

Amending the Constitution

ARTICLE V CRITICAL THINKING QUESTIONS

Directions: Read the text of Article V of the Constitution below, then answer the questions that follow.

Article V

The Congress, whenever two thirds of both Houses shall deem it necessary, shall propose Amendments to this Constitution, or, on the Application of the Legislatures of two thirds of the several States, shall call a Convention for proposing Amendments, which, in either Case, shall be valid to all Intents and Purposes, as Part of this Constitution, when ratified by the Legislatures of three fourths of the several States, or by Conventions in three fourths thereof...

CRITICAL THINKING QUESTIONS

1. To “propose” amendments to the Constitution means to suggest them. List one way Congress by itself can propose amendments to the Constitution.
2. List one way the states can force Congress to consider amendments to the Constitution.
3. Which are more valid—amendments proposed by Congress, or amendments proposed in a convention of the states?
4. What fraction of the states must ratify (or approve) amendments before they become part of the Constitution?
5. Draw a diagram that illustrates the amendment process.

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LESSON 1 REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Directions: Read the text of Article V of the Constitution below, then consider what you have learned in **Lesson 1** and answer the questions that follow.

Article V

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REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. How democratic is the amendment process in Article V of the U.S. Constitution?
2. List some pros and cons for democratic participation in the amendment process. Why do you think the Framers made the amendment process somewhat difficult?
3. How would you evaluate the importance of the right of suffrage for those living under this Constitution?

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LESSON 2 REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Directions: Read the text of Article V of the Constitution below, then consider what you have learned in **Lesson 2** and answer the questions that follow.

Article V

The Congress, whenever two thirds of both Houses shall deem it necessary, shall propose Amendments to this Constitution, or, on the Application of the Legislatures of two thirds of the several States, shall call a Convention for proposing Amendments, which, in either Case, shall be valid to all Intents and Purposes, as Part of this Constitution, when ratified by the Legislatures of three fourths of the several States, or by Conventions in three fourths thereof...

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Consider the types of activities carried out by women like Abigail Adams, Hannah Griffitts, Mercy Otis Warren, and Phillis Wheatley.
2. Without the vote, to what extent and in what ways were these women able to influence the U.S. Congress?
3. Without the vote, to what extent and in what ways were women able to influence their state legislatures?

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LESSON 3 REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Directions: Read the text of Article V of the Constitution below, then consider what you have learned in **Lesson 3** and answer the questions that follow.

Article V

The Congress, whenever two thirds of both Houses shall deem it necessary, shall propose Amendments to this Constitution, or, on the Application of the Legislatures of two thirds of the several States, shall call a Convention for proposing Amendments, which, in either Case, shall be valid to all Intents and Purposes, as Part of this Constitution, when ratified by the Legislatures of three fourths of the several States, or by Conventions in three fourths thereof...

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. George Washington, who presided over the Constitutional Convention, made clear his understanding that the only way to change the Constitution was to use the amendment method the Constitution itself provided:

“If in the opinion of the People, the distribution or modification of the Constitutional powers be in any particular wrong, let it be corrected by an amendment in the way which the Constitution designates. But let there be no change by usurpation; for though this, in one instance, may be the instrument of good, it is the customary weapon by which free governments are destroyed.” (Farewell Address, 1796)

It seems clear in the 21st century that the way to change the Constitution is by the amendment process, and that proposal of amendments by Congress is more expedient than by a convention of the states. But remember that by 1860 the Constitution was only a couple of generations old. What is more, to that time it had only been amended twice (not counting the Bill of Rights, added in 1791). In what ways does this context help you understand whether reformers in the 1800s would have seen amending the U.S. Constitution as the best way for women to gain political rights?

2. How do we know when a constitutional amendment is necessary to correct or revise our constitutional order?

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LESSON 4 REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Directions: Read the text of Article V of the Constitution below, then consider what you have learned in **Lesson 4** and answer the questions that follow.

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REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. The United States constitutional system is designed to respect the authority of the people in individual states to make laws that are different from state to state. How does the Constitution's amendment process illustrate the principle of federalism?

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LESSON 5 REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Directions: Read the text of Article V of the Constitution below, then consider what you have learned in **Lesson 5** and answer the questions that follow.

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REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Write a brief reflection in response to this scenario: It is 1900 and you and others have worked for decades to secure the right of women to vote. In recent years, movements toward greater equality and democracy have been stirring. Now, more than ever, you think the vote is within your grasp. The only decision now is how to achieve the vote and to have it last.

1. Would the U.S. Constitution's Article V amendment process seem like the best way forward?
2. What pros and cons would you identify for using the amendment process? For example, to what extent would the amendment process create stability for your movement?
3. Assuming you thought it was wise to seek a constitutional amendment securing votes for women, which of the amendment processes outlined in Article V would you prefer, and why?

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LESSON 6 REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Directions: Read the text of Article V of the Constitution below, then consider what you have learned in **Lesson 6** and answer the questions that follow.

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REFLECTION QUESTIONS

The Constitution has 25 amendments that are in force today (the 18th enshrined Prohibition, and the 21st repealed it).

1. Which amendment do you think did the most to fundamentally change the Constitution? Explain your reasoning.
2. Was the change for the better, or for the worse?

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QUESTIONS FOR ALL LESSONS

Directions: Read the text of Article V of the Constitution below, then consider what you have learned in all lessons and answer the questions that follow.

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Lesson Critical Thinking Questions

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