

# READING COMPREHENSION

## POP-UP PREAMBLE

The introduction to the Constitution is called the Preamble. It describes the purpose of the remarkable document that laid the foundation for our nation's government. The Preamble is only one sentence—but

what a sentence! Below, we have “popped up” some of the more challenging words. Once you have grasped them, reading the Preamble will help you see just how remarkable the Constitution really is.

Uses: copying machine, opaque projector, or transparency master for overhead projector. Scholastic Inc. grants teacher-subscribers to Junior Scholastic permission to reproduce this Skills Reproducible for use in their classrooms. Copyright © 2008 by Scholastic Inc. All rights reserved.

**We the **P**eople  
of the United States, in **O**rders  
to form a more perfect **U**nion,  
Establish **j**ustice, insure **d**omestic  
**T**ranquility, provide for the common **d**efence,  
**p**romote the general **W**elfare, and  
**s**ecure the Blessings of Liberty  
to ourselves and our **P**osterity,  
do **o**rdain and establish  
this Constitution for the  
United States of America.**

**union:** a joining together of two or more things or people to form a larger group. Here, “Union” refers to the United States of America.

**tranquility:** peacefulness.

**promote:** help with the growth of something.

**secure:** to make safe.

**ordain:** establish or order by high authority.

In 1787, rules of punctuation and grammar—including capitalization—were not yet standard. Capital letters didn't give the words special meaning.

**justice:** fair treatment.

**domestic:** having to do with home or one's own country.

**defence:** For some words, the British style of spelling differs from U.S. style. In 1787, Americans were just a few years removed from being British citizens. The Constitution uses some British spellings, such as *defence* instead of *defense*.

**welfare:** state of health, happiness, and comfort

**posterity:** future generations.

### QUESTIONS (Write your answers on a separate sheet of paper.)

1. The Preamble lists six reasons for the establishment of the Constitution. What are they?
2. If you were to list the reasons in order of importance, which would come first? Explain. Is anything missing that you would add?
3. Which phrase tells anyone reading the Preamble that the new government is not to be ruled by a king or other single power?
4. Which phrase hints that the Constitution's authors intended its rules and standards to remain in effect indefinitely?
5. Rewrite the Preamble in your own words, as briefly and clearly as possible. Spell out who the Constitution is for as well as why it is necessary.  
**BONUS QUESTION:** The “Blessings of Liberty” are not specified. What does that phrase mean to you?