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Date _____

Amending the Constitution

Learn more about this topic! Each section gives more detail on one of the lyrics from the song. Read each section, and then respond by answering the question or taking notes on key ideas.

1. b'

The US Constitution was written in 1787 and is the foundational document of the US government. The founders, however, recognized the Constitution wasn't perfect, and that over time, it would require improvements. As a result, they added Article V to the Constitution. Article V outlines the process for amending, or changing, the Constitution.

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Since 1787, the Constitution has been amended 27 times. These amendments were made to adapt to societal changes as well as better reflect the country's values over time.

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2. b'

What does the process of amending the Constitution look like?
It's far from an easy process. Over 11,000 amendments have been proposed, but only 27 have been ratified, or approved, so far.

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An amendment process begins with a proposal, usually by Congress. A proposed amendment must be passed by two-thirds of both houses of Congress—the House of Representatives and the Senate. This is how all the 27 amendments have been proposed so far. Another way to propose an amendment is if two-thirds of the state legislatures request a convention, or special meeting.

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After an amendment is proposed, it must be ratified by three-fourths of the state legislatures. Congress can also require ratification conventions with elected delegates to decide whether or not to ratify an amendment, but this has only occurred once for the 21st Amendment. Once ratified, the amendment can be incorporated into the Constitution. The process of amending the Constitution can take up to several years.

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3. b'

Amendments are necessary because they allow the Constitution to change as the country evolves. This is why we call the Constitution a living document—it can be continually updated.

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The first 10 amendments added to the Constitution are called the Bill of Rights. These were added to guarantee certain rights and freedoms to citizens, like the freedom of speech, religion, and right to a fair trial.

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Other significant amendments include the 13th Amendment, which abolished slavery in the US in 1865. The 19th Amendment, passed in 1920, granted women the right to vote. And the 26th Amendment lowered the voting age from 21 to 18 in 1971.

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