

- Students can research women's struggle for the right to vote. Students can use Miles Harvey's *Women's Voting Rights* (Children's Press, 1996) as a good place to start. Students can also focus on the key people involved in gaining women's suffrage, like Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony. Skits dramatizing events in the women's suffrage movement could be written by students and acted out for the class.
- Students can be good citizens, too! Discuss with students what they can do to be good citizens — picking up trash, saving energy, being nice to classmates, etc. Encourage students to pick one activity and to write up "good citizenship" plans. Students should keep logs of their activities as they make their plans a reality, discussing how being good citizens made them feel.
- Share stories of immigrants' journeys to America in the late 1800s and early 1900s, like *The Memory Coat: An Ellis Island Story* by Elvira Woodruff (Scholastic, 1999). Help students to imagine what it might have been like to arrive at Ellis Island as an immigrant during this time.
- Share selections from the Bill of Rights with your students. (See [www.nara.gov/exhall/charters/billrights/billmain.html](http://www.nara.gov/exhall/charters/billrights/billmain.html) for an online version of the Bill of Rights.) Help students to discuss what these rights mean for American citizens today. As a group, generate a classroom Bill of Rights — what rights do members of your classroom have? What responsibilities accompany those rights?
- Students can select a famous American who has fought to restore rights for people at some point during the history of the United States. Students can learn about this influential person through Internet and print resources. Then students can present their information by portraying the person in costume for the class.

### Suggested Internet Resources

Periodically, Internet Resources are updated on our web site at [www.LibraryVideo.com](http://www.LibraryVideo.com)

- **[www.servicelearningcommission.org](http://www.servicelearningcommission.org)**

The National Commission on Service Learning works to make service learning available to all K-12 students and features a report entitled *Learning In Deed: The Power of Service Learning for American Schools*.

- **[bensguide.gpo.gov](http://bensguide.gpo.gov)**

"Ben's Guide to U.S. Government for Kids" is a wonderful site with grade-specific material on the character and history of American government. Details about American citizenship, including information about becoming a citizen and the rights and responsibilities of citizenship, are provided.

(Continued)

- **[www.whitehousekids.gov](http://www.whitehousekids.gov)**

The web site of the White House has a special section for kids, which includes a tour of the White House, information about the President's family, and an American History interactive quiz. A helpful guide for teachers and parents is also provided.

### Suggested Print Resources

- Grodin, Elissa. *D is for Democracy: A Citizen's Alphabet*. Sleeping Bear Press, Chelsea MI; 2004.
- Keller, Kristen Thoenes. *Women Suffrage Movement: 1848-1920*. Bridgestone Books, Mankato, MN; 2003.
- Polacco, Patricia. *Keeping Quilt*. Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, New York, NY; 2001.
- Riehecky, Janet. *Citizenship*. Capstone Press, Mankato, MN; 2005.

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#### COMPLETE LIST OF TITLES

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## AMERICAN CITIZENSHIP

Grades K-4

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

**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

American citizens can vote in elections, serve on juries and hold elected office. But who are “citizens,” and what does “citizenship” really mean? Citizens are people who are recognized as legal members of a nation. People born on American soil are automatically considered American citizens, but people from other countries can choose to become citizens through a process called naturalization. Citizenship is a special form of membership that carries with it a number of rights and responsibilities. American citizens have the right to participate in governing the country by doing things like voting and running for office. Citizens are also responsible for respecting the country’s laws, paying taxes and serving on juries. Basically, American citizens are members of the group that rules the United States!

People haven’t always enjoyed the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. In other parts of the world, both now and in the past, people have not been able to govern themselves and have often been subjected to harsh rule by those in power. Even Americans weren’t always able to participate in the running of their government! Only after the American Revolution did Americans have a say about the kind of government they had. And citizenship wasn’t always extended to everyone living on American soil. When the U.S. Constitution was written over 200 years ago, only white males with a sufficient amount of property were allowed to vote. Over more than 150 years, many people have worked tirelessly so that all Americans can achieve the valuable rights and privileges of American citizenship.

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

**citizen** — A member of a group that governs itself.

**immigrants** — People who come to live in a country from other countries.

**naturalization** — The process that people go through to become a member of a country if they weren’t born there.

**constitution** — A document that describes what government is allowed to do and what it is not allowed to do. The U.S. Constitution is the highest law in America.

**laws** — Written rules that are made and enforced by governments.

**rights** — Things you are allowed to do. Rights provide the freedom to do something or not to do it.

**Bill of Rights** — The first ten amendments of the U.S. Constitution, which include guarantees of individual rights.

**responsibilities** — Things you ought to do.

**voting** — Making a choice about something.

**civic duty** — A responsibility of a citizen.

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**democracy** — A form of government in which people rule themselves.

**suffrage** — The right to vote.

**constitutional amendments** — Additions to the Constitution.

## Pre-viewing Discussion

- Students can brainstorm about what comes to mind when they hear the word “citizenship.” According to students, what is a citizen? Do students feel it is important to be a citizen? Why or why not?
- Students can discuss what makes a person a good citizen. Then they can generate a list of good citizens from the history of American government. What qualities make these individuals good citizens?
- Ask students to discuss what groups they are members of (i.e., a family, club or sports team). What does it mean to students to belong to something? How does being a member of a group make them feel? Did students have to do anything to become a member of these groups?
- Discuss with students what responsibilities they have. How did they get these responsibilities? Do students feel that responsibilities are important? Why?
- Encourage students to discuss their experiences with voting. Have they ever voted in the classroom to make a group decision? Have they ever gone to vote in an election with an adult? What was it like? Students can discuss why they think voting is important. How would decisions be made if people didn’t vote?

## Focus Questions

1. Who are citizens? Why are they important for government?
2. How do you become an American citizen?
3. Who are immigrants?
4. Describe what the process of naturalization is.
5. What do immigrants have to learn to become citizens?
6. What is a constitution and what does it do?
7. What is good citizenship? List some of the things that good citizens do.
8. Describe what rights are. Give some examples of rights of American citizens.
9. What are the duties or responsibilities of citizens?
10. What are some of the ways in which citizens take part in government?
11. What is democracy?
12. What does voting mean? Why is voting important for government?
13. List the groups of people who were not allowed to vote when our country was founded. Why were they not allowed to vote?

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14. Who was Martin Luther King, Jr., and why was he a good citizen?

15. What special problems did African Americans face when trying to gain the right to vote?

16. How did women gain the right to vote?

## Follow-up Discussion

- Students can speculate about what might happen if people did not accept their responsibilities as members of a group. For example, what would happen if a student or teacher did not accept the responsibilities of membership in a classroom?
- Discuss with students why it is important for citizens to be involved in American government. What do students think would happen if citizens did not participate?
- Do students think that they will exercise the right to vote when they turn 18 years old? Why or why not?
- If you are a good citizen and follow the laws of the United States, your rights cannot be taken away from you. However, many people who commit crimes do have their rights taken away by American government. Do students feel that there are situations in which American citizens should lose their rights? Why or why not?

## Follow-up Activities

- Invite naturalized citizens to visit your class to discuss their experiences with the process of naturalization. Prepare for the visit by asking students to think of questions that they wish to ask the naturalized citizens, such as what they had to do to obtain citizenship and why they wanted to become American citizens. Visitors should be encouraged to share pictures or videos of their naturalization ceremonies.
- Share the naturalization oath with students in your class (available at the following web site: [www.immigrationlawweb.com/naturalization-oath-of-allegiance.htm](http://www.immigrationlawweb.com/naturalization-oath-of-allegiance.htm)). Discuss with students what this oath means. Students should look up words that they do not know in the oath, such as “renounce,” “abjure,” “allegiance” and “fidelity.” Students can also write their own version of an oath of citizenship for new members of the United States.
- Encourage students to learn more about one of the greatest citizens in America’s history — Martin Luther King, Jr. Share King’s “I Have a Dream” speech with your students, and discuss what the message of the speech is and what it means to them. (See [www.wmich.edu/politics/mlk/dream.html](http://www.wmich.edu/politics/mlk/dream.html) for an electronic version of the speech.) Students can also write about and illustrate their own dreams for the future.

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