

8. Civil Rights for All Americans | Worksheet

Name: _____

Date: _____

When Principles Are Tested

New Civilization Name: _____

Your civilization is a republic, and your constitution promises liberty. But a problem has appeared. Some leaders in your nation are using unclear language in the law to deny freedom to certain groups of people.

Read through the three scenario cards handed out by your teacher. Your job is to write a constitutional amendment that closes these loopholes and protects the rights of everyone.

Your group must produce one sentence that reads like constitutional language for each scenario. Below are some sentence starters to help you get started:

1. No person in our civilization may ...

2. The government shall not ...

3. All citizens have the right to ...





Comprehension Questions

1. What was the biggest problem facing this government?

2. Why was this problem difficult to solve when the country was first founded?

(Check the ideas that apply.)

- Some states depended on slavery and refused to give it up
- The Constitution's compromises allowed slavery to continue
- The nation had not yet clearly written equal rights into the Constitution
- The country was divided about how freedom should apply to everyone

Match each amendment to the freedom it protects.

3. 13th Amendment

- Ends slavery in the United States
- Requires states to protect the rights of citizens
- Protects voting rights regardless of race

4. 14th Amendment

- Ends slavery in the United States
- Requires states to protect the rights of citizens
- Protects voting rights regardless of race

5. 15th Amendment

- Ends slavery in the United States
- Requires states to protect the rights of citizens
- Protects voting rights regardless of race

6. How did the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments help the Constitution better protect freedom?

Enrichment Activity: The Power of Symbols

In the boxes below, draw a symbol that represents the meaning of each amendment. Your drawing should help someone understand the right that the amendment protects.

You may also add a short label if it helps explain your symbol.

13th Amendment	14th Amendment	15th Amendment

Answer Key | Civil Rights for All Americans

When Principles Are Tested

Answers will vary by group. Grade primarily for understanding of the constitutional principle and the clarity of the rules students write.

Student sentences should show that they are closing a loophole and protecting the rights of all people. Strong responses should clearly forbid unfair treatment and should not allow obvious ways around the rule.

Good Examples:

Freedom (13th Amendment concept)

- *No person in our civilization may be forced to work without pay or held as a slave.*
- *The government shall not allow slavery or forced labor.*

Equal Protection (14th Amendment concept)

- *The government shall not treat citizens unfairly under the law.*
- *All citizens must be treated equally and protected by the laws of our civilization.*

Voting Rights (15th Amendment concept)

- *All citizens have the right to vote in elections.*
- *The government shall not deny citizens the right to vote because of their race or background.*

Wrong Examples:

Examples of potential loophole sentences

- *People should be treated fairly.*
- *Everyone should be free.*
- *Leaders should try to be fair to citizens.*
- *Only good people can vote.*
- *Slavery should not happen unless the government allows it.*

Problems with these examples include:

- Vague language
- Missing clear restrictions on government power
- Words that could be interpreted in different ways

Students should revise their rules to make them clear, specific, and difficult to misuse.

Comprehension Questions | Answers

1. What was the biggest problem facing this government?
Slavery. The country was founded on the idea of freedom, but slavery still existed in several states.
2. Why was this problem difficult to solve when the country was first founded?
(All answers are acceptable because the script points to all of these causes.)
 - ✓ Some states depended on slavery and refused to give it up
 - ✓ The Constitution's compromises allowed slavery to continue
 - ✓ The nation had not yet clearly written equal rights into the Constitution
 - ✓ The country was divided about how freedom should apply to everyone

Match each amendment to the freedom it protects.

3. 13th Amendment
 - ✓ Ends slavery in the United States
 - Requires states to protect the rights of citizens
 - Protects voting rights regardless of race
4. 14th Amendment
 - Ends slavery in the United States
 - ✓ Requires states to protect the rights of citizens
 - Protects voting rights regardless of race
5. 15th Amendment
 - Ends slavery in the United States
 - Requires states to protect the rights of citizens
 - ✓ Protects voting rights regardless of race
6. How did these amendments help the Constitution better protect freedom?

Acceptable Student Responses May Include Ideas Such As:

- *They ended slavery and protected people's freedom.*
- *They required the government to treat citizens equally.*
- *They protected the right to vote.*
- *They helped the Constitution protect the rights of all Americans.*
- *They made the laws clearer so states could not deny people their rights.*