

1. Citizenship: what's a good citizen?

Students will comprehend and describe characteristics inherent in good citizenship.

Duration 30–45 minutes

Elementary activity

1. Conduct a classroom discussion on the elements necessary to be a good citizen – obey rules and laws, help others, vote in elections, tell an adult if someone is a danger to themselves or others, be responsible for actions and how they affect others.
2. No one is born a good citizen. You learn from your parents, church, community, tv, friends, and teachers how you can be a good citizen. Draw a poster showing good citizenship in action.

Middle school activity

1. Each student is given a quote (p. 10–11).
2. Divide the class into groups of three to four students. Have students share within their group what each of their quotes means.
3. Using their quotes, groups will develop a universal definition of citizenship to be shared with the class.

High school activity

1. Each student is given a quote (p. 10–11).
2. Students will copy their quote, rewrite it in their own words, and write a brief explanation of the importance of the quote.
3. Each student will compare their quote with five classmates and get a variety of quotes from different eras, races, genders, and nations. Each student will create a universal definition of good citizenship.

Vocabulary

citizen

someone who has the right to live in a country because he or she was born there or has been legally accepted as a permanent resident

citizenship

the duties and responsibilities that come with being a member of a community

election

the process of choosing somebody for public office or a course of action by vote

to vote

to express an opinion or preference (v.)

right

a justified claim or entitlement, or the freedom to do something

responsibility

the authority to make independent decisions requiring conscientiousness and trustworthiness

Optional

Lesson extension

Students in grades 4–5 are invited to enter the Voters’ Pamphlet Art Contest. Submit original art by April 15. Winning art will appear in the General Election Voters’ Pamphlet.

- For more information and complete contest rules, visit www.vote.wa.gov and click on “Just 4 YOU.”

Homework

Ask students to discuss what makes a good citizen with their families.

What is the most important right of a citizen?

What is the most important responsibility of a citizen?

What is one thing you can do to help your community?

CBA connections

1. Elementary – If a responsibility of citizenship is voting, why isn’t it required?
2. Middle school – Part of citizenship is voting. If non-English speakers become naturalized citizens but are unable to read the ballot, have they been given their full rights as citizens?
3. High school – Have students list and summarize all pertinent court cases for one area of suffrage. Include background on this specific area of suffrage. Did the court case(s) resolve the issue? If not, what did?

voters’ pamphlet art contest

Students grades 4-5 are invited to enter the Voters’ Pamphlet Art Contest. Submit original art by April 15. Winning art will appear in the next Voters’ Pamphlet.

For more information and complete contest rules, visit www.vote.wa.gov and click on “Just 4 You.”



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Quotes for discussion

<p>A generation that acquires knowledge without ever understanding how that knowledge can benefit the community is a generation that is not learning what it means to be citizens in a democracy. - Elizabeth L. Hollander, American author (1817–1885)</p>	<p>The strength of the Constitution lies entirely in the determination of each citizen to defend it. Only if every single citizen feels duty bound to do his share in this defense are the constitutional rights secure. - Albert Einstein, German-born American scientist and philosopher (1879–1955)</p>	<p>A strict observance of the written laws is doubtless one of the high virtues of a good citizen, but it is not the highest. The laws of necessity, of self-preservation, of saving our country when in danger, are of higher obligation. - Thomas Jefferson, 3rd President of the U.S. (1743–1826)</p>
<p>The vote is the most powerful instrument ever devised by man for breaking down injustice and destroying the terrible walls which imprison men because they are different from other men. - Lyndon B. Johnson, 36th President of the U.S. (1908–1973)</p>	<p>As citizens of this democracy, you are the rulers and the ruled, the law-givers and the law-abiding, the beginning and the end. - Adlai Stevenson, former Illinois Governor, two-time Democratic presidential nominee, and former U.N. Ambassador (1900–1965)</p>	<p>The key role of public schools is to preserve democracy and, that as battered as we might be, our mission is central to the future of this county. - Paul D. Houston, former Executive director of the American Association of School Administrators (b. 1945)</p>
<p>The Greek word for idiot, literally translated, means one who does not participate in politics. That sums up my conviction on the subject. - Gladys Pyle, former U.S. Senator representing South Dakota (1890–1989)</p>	<p>It is not the function of our Government to keep the citizen from falling into error; it is the function of the citizen to keep the Government from falling into error. - Robert H. Jackson, former U.S. Attorney General (1892–1954)</p>	<p>As global citizens, it is our responsibility to become active participants in our democracy, and to make sure that everyone's civil rights are protected. - Robert Alan, American author and social activist (b. 1959)</p>
<p>Truth-telling, I have found, is the key to responsible citizenship. The thousands of criminals I have seen in 40 years of law enforcement have had one think in common: Every single one was a liar. - J. Edgar Hoover, first director of the FBI (1895–1972)</p>	<p>If I knew something that would serve my country but would harm mankind, I would never reveal it; for I am a citizen of humanity first and by necessity, and a citizen of France second, and only by accident. - Charles de Montesquieu, French politician and philosopher (1689–1755)</p>	<p>No one is born a good citizen; no nation is born a democracy. Rather, both are processes that continue to evolve over a lifetime. Young people must be included from birth. A society that cuts off from its youth severs its lifeline. - Kofi Annan, Ghanaian diplomat, former Secretary General of the U.N., and Nobel Peace Prize recipient (b. 1938)</p>
<p>Every good citizen makes his country's honor his own, and cherishes it not only as precious but as sacred. He is willing to risk his life in its defense and is conscious that he gains protection while he gives it. - Andrew Jackson, 7th President of the U.S. (1767–1845)</p>	<p>Full participation in government and society has been a basic right of the country symbolizing the full citizenship and equal protection of all. - Charles Rangel, U.S. Congressman representing New York (b. 1930)</p>	<p>If people are paying attention, then we get good government and good leadership. And when we get lazy, as a democracy and civically start taking shortcuts, then it results in bad government and politics. - Barack Obama, 44th President of the U.S. (b. 1961)</p>

<p>The government is us; we are the government, you and I. - Theodore Roosevelt, 26th President of the U.S. (1858–1919)</p>	<p>The most important political office is that of the private citizen. - Louis D. Brandeis, U.S. Supreme Court Justice (1856–1941)</p>	<p>It is not always the same thing to be a good man and a good citizen. - Aristotle, Greek philosopher (384 B.C.–322 B.C.)</p>
<p>It is the duty of every citizen according to his best capacities to give validity to his convictions in political affairs. - Albert Einstein, German-born American scientist and philosopher (1879–1955)</p>	<p>The measure of your quality as a public person, as a citizen, is the gap between what you do and what you say. - Ramsey Clark , American lawyer and former U.S. Attorney General (b. 1927)</p>	<p>The tyranny of a prince in an oligarchy is not so dangerous to the public welfare as the apathy of a citizen in a democracy. - Charles de Montesquieu, French politician and philosopher (1689–1755)</p>
<p>We all have an obligation as citizens of this earth to leave the world a healthier, cleaner, and better place for our children and future generations. - Blythe Danner, American actress (b. 1943)</p>	<p>Always vote for principle, though you may vote alone, and you may cherish the sweetest reflection that your vote is never lost. - John Quincy Adams, 6th President of the U.S. (1767–1848)</p>	<p>We must work toward the day when citizen service is the common expectation and common experience of every American. - Bill Clinton, 42nd President of the U.S. (b. 1946)</p>
<p>Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has. - Margaret Mead, American cultural anthropologist (1901–1978)</p>	<p>The social and industrial structure of America is founded upon an enlightened citizenship. - Bainbridge Colby , American lawyer and former U.S. Secretary of State (1869–1950)</p>	<p>No other country on earth could have provided such tremendous opportunities and we should never take the privilege of our citizenship for granted. - Jane D. Hull, former Arizona Governor (b. 1935)</p>
<p>Citizenship consists in the service of the country. - Jawaharlal Nehru, former Indian Prime Minister (1889–1964)</p>	<p>All that is needed for the triumph of evil is for good people to do nothing. - Edmund Burke, British statesman and philosopher (1729–1797)</p>	<p>A passive and ignorant citizenry will never create a sustainable world. - Andrew Gaines, philosopher (b. 1938)</p>
<p>The State must follow, and not lead, the character and progress of the citizen. - Ralph Waldo Emerson, American philosopher and poet (1803 –1882)</p>	<p>Citizenship is what makes a republic; monarchies can get along without it. - Mark Twain, American author (1835–1910)</p>	<p>There can be no daily democracy without daily citizenship. - Ralph Nader, American lawyer and four-time candidate for President of the U.S. (b. 1934)</p>
<p>A community is like a ship; everyone ought to be prepared to take the helm. - Henrik Ibsen, Norwegian playwright (1828–1906)</p>	<p>Bad officials are elected by good citizens who do not vote. - George Jean Nathan, American journalist (1882-1958)</p>	<p>The job of a citizen is to keep his mouth open. - Gunter Grass, German poet, novelist, and playwright, 1999 Nobel Prize for Literature (b. 1927)</p>
<p>Ask not what your country can do for you - ask what you can do for your country. - John F. Kennedy, 35th President of the U.S. (1917–1963)</p>	<p>Citizenship is a tough occupation which obliges the citizen to make his own informed opinion and stand by it. - Martha Gellhorn, American novelist and war correspondent (1908–1998)</p>	<p>The first requisite of a good citizen in this republic of ours is that he shall be able and willing to pull his own weight. - Theodore Roosevelt, 26th President of the U.S. (1858–1919)</p>
<p>The test of good citizenship is loyalty to country. - Bainbridge Colby , American lawyer and former U.S. Secretary of State (1869–1950)</p>	<p>The most important thing an institution does is not to prepare a student for a career but for a life as a citizen. - Frank Newman, American civic engagement activist (1927–2004)</p>	<p>Democracy is never a thing done. Democracy is always something that a nation must be doing. - Archibald MacLeish, American poet and public official (1892–1982)</p>