shall be published from time to time (Art. I, Sect. 9)					
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The President shall give to the Congress Information of the State of the Union and recommend important measures to be taken (Art. II, Section 3)					
The President, Vice President and all civil Officers of the U.S., shall be removed from Office on Impeachment for, and Conviction of, Treason, Bribery, or other high Crimes and Misdemeanors (Art. II, Section 4)					
The judicial Power of the United States, shall be vested in one supreme Court, and in such inferior Courts as the Congress may from time to time ordain and establish (Art. III, Section 1)					
The Trial of all Crimes, except in Cases of Impeachment; shall be by Jury; and such Trial shall be held in the State where the said Crimes shall have been committed (Art. III, Section 2)					
The Citizens of each State shall be entitled to all Privileges and Immunities of Citizens in the several States (Art. IV, Section 2)					
The Congress...shall propose Amendments to this Constitution, or, on the Application of the Legislatures of two thirds of the several States, shall call a Convention for proposing Amendments (Article V)					
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Right to civil Jury Trials in Federal Courts (Amendment VII)					
Protection from excessive Bail, excessive Fines, and from cruel and unusual Punishment (Amendment VIII)					
All rights not listed in the Constitution belong to the People, not the government (Amend. IX)					
Federal Government only has powers delegated in the Constitution (Amend. X)					

After Activity: Preamble Debrief

Directions: Use the results from your “Our Government Report Card” to answer the following questions. Suggested response lengths will vary based on the question.

1. Tally the number of checks you recorded for each of the objectives and write them below:

- 1. Justice: 26
- 2. Domestic Tranquility: 22
- 3. Common Defense: 10
- 4. General Welfare: 25
- 5. Blessings of Liberty: 25

****Answers will vary**

2. Which objective received the most checks? Why do you think this was the result?

The list is very well-balanced...but “Justice” received the most with “General Welfare” and “Blessings of Liberty” very close. Order, fairness, and impartiality must be the cornerstone for establishing law and order in a society.

3. Which objective received the least checks? Why do you think this was the result?

"Common Defense" received the least. This is likely because war powers can be broad or the framers of the Constitution wanted to provide protection and a sense of security without creating fear by granting too much federal military power.

4. Share your answers with a classmate. Did he/she have results similar to yours or were they significantly different? If they were different, briefly describe how they were different.

Answers will vary. Students may have similar or very different approaches to this exercise.

5. Do you think the addition of the Bill of Rights (yellow rows) significantly increased the total tallies for any of the objectives? If so, which objective(s)?

Yes, the “Blessings of Liberty” are secured in every amendment because that was the purpose of the Bill of Rights and the missing part numerous delegates and citizens demanded to be added in order to fully gain their support.

6. Considering America is a nation of diverse citizens, how do these objectives/principles from the Preamble help to unify us as ONE United States?

Answers will vary. In spite of our political, religious, cultural, geographical, ethnic, class, moral, etc., differences...we are able to unite as one nation because we share common longings and/or basic beliefs in each of these five principles. They represent to greatness of this country and its Constitution.