



Gordon S. Wood

The Consent of the Governed

OPENING THE CONVERSATION

1. Wood describes a shift in the meaning of consent. What idea stood out most to you in this essay?
2. How did this essay shape your understanding of “consent of the governed”?

CLOSE READING AND INTERPRETATION

3. What does Wood mean by describing political power as a “loan” from the people?
4. How did this idea differ from earlier political systems?
5. What does it mean for the people to remain sovereign at all times?

EXPLORING TENSIONS

6. Does this vision of popular sovereignty reflect how democracy functions today?
7. Where do you see tensions between this theory and current practice?

REFLECTION AND APPLICATION

8. What responsibilities follow from the idea that power ultimately rests with the people?
9. Does this vision require ongoing civic engagement? Why or why not?

CLOSING REFLECTION

10. How does this essay change the way you think about participation in democracy?