

Celebrate Freedom



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....”



Declaration of Independence

Every year, you and your classmates may participate in Celebrate Freedom Week activities. These activities are designed to remind you about some of the important ideas that make our country so special. In your school, you may have school-wide displays or an assembly. Maybe speakers come to share their thoughts or students write essays or make posters or develop presentations. Whatever happens in your school, you will likely take some time to think about America's founding documents, such as the Declaration of Independence.

The Declaration of Independence states some of America's most important ideas about society and government. It has played a key role in shaping America's constitutional republic. As you recite the words, think about why many students join in Celebrate Freedom Week.

Summarize According to the Declaration of Independence, who has rights? Who can take them away?

Paraphrase In your own words, restate the idea in the Declaration about the purpose of government.

Analyze Why do you think many students recite part of the Declaration of Independence when they celebrate Freedom Week?

self-evident, adj., obvious

endowed, v. given; provided

unalienable, adj., not to be taken away

deriving, v., getting from a source

consent, n., agreement

The Bill of Rights

One of the chief ways early American leaders tried to protect individual rights was by adding the first ten Amendments to the Constitution. This section is known as the Bill of Rights. The Bill of Rights guarantees certain legal rights, and it limits the power of the government to interfere with others.

Constructing an Argument Write an essay discussing one of the rights guaranteed in the Bill of Rights.

1. Review the Bill of Rights in the U.S. Constitution in the online Reference Center or at the back of your book. Notice that the Constitution has Commentary on the side of the actual document. This Commentary helps explain the language in the Constitution and can give you some background about each provision. Use the Commentary to help you review the first ten Amendments, or Bill of Rights.
2. Choose one basic right as the focus of your essay. Note that several of the Amendments—including the First, Fifth, and Sixth—are divided into different parts, each dealing with a specific right. You may choose to focus on one part of one of these Amendments rather than the entire Amendment.
3. Research a recent event or situation where the right you have chosen was protected or threatened. This might be an event or situation in your local community or a nearby community, in your state, or somewhere else in the nation. Be sure to use more than one source and to use reliable sources.
4. Begin your essay by naming the Amendment you have chosen, and restating in your own words what the right protects or guarantees.
5. Explain why you believe that right is important to guarantee liberty today.
6. Describe what you think might happen if that right were not protected by the Constitution.
7. Support your opinion with facts you have learned from your research.
8. Don't forget to check and revise your essay, as needed. Be sure to use proper grammar, spelling, and sentence structure.
9. After you write your essay, your teacher may ask you and your classmates to share your views with the class. If so, remember to speak clearly and to present your views using the evidence you gathered for your essay. When listening to others, listen closely and be respectful of their views.



>> The First Amendment protects the right to petition.