



Justice Stephen G. Breyer

Foreword

OPENING THE CONVERSATION

1. Justice Breyer describes the United States as a nation grounded in shared documents rather than shared ancestry. Does that idea resonate with you? Why or why not?
2. What idea or argument from this essay stood out most to you, and why?

CLOSE READING AND INTERPRETATION

3. Breyer contrasts nations defined by long-standing divisions with those that evolve while remaining grounded in core principles. How does he describe that distinction?
4. What role do the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution play as “guideposts” across generations?
5. How does Breyer connect diversity and unity within the American constitutional system?

EXPLORING TENSIONS

6. What challenges arise from defining a nation through shared principles rather than shared identity?
7. Do shared documents provide enough common ground to sustain a diverse democracy? Why or why not?

REFLECTION AND APPLICATION

8. Where do you see Breyer’s vision reflected—or challenged—in American civic life today?
9. What responsibilities do citizens have in sustaining a nation grounded in shared principles?

CLOSING REFLECTION

10. What does Breyer’s essay suggest about the future of the American experiment?