

# TEACHING DEMOCRACY

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Cal Humanities & The California History-Social Science Project

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*What was  
the purpose  
of the  
Preamble?*



**Teaching Democracy** is a partnership between the California History-Social Science Project (CHSSP) and Cal Humanities. **Teaching Democracy** seeks to both deepen student understanding of the history of American democracy and promote an engaged and knowledgeable citizenry. Our partnership hopes to invigorate K-16 educators to formulate new ways to help students make connections between ideas upon which the United States was founded and its governance.

**Teaching Democracy** provides three major curricular resources for teachers and their students: presentations by leading scholars, selected primary sources, and Standards-aligned curriculum for teachers, including this lesson. These materials will be distributed in five online webinars scheduled for 2012 and archived with recorded presentations on the Teaching Democracy website for future classroom use.

### **About The California History-Social Science Project:**

One of nine disciplinary networks that make up the California Subject Matter Projects (CSMP), the California History-Social Science Project (CHSSP) is headquartered at the University of California, Davis, and its six sites are housed in the departments of history and geography at university campuses throughout California. Our K-16 collaborative is dedicated to providing the highest quality history instruction, with a special focus on meeting the needs of English learners, native speakers with low literacy, and students from economically disadvantaged communities. For more information, visit [chssp.ucdavis.edu](http://chssp.ucdavis.edu).

### **About Cal Humanities**

Cal Humanities is an independent non-profit organization that promotes the humanities in California to help create “a state of open mind.” We produce, fund, and support cultural and educational experiences through media, writings, presentations, and discussion programs. Our aim is to inspire Californians to learn more, dig deeper, and start conversations that matter among our dramatically diverse people.

Cal Humanities sees the humanities as relevant, meaningful ways to understand the human condition and connect us to each other in order to become a better California. A state partner of the National Endowment for the Humanities, we were originally founded in 1975 as a granting organization, but through the years we have created and implemented our own signature humanities programs and projects. Cal Humanities now plays a critical role across the state in producing, funding, and supporting cultural experiences and events. For more information, visit [www.calhum.org](http://www.calhum.org).

### **About the Author**

Jennifer Brouhard is a 5th grade teacher at Glenview Elementary School in the Oakland Unified School District. She has presented at numerous summer institutes and conferences including National Council for History Education, California Council for Social Studies, and the California Council for History Education. In 2009, Ms. Brouhard received the Preserve America Elementary History Teacher of the Year Award, sponsored by the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History.

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## California Content Standards

- ✓ 5.7 Students describe the people and events associated with the development of the U.S. Constitution and analyze the Constitution's significance as the foundation of the American republic.

## Common Core State Standards

- ✓ RI5.1 Explain the relationships or interactions between two or more individuals, events, ideas, or concepts in a historical, scientific, or technical text based on specific information in the text.
- ✓ W5.1 Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information.
  - ✓ W5.1.a Introduce a topic or text clearly, state an opinion, and create an organizational structure in which ideas are logically grouped to support the writer's purpose.
  - ✓ W5.1.b Provide logically ordered reasons that are supported by facts and details.
  - ✓ W5.1.d Provide a concluding statement or section related to the opinion presented.
- ✓ W5.8 Draw on information from multiple print or digital sources, demonstrating the ability to locate an answer to a question quickly or to solve a problem efficiently.
- ✓ L5.6 Acquire and use accurately grade-appropriate general academic and domain-specific words and phrases, including those that signal contrast, addition, and other logical relationships (e.g., *however, although, nevertheless, similarly, moreover, in addition*).

## What was the Purpose of the Preamble?



Citation: The Scene at the Signing of the Constitution, oil painting (reproduction) by Howard Chandler Christy, 1940. URL: [http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/charters\\_of\\_freedom\\_zoom\\_pages/charters\\_of\\_freedom\\_zoom\\_6.2.1.html](http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/charters_of_freedom_zoom_pages/charters_of_freedom_zoom_6.2.1.html)

This 5<sup>th</sup> grade lesson is designed as an introduction to the study of the Constitution. The lesson's focus on the language of the Preamble provides teachers with an opportunity to increase student reading comprehension and disciplinary understanding. Through a close reading of the Preamble, students can further develop their ability to compare and contrast documents and make their own historical interpretations. In answering the lesson focus question, *What was the Purpose of the Preamble?*, students prepare to learn about the rights and responsibilities detailed in the Constitution and the purpose for its structure of government.

## Procedures

### Step 1: A First Look at the Preamble (Class Time: 10 minutes)

Introduce the lesson focus question, *What was the purpose of the Preamble?* Tell students that they will begin to answer the lesson focus question by reading two different drafts of the Preamble. Constitutional Convention delegates received the first draft in August 1787. The second is the final text included in the Constitution that the authors approved on September 17, 1787. Distribute **Student Handout 1: Preamble Drafts**. Give students a few minutes to read both versions independently before reading them aloud as a class. Tell them to annotate the readings—to write notes and circle any differences between the two drafts. Next, have the students answer the two questions in pairs: 1) What changes do you notice between the first and final drafts?; and 2) Why do you think the authors of the Constitution made these changes? This exercise allows students to form initial thoughts about the difference between the Preamble drafts that they will revisit later.

### Step 2: Comparing the Language of the Preamble Drafts (Class Time: 20 minutes)

Students will now closely study the language of each version of the Preamble. Distribute **Student Handout 2: Analyzing the Original Preamble** and **Student Handout 3: Analyzing the Preamble**. This activity, deconstructing sentences, helps students see how words and phrases are combined to make meaning and convey information. Students will sort the text into four categories: 1) prepositional phrases that illustrate time and relationship; 2) nouns and adjectives that show the students the subject of the sentence; 3) action words such as verbs and adverbs to highlight the action taking place; and 4) nouns and adjectives that show who or what is receiving the action. Since this activity concentrates on verbs to highlight the actions taking place, students only have to fill in “Action.” The last column encourages students to ask questions for clarification, as well as to draw conclusions or analyze the text line by line. The follow-up questions on the handouts reinforce the idea that the people of the United States have created a government to protect the personal and national interests of the people for themselves and future generations.

### Step 3: Check Student Understanding (5-10 minutes)

**Student Handout 2: Analyzing the Original Preamble** and **Student Handout 3: Analyzing the Preamble** are meant to guide students’ observation and analysis of the Preamble drafts, and to determine key changes to the final draft. Ask students to share their observations and explain any points they have missed. First, students should notice that the United States of America has replaced the names of the delegates’ states. This change is significant as the authors see themselves as part of one united nation rather than as a group of individual states. In addition, the authority of the government lies with the people who created the government. The second change is that there is more elaboration about the duties and responsibilities of the government. Ask students for their thoughts on the changes made between the first and final drafts. Tell students to add any new insights to their **Student Handout 1: Preamble Drafts** notes. Have students discuss



in small groups how new observations help answer the focus question. One student from each group can report their group's discussion to the class. Finally, have students write on the back of **Student Handout 1: Preamble Drafts** what they know, how this will help them answer the focus question, and what they still do not understand. Based on what they still do not understand, you may need to do some small group or whole class reteaching.

#### **Step 4: In Your Own Words (Class Time: 10 minutes)**

To prepare students for writing (in Step 6 below) and reinforce new learning, this activity gives them practice with paraphrasing. Have students explain what the Preamble means in their own words on **Student Handout 4: In Your Own Words**. Students can work on this together but they must be able to explain their choices for both columns. The varying answers to "What does this mean?" will give teachers a good gauge of student understanding of the Preamble and reveal which students will have a difficult time with the lesson assessment.

#### **Step 5: Collecting Evidence (Class Time: 15 minutes)**

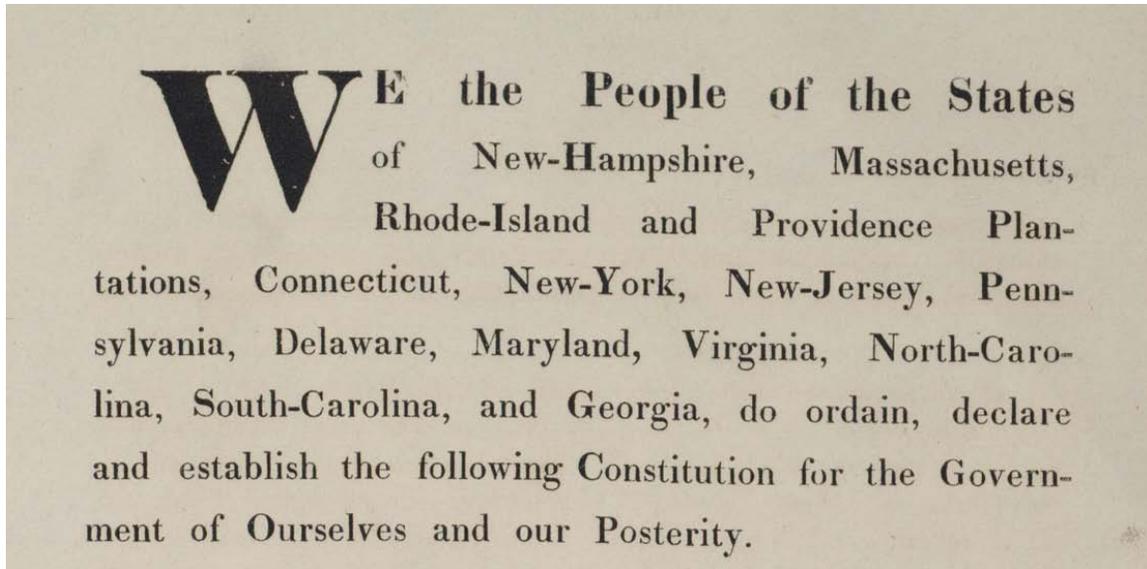
Distribute **Student Handout 5: Pre-Writing Notes**. Tell students that the final assignment for the lesson is to write a paragraph answering the focus question. First, they will need to collect evidence for writing. As a class read the focus question, background information, introduction, and thesis from the handout. Have students circle the key words in the focus question and underline the three main arguments of the thesis: that the purpose of the Preamble was to (1) establish new government by the people and for the people; (2) explain the role of the government; and (3) promote the shared responsibility of ensuring a free government. Students will work in groups to find the words in the Preamble that support the thesis. The graphic organizer supports their note taking. For the "Paraphrase" column, tell students to explain how words from the Preamble are evidence of the three main arguments.

#### **Step 6: Answering the Focus Question (15 minutes)**

Students will now answer the lesson focus question. Have students refer to all their previous lesson notes to complete **Student Handout 6: Answering the Focus Question**. The sentence frames will guide students through the process of synthesizing the evidence and making interpretations based upon the primary source (the Preamble). Explain to the students that the information for each of the prompts (i.e., "First," "Second," "Finally") can be found in **Student Handout 5: Pre-Writing Notes**, listed as the three main arguments. Students can quote from the Preamble or paraphrase in their own words. The written analysis of the text will guide students to identify the purpose of the Preamble.

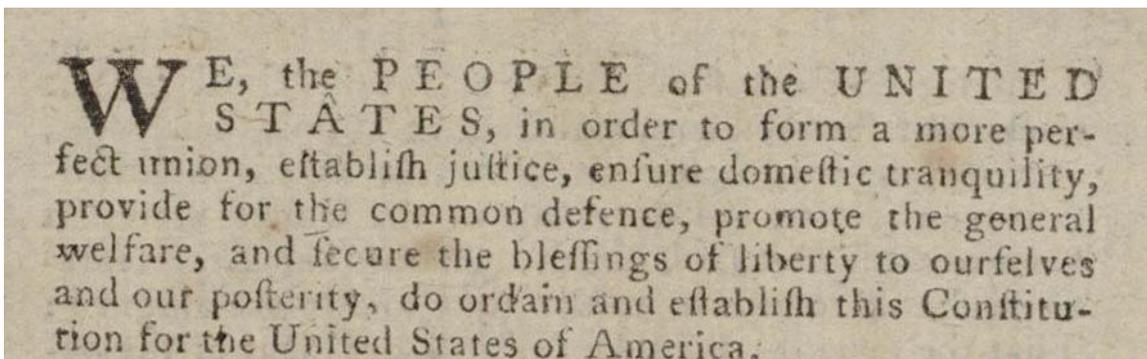
## Student Handout 1: Preamble Drafts

**First Draft: Distributed to Constitutional Convention delegates in August 1787**



Library of Congress, Rare Book and Special Collections Division, Alfred Whital Stern Collection of Lincolniana.  
[\[http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.rbc/bdsdcc.c01a1\]](http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.rbc/bdsdcc.c01a1)

**Final Draft: Signed by Constitutional Convention delegates on September 17, 1787**



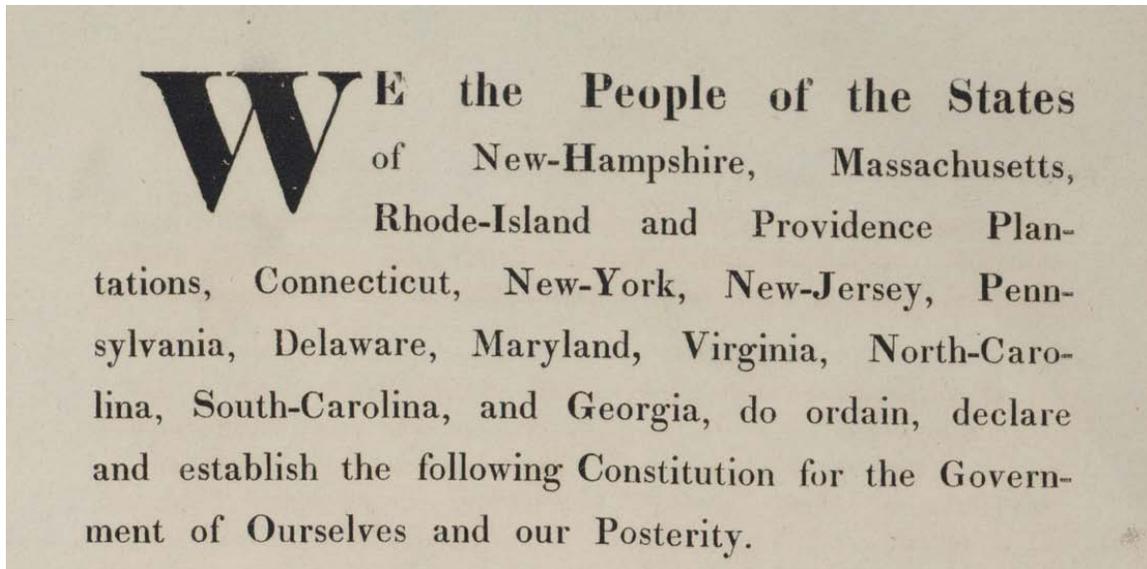
Library of Congress, Rare Book and Special Collections Division, Continental Congress & Constitutional Convention Broadside  
Collection [\[http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.rbc/bdsdcc.c0801\]](http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.rbc/bdsdcc.c0801)

1) What changes do you notice between the first and final draft?

2) Why do you think the authors of the Constitution made these changes?

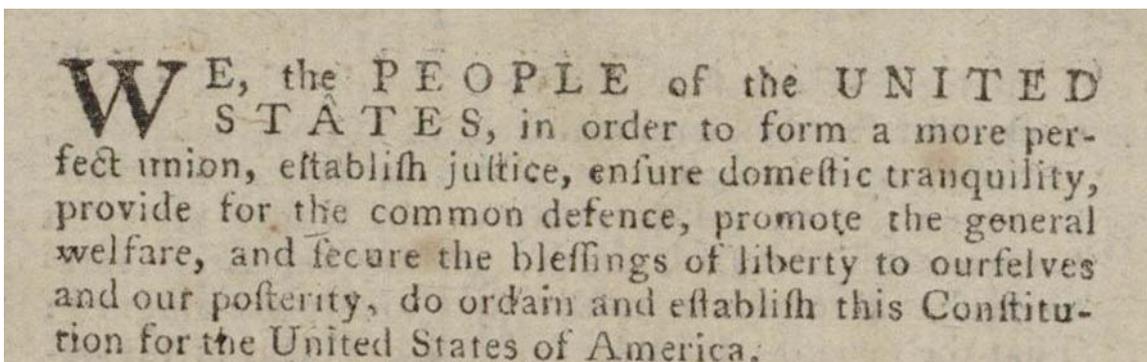
## Student Handout 1K: Preamble Drafts

### First Draft: Distributed to Constitutional Convention delegates in August 1787



Library of Congress, Rare Book and Special Collections Division, Alfred Whital Stern Collection of Lincolniana.  
[\[http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.rbc/bdsdcc.c01a1\]](http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.rbc/bdsdcc.c01a1)

### Final Draft: Signed by Constitutional Convention delegates on September 17, 1787



Library of Congress, Rare Book and Special Collections Division, Continental Congress & Constitutional Convention BroadSides  
Collection [\[http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.rbc/bdsdcc.c0801\]](http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.rbc/bdsdcc.c0801)

- 1) What changes do you notice between the first and final draft? **In the first draft, the first sentence begins, "We the People of the states of," and lists the 13 states. In the second version the states are not listed, and the authors wrote "We, the People of the United States" instead. The second draft is much longer.**
- 2) Why do you think the authors of the Constitution made these changes? **By writing the United States and not listing each of the 13 states the authors wanted to show that the states now made up one unified nation.**



### Student Handout 2: Analyzing the Original 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.

**Circle the Verbs:** Circle the verbs in the passage above and write the verbs you circled in the box below.

#### Break Down the Text

Prep/Time Marker	Subject	Action	Who or what is getting the action	Questions/ Conclusions
	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		the following Constitution	
for the government of ourselves and our posterity				

- 1) Who created the government?
  
- 2) Where did the government get its power?
  
- 3) Who was the Constitution and the government created for?

## Student Handout 2K: Analyzing the Original 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.

**Circle the Verbs:** Circle the verbs in the passage above and write the verbs you circled in the box below.

do ordain                  declare                  establish

### Break Down the Text

Prep/Time Marker	Subject	Action	Who or what is getting the action	Questions/Conclusions
	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	<i>Possible responses...</i>  What is a Constitution?  Who are "our posterity?"  Why does the Preamble need three similar verbs?
for the government of ourselves and our posterity				All 13 states are in support of the Constitution.

1) Who created the government?

The people of the states listed under "Subject."

2) Where did the government get its power?

The people of the states listed under "Subject." Students may also say that the Constitution grants power to the government (created by the people of all the states listed under "Subject.")

3) Who was the Constitution and the government created for?

For the people of the states listed under "Subject."

### Student Handout 3: Analyzing the Preamble

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.

**Circle the Verbs:** Circle the verbs in the passage above and write the verbs you circled in the box below.

### Break Down the Text

Prep/Time Marker	Subject	Action	Who or what is getting the action	Questions/Conclusions
	We, the people of the United States of America,			
in order			a more Perfect Union	
			justice	
			domestic tranquility	
			for the common defense	
			the general welfare	
		and _____	the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity	
			this Constitution	
for the United States of America				

- 1) Who is creating the government?
- 2) Where did the government get its power?
- 3) What is the purpose of the government?

### Student Handout 3K: Analyzing the Preamble

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.

**Circle the Verbs:** Circle the verbs in the passage above and write the verbs you circled in the box below.

To form      establish      insure      provide      promote      secure      do ordain      establish

#### Break Down the Text

Prep/Time Marker	Subject	Action	Who or what is getting the action	Questions/Conclusions
	We, the people of the United States of America,			Possible responses...  What happened to all the states?
In order		to form	a more Perfect Union	This Preamble is much more detailed than the draft.  Vocabulary questions  Why are all these details necessary? Some of them are very similar.  The authors kept the verbs "ordain and establish."
		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				

- 1) Who is creating the government? **The people of the United States**
- 2) Where did the government get its power? **The people of the United States**
- 3) What is the purpose of the government? **To form a 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.**



### Student Handout 4: In Your Own Words

*Instructions: From the list below choose the correct paraphrased statement and write it in the middle column.*

- encourage the wellbeing of all
- create fair laws and courts
- We, the people of America, in order to build a better country
- guarantee peace
- grant permission to create a new nation through the authority of the Constitution
- will protect the country
- insure freedom for Americans now and the future

<i>The Preamble says...</i>	<i>Choose and write the correct paraphrased statement from above</i>	<i>What does this mean?</i>
We, the People of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union,		
establish justice,		
ensure 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.		

### Student Handout 4K: In Your Own Words

*Instructions: From the list below choose the correct paraphrased statement and write it in the middle column.*

- encourage the wellbeing of all
- create fair laws and courts
- We, the people of America, in order to build a better country
- guarantee peace
- grant permission to create a new nation through the authority of the Constitution
- will protect the country
- insure freedom for Americans now and the future

<i>The Preamble says...</i>	<i>Choose and write the correct paraphrased statement from above</i>	<i>What does this mean? These answers will vary but they should give you a good sense of student comprehension.</i>
We, the People of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union,	We, the people of America, in order to build a better country	The people of America want to create a better government than the Articles of Confederation.  The people of America are creating a better United States government.
establish justice	create fair laws and courts	I am protected by fair laws and have rights if I go to court.
ensure domestic tranquility,	guarantee peace	The United States will be a peaceful country.
provide for the common defense,	will protect the country	The government will protect the country from harm.
promote the general welfare,	encourage the wellbeing of all	We all want to be well.
and secure the blessing of liberty to ourselves and our posterity	ensure freedom for Americans now and in the future	I live in a free country and future generations will too.
do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.	grant permission to create a new nation through the authority of the Constitution	The people give permission to establish a new government with the Constitution.

## Student Handout 5: Pre-Writing Notes

### Writing Prompt

*Focus Question:* What was the purpose of the Preamble?

Background: The Constitutional Convention delegates approved the final draft of the Constitution on September 17, 1787.

Introduction and Thesis: The Preamble is the introduction to the Constitution. Its purpose is to: (1) establish a government that is by the people and for the people; (2) explain the role of the new government; and (3) promote a shared responsibility to maintain and protect a free government.

*Instructions:* Your next assignment will be to write a paragraph answering the focus question. The thesis is written above. It has three main arguments. You will need to collect evidence for the three main arguments from the Preamble. Using your notes from **Student Handout 4: In Your Own Words** as an example, complete the “Paraphrase” column. You will use these notes to write your final paragraph.

	Evidence from the Preamble	Paraphrase (write in your own words)
Establish new government	Who:  What:	Who:  What:
Role of government		
Shared responsibility		

## Student Handout 5K: Pre-Writing Notes

### Writing Prompt

*Focus Question:* What was the purpose of the Preamble?

Background: The Constitutional Convention delegates approved the final draft of the Constitution on September 17, 1787.

Introduction and Thesis: The Preamble is the introduction to the Constitution. Its purpose is to: (1) establish a government that is by the people and for the people; (2) explain the role of the new government; and (3) promote a shared responsibility to maintain and protect a free government.

*Instructions:* Your next assignment will be to write a paragraph answering the focus question. The thesis is written above. It has three main arguments. You will need to collect evidence for the three main arguments from the Preamble. Using your notes from **Student Handout 4: In Your Own Words** as an example, complete the “Paraphrase” column. You will use these notes to write your final paragraph.

	Evidence from the Preamble	Paraphrase (write in your own words)
Establish new government	Who: <b>We, the people</b>  What: <b>to form a more perfect union</b>  <b>Do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America</b>	Who: <b>The people of the United States, Americans</b>  What: <b>to create a better or improved government (nation, country)</b>  <b>Do create this Constitution for the people of the United States of America</b>
Role of Government	<b>Establish justice</b> <b>Insure domestic tranquility</b> <b>Provide for the common defense</b> <b>Promote general welfare</b>	<b>fair laws and court</b> <b>peaceful homes and communities</b> <b>protection, military, police</b> <b>take care of the American people</b>
Shared responsibility	<b>Secure the blessings of liberty on ourselves and our posterity</b>	<b>Protect liberty for ourselves and future generations</b>



## Student Handout 6: Answering the Focus Question

### Paragraph frame

Constitutional Convention delegates approved the final draft of the Constitution on September 17, 1787. The Preamble is the introduction to the Constitution. Its purpose is to: (1) establish a government that is by the people and for the people; (2) explain the role of the new government; and (3) promote a shared responsibility to maintain and protect a free government. First, the authors of the Constitution \_\_\_\_\_

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Second, the Preamble said the new government would \_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_ Finally, the authors of the Constitution explained \_\_\_\_\_

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## Student Handout 6K: Answering the Focus Question

### Paragraph frame

Constitutional Convention delegates approved the final draft of the Constitution on September 17, 1787. The Preamble is the introduction to the Constitution. Its purpose is to: (1) establish a government that is by the people and for the people; (2) explain the role of the new government; and (3) promote a shared responsibility to maintain and protect a free government. First, the authors of the Constitution used the words, “We, the People” and “to form a more perfect union” to create a new and better government for all. Second, the Preamble said the new government would take care of the American people, provide fair laws and courts, and protect the country. Finally, the authors of the Constitution explained the shared responsibility of the people and the government to “secure the blessings of liberty” and to protect these basic rights for future generations to come.