Ideals of Democracy

Student practice • Topic 1.1

Use the sources below to explain how ideals appear in the Declaration of Independence, Constitution, and Gettysburg Address. Games are fictional models; documents are historical. Do not write personal information you do not want shared.

Source A • Declaration of Independence, 1776

Declaration of Independence (1776): “to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.” The Declaration states an ideal; it did not give equal political participation to everyone.

Source B • Constitution, 1787

U.S. Constitution (1787), Article I, Section 1: “All legislative Powers herein granted shall be vested in a Congress of the United States”. Article II assigns executive power; Article III assigns judicial power. These allocations limit and divide authority.

Source C • Gettysburg Address, 1863

Gettysburg Address (1863): “government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.” Lincoln linked the Union’s survival to popular government during the Civil War. This was an argument about ideals, not a claim that equality had already been achieved.

1. Identify one democratic ideal in each source. For each, explain how a specific phrase or constitutional structure supports your interpretation.

From ideals to institutions

2. A fictional flood commission is elected for one year. It can repair drainage, but its chair proposes banning all complaints about the commission. Explain the democratic ideal reflected in its selection and the ideal threatened by the proposal. Explain why an election alone is insufficient.

3. A student says: “Popular sovereignty means the public must vote directly on every law.” Explain the error using republicanism. Then distinguish separation of powers from checks and balances with one concrete example.

Read a pattern, respect a limit

4. Fictional civic-forum attendance audit

Meeting A: 40 of 100 invited residents attended. Meeting B: 60 of 150 invited residents attended. Participants volunteered; these were not random samples.

a. Calculate the attendance percentage for each meeting. b. Describe a valid comparison using both counts and percentages. c. Explain why these figures cannot establish that all residents consent to every forum decision.

5. Compare the equality ideal in the Declaration with the popular-government argument in the Gettysburg Address. Identify a continuity and explain why the documents do not prove equal political participation had been achieved.

Make an argument

6. Develop an argument about whether public authorization alone is enough to create limited government. Use evidence from the Constitution and at least one of the other two sources. Explain the reasoning that connects your evidence to your claim. Address an alternative perspective.

Locally authored practice. This is not a reproduction of a College Board exam question or scoring rubric. Your teacher evaluates the accuracy and sufficiency of your reasoning.

Simulation debrief: choose one decision from The Unfinished Republic. Explain its modeled consequence, compare a different choice, and identify something the simulation leaves out.

Four-chapter field journal

For each chapter, record a decision, a specific source detail, the connection between the two, and a limitation. These notes may also be completed in the game and downloaded.

1776 • Rights and consent

1787 • Constitutional structures

1863 • Equality and popular government

Today • Applying ideals