We the People of the United States

The Framers were an elite group — among the best and brightest America had to offer at the time. But they knew that they were trying to forge a nation made up not of elite, but of the common man. Without the approval of the common man, they feared revolution. This first part of the Preamble speaks to the common man. It puts into writing, as clear as day, the notion that the people were creating this Constitution. It was not handed down by a god or by a king — it was created by the people.

in Order to form a more perfect Union

The Framers were dissatisfied with the United States under the Articles of Confederation, but they felt that what they had was the best they could have, up to now. They were striving for something better. The Articles of Confederation had been a grand experiment that had worked well up to a point, but now, less than ten years into that experiment, cracks were showing. The new United States, under this new Constitution, would be more perfect. Not *perfect*, but more perfect.

establish Justice

Injustice, unfairness of laws and in trade, was of great concern to the people of 1787. People looked forward to a nation with a level playing field, where courts were established with uniformity and where trade within and outside the borders of the country would be fair and unmolested. Today, we enjoy a system of justice that is one of the fairest in the world. It has not always been so — only through great struggle can we now say that every citizen has the opportunity for a fair trial and for equal treatment, and even today there still exists discrimination. But we still strive for the justice that the Framers wrote about.

insure domestic Tranquility

One of the events that caused the Convention to be held was the revolt of Massachusetts farmers known as Shays' Rebellion. The taking up of arms by war veterans revolting against the state government was a shock to the system. The keeping of the peace was on everyone's mind, and the maintenance of tranquility at home was a prime concern. The framers hoped that the new powers given the federal government would prevent any such rebellions in the future.

provide for the common defence

The new nation was fearful of attack from all sides — and no one state was really capable of fending off an attack from land or sea by itself. With a wary **eye on Britain and Spain, and ever-watchful for Indian attack, no one of the** United States could go it alone. They needed each other to survive in the harsh world of international politics of the 18th century.

promote the general Welfare

This, and the next part of the Preamble, are the culmination of everything that came before it — the whole point of having tranquility, justice, and defense was to promote the general welfare — to allow every state and every citizen of those states to benefit from what the government could provide. The framers looked forward to the expansion of land holdings, industry, and investment, and they knew that a strong national government would be the beginning of that.

and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity

Hand in hand with the general welfare, the framers looked forward to the blessings of liberty — something they had all fought hard for just a decade before. They were very concerned that they were creating a nation that would resemble something of a paradise for liberty, as opposed to the tyranny of a monarchy, where citizens could look forward to being free as opposed to looking out for the interests of a king. And more than for themselves, they wanted to be sure that the future generations of Americans would enjoy the same.

do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America

The final clause of the Preamble is almost anti-climactic, but it is important for a few reasons — it finishes the "We, the people" thought, saying what we the people are actually doing; it gives us a name for this document, and it restates the name of the nation adopting the Constitution. That the Constitution is "ordained" reminds us of the higher power involved here — not just of a single person or of a king, but of the people themselves. That it is "established" reminds us that it replaces that which came before — the United States under the Articles (a point lost on us today, but quite relevant at the time).