

CITIZENSHIP

SS.7.CG.2.1 Define the term “citizen,” and explain the constitutional means of becoming a U.S. citizen.

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2023 BENCHMARK UPDATES

- Updated from SS.7.C.2.1
 - Changed from, “Define the term “citizen,” and ~~identify legal~~ means of becoming a U.S. citizen.” to “Define the term “citizen,” and explain the constitutional means of becoming a U.S. citizen.”
- Depth of Knowledge Changes within Benchmark
 - Changed from “identify” to “explain”
- Benchmark Clarification Changes
 - Changed from “Students will define citizenship as stated in the ~~Fourteenth~~ Amendment.” to “Students will define citizenship as stated in the 14th Amendment.”
 - Changed from “Students will ~~describe~~ the process of becoming a naturalized citizen.” to, “Students will explain the process of becoming a naturalized citizen”
 - Addition of “Students will define permanent residency and explain its role in obtaining citizenship.”
 - Changed from “Students will ~~evaluate~~ the impact of the naturalization process on society, government, ~~or~~ the political process.” to, “Students will examine the impact of the naturalization process on society, government, and the political process.”
- Vocabulary Changes
 - Addition of “permanent residency”

Essential Teacher Content Background Information

[Teacher Content Notes Not Appropriate For Student Use]

This section addresses the following topics:

1. Definition of Citizenship
2. Citizenship in the United States
3. Becoming a Naturalized U.S. Citizen
4. Exceptions to the Naturalization Process
5. The Naturalization Examination
6. Permanent Residency
7. The Impact of Naturalization on Society, Government and the Political Process
8. Citizenship and Residency in Florida

1. Definition of Citizenship

A citizen is one who has specific rights and obligations within a political unit such as being a citizen of a country or a state. All countries have their own definitions and expectations of citizenship, although there are several similarities and differences across countries and types of government. For example, it is common for democracies to grant citizenship to all persons born within their jurisdictions although not all democracies have the same procedures for granting naturalization, nor do all democracies grant the same rights to naturalized citizens.

2. Citizenship in the United States

Citizenship in the United States may be achieved through two methods: citizenship by birth and citizenship by naturalization. Citizenship by birth may be achieved through the “jus sanguine”, which translates to “law of blood” or “jus solis”, which translates to “law of soil”. U.S. citizens who become citizens through “law of blood” are those whose biological parents are U.S. citizens, whether by birth or naturalization. Citizenship by “law of soil” is citizenship based on where one is born. A person born in the U.S. (or a location under U.S. control such as a U.S. military base overseas) is a citizen by “law of soil” even if that child’s biological mother (see footnote #1 for explanation) is not a U.S. citizen.

Both methods for achieving citizenship are mentioned in the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. The 14th Amendment was ratified in 1868 and is the first time that citizenship is defined in the U.S. Constitution.

The U.S. Constitution as ratified in 1788 mentions citizenship 13 times although it does not define it. For example, the U.S. Constitution limits office holding only to those who are U.S. citizens and requires that the president be a natural born citizen. The original U.S. Constitution fails to define who is a citizen. That is done in the 14th Amendment. Below is an excerpt of Section 1 of the 14th Amendment:

“All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside.”

“Aliens” are persons living in the U.S. who are not citizens. Non-citizens include resident aliens, who live legally in the U.S., and illegal immigrants.

3. Becoming a Naturalized U.S. Citizen

A person who is not born a U.S. citizen may become a citizen through the naturalization process. The U.S. Congress has the power to make naturalization laws for the United States.

Immigrants seeking to become naturalized citizens, one must meet the following conditions:

- A. The person is over 18 years old
- B. Must have been a permanent resident of the United States for five years, without leaving for more than 30 months combined and for no more than 12 consecutive months throughout the five-year period.
- C. Must file a petition for naturalization
- D. Must take an examination that shows that they can read, speak and write English, and demonstrate knowledge of American history and the U.S. Constitution.
- E. Must be able to prove that they are of good moral character
- F. Two U.S. citizens must confirm that the citizenship applicant will be a good citizen and will be loyal to the U.S.

Once A-F above has been met, the citizenship applicant must take the following Oath of Allegiance:

"I hereby declare, on oath, that I absolutely and entirely renounce and abjure all allegiance and fidelity to any foreign prince, potentate, state, or sovereignty of whom or which I have heretofore been a subject or citizen; that I will support and defend the Constitution and laws of the United States of America against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that I will bear arms on behalf of the United States when required by the law; that I will perform noncombatant service in the Armed Forces of the United States when required by the law; that I will perform work of national importance under civilian direction when required by the law; and that I take this obligation freely without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion; so help me God."

4. Exceptions to the Naturalization Process

The Child Citizenship Act of 2000 took effect on February 27, 2001. It allows non-U.S. citizen children under 18 who have at least one U.S. citizen parent, and who live in the legal and physical custody of that parent, to be granted automatic naturalized citizenship. The child must reside in the United States, and be a lawful permanent resident, at the time that citizenship is granted.

5. The Naturalization Examination (see “d” above”)

The Naturalization Examination: The [materials and practice questions](#) will help citizen applicants prepare for the U.S. Citizen and Immigration Services Naturalization Civics and History Examination:

Examination preparation [flashcards](#) to practice are also available.

6. Permanent Residency

People who are not citizens of the United States may also apply for permanent residency and receive their Green Card. A Green Card is the permanent residency card that provides information about the legal status of living and working in the United States.

There are many different situations that are approved by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) for legal status applications. Some examples of applications are because family members are already citizens of the U.S., employment in the country, refugee or asylum status, human trafficking and other crime victims, victims of abuse, or other specific situations.

Once a person obtains permanent residency, they may continue to be a permanent resident to continue to live and work in the U.S. Although some Permanent Resident Cards, commonly known as Green Cards, have no expiration date, most are valid for 10 years. At that time they would need to be renewed. A person also has the right to apply for citizenship after being a permanent resident for five years or three years, if applying as a spouse of a citizen.

7. The Impact of Naturalization on Society, Government and the Political Process

The immigration debate has long been central to American politics. Concerns over who should be allowed to legally live in the U.S. without naturalizing (resident aliens), who is eligible to pursue naturalization, and who is at risk for deportation, has shaped conflict between and within political parties, Congress and the president, and between the national and state governments. This debate has also impacted campaigns as voter groups, such as Latinos, often hold immigration views that differ from those held by non-Latinos. Further, Latinos live in the four states with the largest populations, which enhances their political impact through representation in Congress and in the Electoral College, which elects the president.

The immigration debate focuses, in part, on the DREAM Act (“Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors”) which was introduced in Congress in 2001 and did not pass. The Act targets non-citizen youth on a path to citizenship. Critics suggest that the DREAM Act would bring about meaningful reform for only a few eligible illegal immigrants who fear deportation.

7. Citizenship and Residency in Florida

The 14th Amendment’s definition of citizenship includes the following:

- A. National citizenship comes before state citizenship
- B. Citizens are entitled to rights granted by the national government
- C. Citizens are entitled to rights granted by their own state’s government

Citizenship does not exist at the state level; there are no Florida citizens.

There are rights reserved to Florida residents. Residency in Florida is established once a person has lived in Florida for six months. Persons who have established residency in Florida have the right to receive a homestead (residential property tax) exemption on their home provided that they live there at least six months per year, and to receive college scholarships and other financial assistance reserved for Florida residents. Persons who live in Florida, but who have not yet established Florida residency, do have certain rights, such as voting (29 days residency) and securing a driver’s license (no minimum residency). Florida, like all other states, may not grant citizenship to aliens.

Lesson Summary

ESSENTIAL QUESTION	
What does it mean to be a U.S. citizen? How is U.S. citizenship obtained?	
BENCHMARK	
SS.7.CG.2.1 Define the term “citizen,” and explain the constitutional means of becoming a U.S. citizen.	
CIVICS EOC REPORTING CATEGORY	
N/A	
OVERVIEW	
In this lesson, students will understand the constitutional means of becoming a U.S. citizen.	
BENCHMARK CLARIFICATIONS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students will define citizenship as stated in the 14th Amendment. • Students will explain the process of becoming a naturalized citizen. • Students will define permanent residency and explain its role in obtaining citizenship. • Students will examine the impact of the naturalization process on society, government and the political process. 	
BENCHMARK CONTENT LIMITS	
N/A	
CIVICS CONTENT VOCABULARY	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 14th Amendment, alien, citizen, Green Card, immigrant, law of blood, law of soil, legal permanent resident, naturalization, permanent residency, resident 	
INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES	
Close reading of complex text	Inquiry of primary sources
MATERIALS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highlighters • Sticky notes • Construction paper and art supplies • Lesson Hook Questions slide • Citizenship Through Visuals and Text slides • Citizenship: Just the Facts activity sheet • Citizenship: Just the Facts reading • Citizenship Vocabulary slides • Naturalization Process slide • Oath of Allegiance reading 	

- Midterms 2022: The Changing Demographic of the Electorate fact sheet (external link)
- Immigrants in the United States fact sheet (external link)
- Immigrants in Florida fact sheet (external link)
- Preparing for the Oath Video Questions (optional)
- Interview with a Naturalized Citizen: Maria del Carmen Cossu video (external link; optional)
- Interview with a Naturalized Citizen: Magdalena Mieri video (external link; optional)
- Interview with a Naturalized Citizen: Gunter Weibel video (external link; optional)

B.E.S.T. STANDARDS

- ELA.7.R.2.1- Explain how individual text sections and/or features convey a purpose in texts.
- ELA.7.R.3.2- Paraphrase content from grade-level texts.
- ELA.V.1.3- Apply knowledge of context clues, figurative language, word relationships, reference materials, and/or background knowledge to determine the connotative and denotative meaning of words and phrases, appropriate to grade level.
- ELA.K12.EE.1.1- Cite evidence to explain and justify reasoning.

Suggested Student Activity Sequence & Pace

DAY	ACTIVITY SEQUENCE
DAY 1	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To begin this lesson, use the “Lesson Hook Questions” slide to project and ask students the following questions: What does it mean to be a member of something? How does it feel to be a member of something? 2. Have students brainstorm and write their answers on the board. 3. Explain to students that being a citizen of the United States means, in a way, that they are ‘members’ of this country. Ask the students to think about what it means to be a ‘member’ of the U.S. and how it compares to being a member of something else to which a person can belong. 4. Project the “Citizenship Through Visuals and Text” slides and scroll through slides 1-4 slowly and one at a time. 5. Pose the following questions for discussion for each image: What does the image represent? How do you know? What does this image have to do with U.S. citizenship? 6. Allow students time to share out. Guide students to the understanding that passports are only issued to U.S. citizens (a privilege of citizenship) and must be carried when outside the U.S. to prove one’s American citizenship; that the Statue of Liberty symbolizes U.S. citizenship for Americans and people around the world; that a Green Card is issued to permanent residents of the U.S. who are not citizens but will be living and working in the U.S. with the opportunity to become U.S. citizens; and that the fourth image is from a naturalization ceremony, where legal immigrants officially become U.S. citizens. 7. Project slide 5 to display the text from Section 1 of the 14th Amendment and pass out the “Citizenship: Just the Facts” activity sheet. 8. Read the passage aloud to the class. Pause when needed to clarify any terms or to assist with comprehension. 9. Read the passage again and instruct students to follow along using their activity sheet and highlight/underline any words that help them define the term ‘citizen’/‘citizenship’ 10. Have students share the words they highlighted. 11. Project slide 6 with a simplified explanation of Section 1 of the 14th Amendment from the Kid’s Constitution from Civic Ed. 12. Read the passage aloud to the class. Pause when needed to clarify any terms or to assist with comprehension. 13. Have students read the passage aloud for a second time using their activity sheet. Instruct students to highlight/underline the words from this passage that helps define the term ‘citizen’/‘citizenship’. 14. Instruct students to use the words or phrases they highlighted from both passages and then write a definition of citizenship in their own words and in complete sentences on their activity sheet. 15. Pass out the “Citizenship: Just the Facts” iCivics reading. 16. Instruct students to read the first paragraph independently and think about ways an individual may automatically be a U.S. citizen. 17. Using the “Citizenship Vocabulary” slides, share/add the following key points (slides 1 & 2) and instruct students to take notes on their activity sheet: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Being born in the United States is also known as the ‘law of soil’. ■ Being born to a mother or father who is a U.S. citizen is also known as the ‘law of blood’. 18. Explain to students that if an individual is not a U.S. citizen through ‘law of soil’ or ‘law of blood’ then they are non-citizens. Continue using additional key points (slides 3-6) to guide

	<p>students through understanding some of the vocabulary related to non-citizens. Instruct them to add to their activity sheet:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ An immigrant is a person who comes to a country to live there permanently. ■ There are also people who are considered aliens. Aliens are persons living in the U.S. who are not citizens. Aliens can be in the U.S. for temporary purposes (a job or visiting for a certain period of time) or as a legal permanent resident (someone who is permanently living in the U.S. legally but not a citizen). ■ Permanent residents receive Green Cards most often valid for 10 years. ■ Going through the naturalization process allows immigrants to become U.S. citizens. <p>19. Have students complete an exit ticket on a sticky note on their way out the door in which they list the three ways of being/becoming a citizen of the United States.</p>
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DAY 2	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Instruct students to take out their “Citizenship: Just the Facts” reading and “Citizenship: Just the Facts” activity sheets from the previous day. 2. Instruct students to read the second paragraph independently and summarize the naturalization process on their student activity sheet. 3. Provide any needed clarification by using the key points found on the “Naturalization Process” slides. Have students add to their notes on their activity sheet as needed. 4. Have students read the final two paragraphs from the reading independently. 5. Project the “Oath of Allegiance” reading from the U.S. Courts website. 6. Read it aloud together, making sure to go over vocabulary words in the document. 7. Pose the following questions for discussion: Citing evidence from the text, how would you explain the Oath of Allegiance in your own words? Why do you think the Oath is part of the naturalization process? What are new citizens promising to do by making this pledge? How would you describe the process of becoming a naturalized citizen? Why would people choose to go through this process? 8. Project the following fact sheets and graphics from the American Immigration Council and examine as a whole class, pausing to have students share observations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ “Midterms 2022: The Changing Demographics of the Electorate” ■ “Immigrants in the United States” ■ “Immigrants in Florida” 9. Discuss the impact of the naturalization process that can be seen through these fact sheets and graphics, focusing on society, government, and the political process. Ask students questions such as: What information is being presented? How would you summarize what you are seeing? How might states be impacted by naturalized citizens? (population diversity, more naturalized citizens owning businesses, working in the community, running for office, voting) If you were running for a political office, why might it be important to know how many registered voters were ‘New Americans’? 10. Have students record notes about the impact of the naturalization process in the space provided on their activity sheet. Teacher Note: Use the sample answer keys to help guide the conversations. 11. For the remainder of the class time (and possibly beyond), instruct students to create a ‘how to’ guide for someone who wants to become a citizen, describing every step of the naturalization process. The guide should include the types of natural born citizens (law of soil, law of blood). They should also explain how becoming a citizen will impact society, government, and the political process. Provide construction paper and art supplies for creation.
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	<p>Extension Activity: Watch as a whole-class, or have students individually watch an oral history video from the Smithsonian’s Preparing for the Oath website. While watching, students can answer these “Preparing for the Oath Video Questions”.</p>
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- Video #1: “[Interview with a Naturalized Citizen: Maria del Carmen Cosu](#)”
- Video #2: “[Interview with a Naturalized Citizen: Maria Magdalena Mieri](#)”
- Video #3: “[Interview with a Naturalized Citizen: Gunter Waibel](#)”

Civics Content Vocabulary

Word/Term	Definition
14th Amendment	an amendment to the U.S. Constitution that defines citizenship, grants citizenship to former slaves, and defines voters as males at least 21 years of age
alien	any person not a citizen or national of a country
citizen	a legal member of a state and/or country
Green Card	the permanent residency card that provides information about the legal status of living and working in the United States
immigrant	a person who comes to a country to live there permanently
law of blood	a person's citizenship at birth is the same as that of his or her biological mother or father
law of soil	a person's citizenship at birth is determined by the country where he or she was born
legal permanent resident	someone who is legally and permanently living in the U.S., but not a citizen
naturalization	the process by which an immigrant becomes a citizen
permanent residency	the allowance of an individual to live and work in the United States on a permanent basis, giving them a Green Card and allowing an opportunity to become a citizen
resident	someone who lives in a place for a minimum period of time

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[Civics 360 Resources](#)

Florida Department of Education's Civic Literacy Reading List

- *The Democratic Process* by Mark Friedman

ANSWER KEYS

Sample Answers: Citizenship: Just the Facts activity sheet

Sample Pamphlet Rubric

Sample Answers: Preparing for the Oath Video Questions (optional activity)

SOURCES

U.S. Constitution: <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/constitution>

Passport photo: <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/passports.html>

Statue of Liberty photo: <https://www.nps.gov/stli/planyourvisit/index.htm>

Green Card photo: <https://usa-esta.net/en/what-is-the-green-card/>

Naturalization Ceremony:

<http://www.tampabay.com/news/humaninterest/naturalization-ceremony-at-trop-gives-240-new-citizens-reason-to-cheer/2194080>

Citizenship: Just the Facts from iCivics:

https://www.icivics.org/sites/default/files/lesson_plan/Citizenship%20Just%20the%20Facts_StudentDocs_0.pdf

Kid's Constitution from the Center for Civic Education:

https://www.civiced.org/images/stories/downloads/United_States_Constitution_for_Kids.pdf

Permanent Residency from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services:

<https://www.uscis.gov/green-card/after-we-grant-your-green-card/maintaining-permanent-residence>

Oath of Allegiance from US Courts:

https://www.id.uscourts.gov/Content_Fetcher/index.cfm/Oath_of_Allegiance_1716.pdf?Content_ID=1716#:~:text=The%20Pledge%20of%20Allegiance%20I,Liberty%20and%20Justice%20for%20all.

Fact Sheets & Graphics from American Immigration Council (accessed December 2022):

[https://data.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/en/midterms-2022/;](https://data.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/en/midterms-2022/)

<https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/immigrants-in-the-united-states;>

<https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/immigrants-florida>

Preparing for the Oath Videos from the National Museum of American History:

<https://www.youtube.com/@SmithsonianAmHistory>