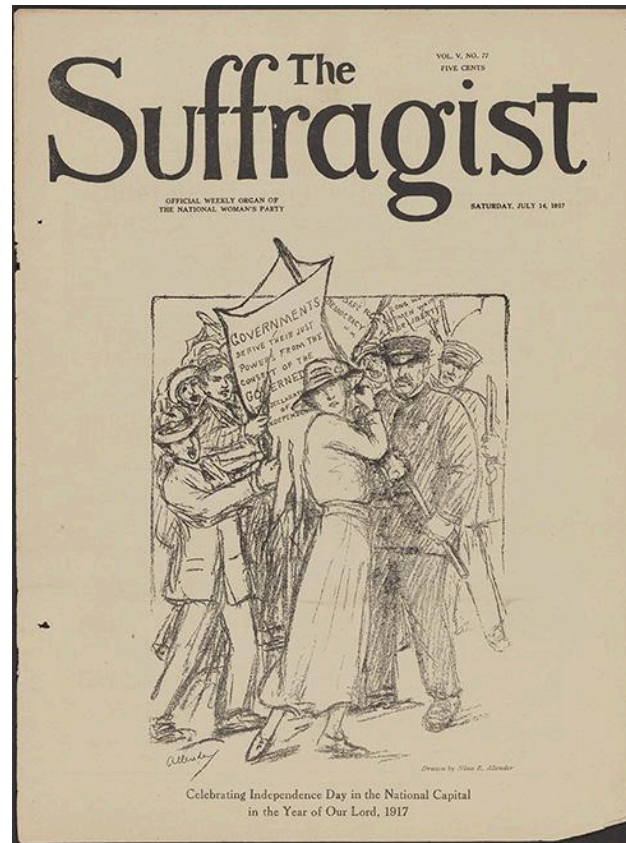


Why is consent of the governed essential to democracy?

Virginia and United States Government



Allender, N. (1917). *Celebrating Independence Day in the Nation's capital in the year of Our Lord, 1917*. [Illustration]. *The Suffragist*, 77(5). On loan from the National Woman's Party at Belmont-Paul Women's Equality National Monument. Available through Library of Congress at <https://www.loc.gov/exhibitions/women-fight-for-the-vote/about-this-exhibition/confrontations-sacrifice-and-the-struggle-for-democracy-1916-1917/changing-strategies-of-nawsa-and-nwp/the-consent-of-the-governed/>

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Standard(s)

GOVT.2 The student will apply history and social science skills to describe the concept of democracy by

- a. explaining the concepts of popular sovereignty, natural rights, the rule of law, self-government, and consent of the governed;
- b. comparing structures of government including constitutional republic, autocracy, direct democracy, representative democracy, the presidential system, and the parliamentary system;
- c. recognizing the equality of all citizens under the law;

GOVT.4 The student will apply history and social science skills to explore and understand the significance, reverence, and pride around the foundation of the American republic by

- c. describing the fundamental concepts of American constitutional democracy, including how the government derives its power from the people, and the primacy of individual liberty;

The consent of the governed is essential to our democracy because it is the foundational principle from which the government derives its authority and legitimacy. According to John Locke and Thomas Jefferson, governments are established to protect people's natural rights and are legitimate only so long as they fulfill this purpose. When a government becomes "destructive of these ends," the people have the right to withdraw their consent. This inquiry guides students in exploring what consent of the governed truly means and why it remains a cornerstone of democratic government.

Featured Sources

Source A: [Declaration Mural](#)

Source B: [The Declaration of Independence](#)

Source C: [Preamble to the Constitution of the United States](#)

Source D: [Second Treatise of Government](#)



Formative Performance Tasks

1. **DELIBERATE:** Students engage in a “[See, Think, Wonder](#)” with Source A and then discuss in small groups to surface common themes.
2. **PRODUCE:** Students will create a [blackout poem](#) using sources B,C, and D.
3. **COLLABORATE:** Students will create a synthesized blackout poem using their three sources

Instructional Snapshot

Students begin with a ***See, Think, Wonder*** activity using Source A silently observing and noting what they *see* before discussing what they *think* is happening and what they *wonder* about democracy and representation (DELIBERATE).

Next, students synthesize foundational texts (Sources B, C, or D) to highlight language that expresses ideas of consent, equality, and freedom. From these words, they compose short [blackout poems](#) that creatively capture the essence of consent of the governed (PRODUCE).

Students then form [mixed “jigsaw” groups](#) where each member shares their blackout poem from a different source. Together, groups synthesize their work into a single collective poem that reflects a shared understanding of why consent matters in sustaining democracy. (COLLABORATE)

Why is consent of the governed essential to democracy?

Featured Source: Declaration Mural

Source A: Betts, R. D., & Kaphar, T. (2021). *Declaration* [Mural]. Mural Arts. <https://muralarts.org/artworks/declaration/>



Declaration mural in Philadelphia created by Reginald Dwyane Betts and Titus Kaphar

1. What do you **see**? What details stand out?
2. What do you **think** is going on? What makes you say that?
3. What does this make you **wonder** about democracy or representation?
4. In pairs share what you saw, thought, and wondered and begin to consider why is consent of the governed essential to democracy?

Why is consent of the governed essential to democracy?

Featured Source

Source B: *Dunlap Declaration of Independence* [Broadsheet]. (1776). Library of Congress. <https://www.loc.gov/item/2003576546/>

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, —That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness.

Why is consent of the governed essential to democracy?

Featured Source

Source C: National Archives and Records Administration. (2026). *The Constitution of the United States*. U.S. National Archives and Records Administration. <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/constitution>

We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, 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.

Why is consent of the governed essential to democracy?

Featured Source

Source D: Locke, J. (1690/2003). *Second treatise of government* (Project Gutenberg eBook No. 7370). Project Gutenberg.
<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/7370/7370-h/7370-h.htm>

Men being, as has been said, by nature, all free, equal, and independent, no one can be put out of this estate, and subjected to the political power of another, without his own consent. The only way whereby anyone can lawfully be subjected to the political power of another, is by his own consent. This consent, given either tacitly or expressly, makes a man a member of the political society; and it is this society which gives the government its lawful authority. Thus, the end of men's uniting into commonwealths, and putting themselves under government, is the preservation of their property, their lives, liberties, and estates, and all the advantages of civil society.

Blackout Poem Directions

- **Read the text** and lightly circle words or phrases that stand out to you.
- **Look for a theme or message** by connecting those circled words into a poem.
- **Cross out or blackout everything else** on the page using a marker, leaving only your chosen words visible.
- **Add artistic designs** around the blacked-out areas if you would like to enhance the meaning or mood.

Jigsaw Poetic Synthesis

Directions:

1. Form Jigsaw Groups:

Create mixed groups of 3–4 students. Each member should bring their blackout poem created from a different source (Declaration, Preamble, Locke).

2. Share and Discuss:

- o Read your blackout poems aloud to the group.
- o Discuss similarities and differences in how each text and poem expresses *consent of the governed*.
- o Identify common themes, phrases, or imagery that appear across your poems.

3. Synthesize to Create a Single Poem:

- o As a group, *synthesize* your blackout poems by weaving together selected words, lines, or phrases into **one collective poem**.
- o Your poem should clearly respond to the compelling question:
Why does consent of the governed matter in a democracy?
- o Ensure all voices are represented in the final piece.

4. Reflect:

Write a brief reflective statement (3–4 sentences) explaining **why consent of the governed is essential to a democracy** and how your group’s poem expresses that idea. Cite specific evidence from the sources.

5. Group discussion- How does consent of the governed show up or fail to show up in your community?

Sources List:

Allender, N. (1917). *Celebrating Independence Day in the Nation's capital in the year of Our Lord, 1917*. [Illustration]. *The Suffragist*, 77(5). On loan from the National Woman's Party at Belmont-Paul Women's Equality National Monument. Available through Library of Congress at <https://www.loc.gov/exhibitions/women-fight-for-the-vote/about-this-exhibition/confrontations-sacrifice-and-the-struggle-for-democracy-1916-1917/changing-strategies-of-nawsa-and-nwp/the-consent-of-the-governed/>

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Glatch, S. (2025). *What is blackout poetry? Examples and inspiration*. Writers.com. <https://writers.com/what-is-blackout-poetry-examples-and-inspiration>

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