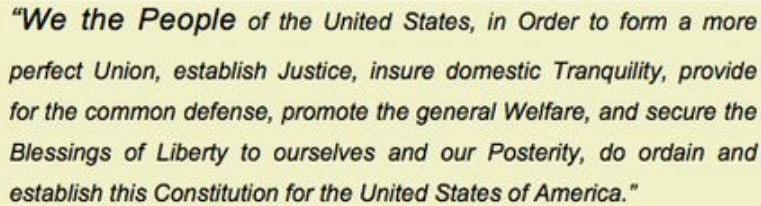


American Government - Preamble to the United States Constitution

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 words written in italics above are the preamble to the Constitution of the United States. The Constitution is the document that defines America's democracy. It sets forth the nation's laws. It also spells out the rights and liberties of the American people.

The United States Constitution's preamble 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. They wanted the government to protect the people's rights. They wanted the Constitution to establish a democracy. In a democracy, the people elect, or vote for, the people they want to run their government. The government's power comes from the people. The government cannot exist without the **consent** of the **majority** of its people. If the government fails to protect the people, then the people can use their voting power to elect new people to run the government.

What 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 democratic 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.

The Circus Comes to Town

by ReadWorks



Donald Seastrunk never feared the jugglers until they upgraded from bean bags to bowling pins. By the movie theater, after a movie let out, excited crowds gathered around the most skilled jugglers, whose silk vests were as blue as the sky. Winking and smiling, the jugglers performed astonishing feats: dozens of balls in the air at once; nifty, behind-the-back and through-the-legs tricks; even juggling blindfolded. Word of mouth spread to neighboring towns. People from far away came to see the street performers. All seemed well and good, but with the jugglers' popularity came copycats. And so many of them!

On the side streets and quiet walkways, juggling copycats blundered through their simple routines. A ball or two rolling into the street was the worst of it, at first. But when the very best jugglers switched to bowling pins to freshen up their act, the bad jugglers copied this, too. For Donald Seastrunk, the juggling problem came to a head one May morning, as he hurried from his car up the path to the library. Just as he thought he was safe, a stray bowling pin spiraled through the air and whomped him on the head.

The next day it was crazy at Town Hall, too. Mayor Marjorie Arnold sighed at her desk. She had just read Donald Seastrunk's angry email, which Donald had sent to dozens of friends, the town council, and the mayor's office. This wasn't the first complaint the mayor had

received about the jugglers. But what could she do? Some people were mad, but others loved the jugglers. After all, the town was practically famous now, and people were proud to be from a famous town. The biggest newspaper in the state capital had even written an article about the jugglers. And think of all the money the crowds spent at local stores! The mayor chewed her pen. She tapped her foot furiously. She sighed so strongly that important documents blew off her desk, and this made her sigh again.

Whenever she found herself in trouble, Mayor Arnold liked to hold imaginary conversations with the golden cat statue on her desk. With another heavy sigh, she asked it for advice.

"Why not pass a law banning juggling in public?" it seemed to say.

"The mayor can't just pass whatever laws she wants," said Mayor Arnold. "Laws are passed by the town council." With a groan, the mayor rose from her leather chair and stood at the window, looking at the trees in full bloom on the town green. One tree had a bowling pin caught in the branches.

The mayor imagined the cat's voice dropping to a whisper. "Why not order the police to fine the jugglers for disturbing the peace?"

"That's no good," the mayor said. She rested her forehead on the cool window and closed her eyes. "What if the jugglers sue us? Then the case would go to court, and the town could lose a lot of money!"

The golden cat statue made no reply. The mayor was by herself. She heard what sounded like the distant rumble of thunder. Thunder? There wasn't a cloud in the sky! Without taking her forehead off the window, Mayor Arnold opened her eyes. What she saw next made her jump up with a squeak. A crowd of people were marching up the long street that led to Town Hall, and at the crowd's front was Donald Seastrunk himself. They pumped their fists in the air and waved signs. An anti-juggler protest! Mayor Arnold sighed. It was going to be a long day.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Use the article "The Circus Comes to Town" to answer questions 1 to 2.

1. Some people love the jugglers. How do Donald Seastrunk and some other townspeople feel about the jugglers?

2. Why is Mayor Arnold having trouble deciding what to do about the jugglers?

Use the article "American Government - Preamble to the United States Constitution" to answer questions 3 to 4.

3. In a democracy, what can happen if the government fails to protect the people?

4. According to the preamble to the United States Constitution, the government should defend the country and care for the general well-being of the people. What are two other responsibilities of the government?

Use the articles "The Circus Comes to Town" and "American Government - Preamble to the United States Constitution" to answer question 5.

5. Think about the responsibilities of the government mentioned in the preamble to the Constitution. Is Mayor Arnold doing a good job as a government leader? Why or why not? Use evidence from both texts to support your answer.
