

SELF-EVIDENT

The Truths That Built a Nation

Young Explorers Edition • Grades Three through Six

LESSON ELEVEN

“We the People”

The Words We Are Studying

“... Governments ... deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed ...”

The Declaration of Independence, July 4, 1776

The Big Idea

In America, the government works for the people, not the other way around. That means citizens have an important job to do.

Words to Know

Government. The group of people who make and carry out the rules for a country. In America, it works for the people.

Consent. Saying yes, giving permission. The government’s power comes from the people saying yes.

Citizen. A member of a country who has both rights and responsibilities.

What It Means

The Declaration says something amazing right after our famous sentence. It says governments get their power from the consent of the governed. That means the government only has power because the people agree to give it.

For most of history, it was the opposite. Kings bossed everyone around and said their power came from themselves. But the Founders flipped it. They said the government works for the people, to protect the rights God gave them.

That is why Americans say “We the People.” In America, the people are not the servants of the government. The government is supposed to serve the people and protect their rights.

A Picture to Help You Remember

Imagine your class needs a line leader. Instead of one kid just grabbing the job and bossing everyone, the class picks someone and says, “You can be our leader, and your job is to help us.” The leader only has the job because the class agreed.

That is how American government is supposed to work. Leaders serve because the people chose them, and their job is to help protect everyone’s rights. If they stop doing that job well, the people can choose new leaders.

What a Founder Said

“Can the liberties of a nation be thought secure when we have removed . . . a conviction in the minds of the people that these liberties are the gift of God?”

— Thomas Jefferson, Notes on the State of Virginia

In plain words: Our freedom is only safe when people remember that their freedom is a gift from God.

Why It Matters for You

Even though you are young, you are learning to be a good citizen. Someday you will help choose leaders and stand up for what is right.

Being a good citizen starts now: learning the truth, telling the truth, and caring about your community. A free country needs good people who pay attention.

Let’s Talk About It

1. Where does the government get its power, according to the Declaration?
2. How is American government different from a king who bosses everyone around?
3. How is picking a line leader like the way American government is supposed to work?
4. What is one way you can be a good citizen right now, even as a kid?

Try This

As a class or family, pick a small decision to make together by voting (like which game to play). Notice how the leader’s “power” came from everyone agreeing. That is consent of the governed!

A Verse to Remember

“For rulers hold no terror for those who do right . . . For the one in authority is God’s servant for your good.” (Romans 13:3-4)