

- Ask students to research the requirements for citizenship, including the civics test (see www.ins.usdoj.gov/graphics/services/natz/100q.pdf for an online version). Ask the class to consider the reasons for these requirements and what they say about American values and the U.S. form of government. Based upon the results of this research, students can work in small groups to write proposals for reforming the naturalization process. What changes would students recommend? Why?
- Have students create a time line that illustrates the development of voting rights throughout American history.
- Students can select a famous American from U.S. history who embodies the meaning of citizenship and write his or her biography in the format of a child's picture book, complete with illustrations. Students can then share their picture books with a younger class.
- Encourage students to select the Fifteenth, Nineteenth or Twenty-Sixth Amendment to the Constitution, and to research the historical context in which this amendment was passed and information about the struggle for its ratification. Using this information, students can write a newspaper article about the passage of the amendment. Students should make sure to include interviews with key members of the struggle in their articles.
- Many young people do not exercise their right to vote. It's up to your students to change that! Students can imagine that they were just hired by the U.S. government to increase young people's interest in voting. Students can work in small groups to develop a media campaign to increase young people's presence at the voting booth.
- Encourage your students to take an active role in American government! They can write a letter about an issue of concern to your state's members of Congress or even to the President of the United States.

Suggested Internet Resources

Periodically, Internet Resources are updated on our Web site at www.LibraryVideo.com

- **bensguide.gpo.gov**

"Ben's Guide to U.S. Government for Kids" is a wonderful site with grade-specific material (from kindergarten through 12th grade) on the character and history of American government. The segment on "Citizenship" is especially helpful and includes information about the rights and responsibilities of being a U.S. citizen.

- **www.ins.usdoj.gov/graphics/aboutins/history/teacher/Resources.htm**

A page of resources for teachers and students sponsored by the Immigration and Naturalization Service. This site includes information about immigration throughout American history and details the process of naturalization.

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- **www.mockelection2000.net**
The National Student/Parent Mock Election helps students to become aware of the power of their votes.
 - **www.kidsvotingusa.org/students.html**
This Kids Voting USA site provides information about helping students to become more active citizens. This site includes a Constitution test and information about students who are involved in American government.
- ### Suggested Print Resources
- Boyers, Sara Jane. *Teen Power Politics: Make Yourself Heard*. Twenty-First Century Books, Brookfield, CT; 2000.
 - Jacobs, Thomas A. *What Are My Rights?: 95 Questions and Answers About Teens and the Law*. Free Spirit Pub., Minneapolis, MN; 1997.
 - Krull, Kathleen. *A Kids' Guide to America's Bill of Rights: Curfews, Censorship, and the 100-Pound Giant*. Avon Books, New York, NY; 1999.

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RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES OF U.S. CITIZENSHIP

Grades 5–12

This guide is a supplement designed for teachers to use when presenting programs in the video series *United States Government*.

Before Viewing: Give students an introduction to the topic by relaying aspects of the program overview to them. Select pre-viewing discussion questions and vocabulary to provide a focus for students when they view the program.

After Viewing: Review the program and vocabulary, and use the follow-up questions and activities to inspire continued discussion. Encourage students to research the topic further with the Internet and print resources provided.



Program Overview

United States citizenship is defined as membership in a self-governing, politically organized society that has both rights and responsibilities. Although being a citizen of the U.S. is similar to being a member of a club, it requires a far more serious commitment on the part of the member. Citizens of the United States provide the foundation of the country, and only through their collective consent and authorization can American government be established and function.

To be a U.S. citizen, one either has to be native born or naturalized. Native-born citizens are born on the soil of the United States or its territories or, in certain circumstances, may be born abroad. To be naturalized, a person must be a legal resident of the United States for at least five years, formally apply for citizenship, be of good moral character, pass tests for speaking, reading and writing English, have knowledge of American history and government, and take the Oath of Allegiance to the United States. Although they cannot become President or Vice President, such citizens have the same rights as those who are native born.

The U.S. Constitution states many of the basic personal rights of citizens, such as freedom of religion and expression, and economic rights, like the right to property and choice of occupation. Citizens also have political rights, such as the right to vote. Many young Americans do not exercise their right to vote, however. Older citizens are far more likely to exercise this right.

Citizenship involves more than rights, for with rights come responsibilities; they are two sides of the same coin. Among the responsibilities of citizenship are non-legal obligations such as the duty to vote and to participate in the process of self-government, and legal obligations such as obeying the law, paying taxes and serving on juries. Many citizens choose some form of voluntary service at the local or national level. Participation can take many forms, such as contacting public officials or engaging in protests. Whatever form it takes, good citizenship is marked by self-discipline and faithfulness to one's commitments. Good citizens are patriots who love their country and are committed to its values and principles and strive to improve it. All Americans can find some avenue to express their patriotic devotion to their country and place themselves at the heart of American democracy.

Note: Teachers should be aware that this topic may be sensitive for some students, especially those who are immigrants or not American citizens. Discussion questions and activities should be approached with care.

Vocabulary

U.S. citizen — A member of a self-governing, politically organized community.

rights — Claims that one is entitled to do or to refrain from doing.

responsibilities — Obligations or duties to do or to refrain from doing.

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naturalization — The legal process of becoming a citizen of a country when you are already a citizen of another country.

inalienable rights — Rights that are inherent in human beings and, for that reason, cannot be taken away.

U.S. Constitution — The legal document establishing the framework for American government.

suffrage — The right to vote.

Fifteenth Amendment — The amendment to the U.S. Constitution stating that no citizen could be denied the right to vote based on his or her race.

Voting Rights Act of 1965 — Legislation developed to end discriminatory practices that made it impossible for many to exercise their right to vote.

Nineteenth Amendment — The amendment to the U.S. Constitution that granted women voting rights.

Twenty-Sixth Amendment — The amendment to the U.S. Constitution that lowered the voting age to 18.

patriots — People who love their country and are committed to its fundamental values and principles.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights — The 1948 United Nations document setting forth a list of claims on behalf of all persons, solely on account of their humanity.

Pre-viewing Discussion

- Discuss with the class what living in the United States means. What state of freedom, security and prosperity do Americans enjoy that many others do not? Discuss what factors make American citizenship so sought after and why many native-born Americans take what they have for granted.
- Ask students why they think so few young people between the ages of 18 and 24 vote. Suggest to them that older people vote far more often and age groups like the elderly gain considerable influence in American government because of their willingness to vote. Ask students what issues important to them might become part of the public agenda if they gained political influence.
- See how many ways of influencing government students can suggest. Do their parents, relatives or friends engage in any of these activities? See if students are aware that young people sit on commissions and take part in public life in other ways even before they reach voting age. Brainstorm with students ways that they could become involved in American government, either now or in the future.
- Cite for the class President John F. Kennedy's famous words, "Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country." Ask them what they think Kennedy was saying and whether or not they agree with him. Do students feel that this is a reasonable request or is it too much to expect? What does this statement have to do with citizenship?

Focus Questions

1. What is an American citizen?
2. What is the relationship between rights and responsibilities?
3. Why are U.S. citizens important?
4. How does one become a U.S. citizen?
5. What does naturalization mean?
6. What is required to become a naturalized American citizen?
7. What are inalienable rights?
8. What categories of rights are guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution? Provide some examples from each category.
9. How did African-American men receive the legal right to vote?
10. How did women gain the right to vote?
11. How did young adults, aged 18–20, gain the right to vote?
12. How often do young people vote as compared with older people?
13. What are the legal rights and responsibilities of citizens?
14. What are some ways that people can participate in self-government?
15. What is patriotism?
16. What are some ways that people demonstrate patriotism?

Follow-up Discussion

- Hold a class discussion about what students do and do not love about the United States. How do they think they can maintain the things they love? What suggestions do students have for improving the things they don't like, and what role can they play in this improvement?
- Ask the class what they think about the idea of dual citizenship. Should Americans care if their fellow citizens hold equal allegiance with another country? Ask the class to discuss what some of the consequences might be if dual citizenship became widespread and whether these consequences are desirable or undesirable, and why.
- Discuss with students the limits to the rights of American citizens. Do they think rights are absolute, or are they limited? In the discussion, use freedom of speech as an example. Do students think citizens are free to say whatever and whenever they want? Why or why not?

Follow-up Activities

- Invite naturalized citizens to speak with your class. Students can prepare questions to ask the visitors. Include questions about why the guests wanted to become American citizens and what U.S. citizenship means to them.
- Arrange for the class to attend a citizenship swearing-in ceremony. Ask students to take notes on what they see and hear. Ask the class to take note of the Oath of Allegiance (see bensguide.gpo.gov/9-12/citizenship/oath.html for an online version of the oath). Then hold a debriefing session discussing the ceremony and its meanings for the new citizens.

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