

Teacher's Name:  
Employee Number:  
School:

**Social Studies Lesson Plan**  
**Evaluating the importance of civic responsibilities in American democracy.**

1. **Title: The Importance of Civic Responsibilities in American Democracy**

2. **Overview - Big Ideas:**

*Enduring Understandings*

- Identify some important civic responsibilities.
- Identify various examples of civic responsibilities and relate these responsibilities to the rights enjoyed as citizens of the U.S.
- Evaluate situations in which rights conflict with the common good.
- Formulate an opinion on an issue and defend a position.
- Identify ways for citizens to participate in government.

*Essential Questions* – *(What provocative questions will you use to foster inquiry, understanding and transfer of learning?)*

- What is the purpose of government?
- What are some civic responsibilities?
- What is the *common good*?
- How can citizens' rights and the common good co-exist?
- How necessary is it for citizens to value the common good?
- What can citizens do to protect their rights and, at the same time, protect the common good?
- What can citizens do to participate in government?

**3. Lesson Objectives:**

Standards - Next Generation Sunshine State Standards for Social Studies

NGSSS-SS Benchmarks Relevant to this Lesson

Evaluating the importance of civic responsibilities in American democracy.

Tested Seventh Grade NGSSS-SS Benchmarks Relevant to this Lesson

- SS.7.C.3.9 Illustrate the law making process at the local, state, and federal level.
- SS.7.C.2.12 Develop a plan to resolve a state or local problem by researching public policy alternatives, identifying appropriate government agencies to address the issue, and determining a course of action.
- SS.7.C.2.13 Examine multiple perspectives on public and current issues.

**4. Key Vocabulary:**

action plan, assemble, citizens, civic responsibilities, common good, equal protection of the law, establishment clause, free exercise clause, freedom of expression, freedom of the press, freedom of religion, issue, naturalized citizens, participation, petition, resident aliens, right to due process of law

**5. Evidence of Student Understanding (Assessment) in this Lesson:**

***What key knowledge and skills will students acquire as a result of this lesson?***

After students complete this lesson, they will develop an understanding of the purpose of government. Students will comprehend the idea of civic responsibilities and how these are linked to citizens' rights. Students will examine some responsibilities and ways to promote the common good. They will develop an understanding of how the common good can co-exist with citizens' rights. Finally, students will also develop strategies on how to safeguard both based on citizen participation in government.

***What will students be able to do as a result of such knowledge and skills?***

Students will be able to foster an understanding of citizens' rights and responsibilities and the importance of protecting both. They will be able to analyze situations using critical thinking skills while making decisions about protecting citizens' rights and promoting the common good. Students will learn that participation in government is essential to the democratic process.

*Both **formative and summative assessments** are included*

**6. Materials Needed:**

- Attachment A: Reading associated with the lesson: "Rights and Responsibilities in Our American Democracy"
- Attachment B: "Debate"
- Attachment C: "Ideas to Discuss" (We the People, 2003, Center for Civic Education)
- Attachment D: Post-Quiz

**7. Steps to Deliver the Lesson:**

*A detailed, step by step description of how to deliver the lesson and achieve the lesson plan objectives.*

- a. Lesson Opening: Ask students to work in cooperative groups to discuss the following scenarios and formulate opinions about each of these situations. Remember to keep notes and be prepared to defend your point of view.
- **A student gets on the loudspeaker and yells a bad word. The entire student body hears it. The principal calls the student to his office.**

What rights and interests might be endangered? Does the principal have a right to limit this type of expression? Why or why not? Should a rule be enacted? What actions should be taken? What is best for the common good? How would you handle this situation?

- **Someone at the airport is getting their bag checked. Airport security is taking a long and the passenger says, “Don’t worry about my bag. It’s not like I have bomb or anything.” The passenger is detained.**

What rights and interests might be endangered? Does airport security have a right to limit this type of expression? Why or why not? Should a rule be enacted? What actions should be taken? What is best for the common good? How would you handle this situation?

- **You are on a runway at the airport. The pilot comes on the loudspeaker and says all cell phones need to be turned off because the plane is about to take off and cell phones interfere with flight communication. The girl next to you continues to use the phone.**

What rights and interest might be endangered? Should the pilot limit this type of expression? Why or why not? Should a rule be enacted? What actions should be taken? What is best for the common good? How would you handle this situation?

- Students will share their ideas with the class. The teacher will act as a facilitator and write key ideas on the board. The teacher may also have students engage in role playing for further exploration of the issues.
- b. Reading: Use any reading strategy (choral, buddy, jump in, silent, etc.) which is appropriate for your students to read Attachment A: “Rights and Responsibilities in Our American Democracy.”
  - c. Help students define appropriate vocabulary associated with the lesson, using meaningful context. Reread material for further clarification.
  - d. Work in pairs to complete Attachment B: “Debate.” In this assignment, students must pretend that a group with unpopular views wants to meet at a local beach to recruit potential members. You and your partner will prepare a debate to discuss opposing opinions on whether or not this group should be allowed to meet. Both sides will be expected to defend their position. Then, the class should vote to see which side presented the best argument.
  - e. Work in cooperative groups to complete Assignment C: “Ideas to Discuss” which is based on the right to the equal protection of the law and the right to due process of law.

- f. Have students take the post-quiz associated with this lesson which is Attachment D. Go over the quiz with students to check for understanding.

**8. Specific Activities: (From Guided to Independent):**

*Activities designed to facilitate the gradual release of teacher responsibility, from teacher-led to independent.*

- a. When students finish reading the material in Attachment A, they will work on Attachment B in groups of two.
- b. While students work on Attachment C, the teacher will facilitate and supervise the cooperative groups. Students will share ideas with others.
- c. Provide “buddies” for ELL and ESE students as needed.
- d. Model assignments as appropriate.

**9. Differentiated Instruction Strategies:**

*How to accommodate a variety of student learning needs, remediation strategies as well as enrichment strategies.*

- a. Provide individual assistance for students having difficulty with the reading material while the rest are working independently.
- b. Provide individual assistance in a small group setting for students having difficulty with written work.

**10. Technology Integration:**

*Activities incorporating technology; e.g., address lesson content through online resources.*

- a. Have students visit the following website so as to access the online version of the U. S. Constitution: <http://www.usconstitution.net/const.html>
- b. For further clarification or study, students may also access a “kid friendly” version of the U.S. Constitution: <http://www.usconstitution.net/constkids4.html>

- c. Have students visit: <http://www.icivics.org>  
They can play a citizenship game called *Do I Have a Right?* They can also learn about citizenship through the *Citizenship and Participation Unit*. There is also a section called *Activate* which gives students a chance to create an action plan to affect positive change in the community.

## 11. Lesson Closure:

*Methods to draw ideas together, review concepts, etc.*

- a. After completing the post-quiz and reviewing answers with students, ask them the following questions:
- What is the purpose of government?
  - What are some civic responsibilities?
  - What does common good mean?
  - How can citizens' rights and the common good co-exist?
  - How necessary is it for citizens to value the common good?
  - What can citizens do to protect their rights and, at the same time, protect the common good?
  - What can citizens do to participate in government?
- b. For home learning, have students research political candidates and design posters which encourage citizens to participate in the decision-making process by exercising their right to vote. Students can also write an expository composition explaining ways in which individuals can participate in government and practice good citizenship.

## Attachment A

### Reading #1: Rights and Responsibilities in Our American Democracy

What does it mean to be a citizen of the United States? A **citizen** is a person who is born in the United States or born to parents who are American citizens living in other countries. There are other groups of individuals living in the United States. One group is **naturalized citizens** which are individuals who were born in another country but, live in the United States legally. They have taken a test based on the Constitution as well as American History and passed it. They have been granted citizenship status. In addition, the government also protects the rights of all other individuals living in the United States, even if they are not citizens. This group is called **resident aliens** and while they cannot vote, run for office or serve as jurors, they still have the right to be treated fairly.

What is the purpose of government in our country? Government in our country exists for two reasons. First, government protects citizens' rights and, at the same time, it provides for the **common good**, or the good of the community or nation as a whole. In other words, the common good is the general welfare of all Americans.

How can we protect citizens' rights? Having a strong and well-written Constitution is just not enough. In order to safeguard our rights and the common good, individuals need to carry out their **civic responsibilities** or duties and obligations. They need to actively participate in government. There are many ways citizens can help the democratic process.

It is necessary to know that along with rights, citizens have responsibilities to fulfill. Individuals enjoy **freedom of expression** which includes the right to talk about personal feelings or opinions, the right of **freedom of the press** which refers to being able to read and write whatever you please, the right to **assemble** or meet, and the right to **petition** or ask the government to correct things as per the First Amendment. At the same time, individuals must always remember that they must value this right for others as well. Therefore, their freedom can never hurt others or put them in danger. In terms of **freedom of religion** as expressed in the First Amendment, citizens have the right to practice their own beliefs but, must respect other religious practices. Under this amendment, Congress may not favor one religion over another and this is known as the **establishment clause**. At the same time, Congress may not unreasonably limit your right to practice any religious belief and this refers to the **free exercise clause**. Another of the basic rights of citizens is that of **equal protection of the law** under the Fourteenth Amendment. One must always remember that all individuals need to be treated equally by state and local governments and not be discriminated because of race or gender. The **right to due process of law** refers to the Fifth Amendment which protects an individual's right to be treated fairly by the federal government.

How can individuals participate in government? There are many ways to do so. One of them is by exercising the right to vote. By voting, citizens are complying with

their civic responsibility. This allows citizens a chance to affect peaceful change in the United States as well as support our democracy. An individual cannot vote until they are 18 years old but, this does not mean that students cannot become involved in government. Students can become involved by learning as much as possible about rights and responsibilities, the Constitution, and American History. In this manner, students will know how government is supposed to work, what their rights and responsibilities are, along with learning about the common good. Students can also participate by keeping up with the latest news on what government is doing. By knowing what is going on, individuals protect their rights as well as the rights of others. Ultimately, this protects our democracy. Students can also express their opinions about laws or about an **issue** or concern at the local, state or federal level. With their teachers and their parents' help, they can develop **action plans** or a way to try to correct these problems. They can even contact their public officials to ask for their aid. Another way which students can participate in government is by volunteering to help the community. For instance, students can clean up beaches and parks, raise money for endangered animals and habitats, and go to nursing homes to visit the elderly. Older students can help younger ones learn to read. Students can also raise funds to help homeless shelters. They can help by planting gardens, starting recycling programs, and even participating in school government. The possibilities are endless. Young or old, everyone can help!

## **Attachment B**

### **“Debate”**

*Instructions: Work in cooperative groups to complete. Students must pretend that a group with unpopular views wants to meet at a local beach to recruit potential members. You and your partner will prepare a debate to discuss opposing opinions on whether or not this group should be allowed to meet. Both sides will be expected to defend their position. You may use this paper to jot down the pros and cons. Then, the class should vote to see which side presented the best argument.*

## Attachment C

### “Ideas to Discuss”

#### Scenario 1: The Right to the Equal Protection of the Law

Suppose your city government officials are planning a picnic for the people who live in your community.

1. What responsibilities should officials have to you regardless of your age, gender, race, or religion?
2. If you volunteer to help plan the city’s picnic, what responsibilities should you have to others?
3. Government is not permitted to favor some people over others because of their age, gender, race, or religion. What responsibilities should you have that go along with this right?
4. Suppose no one fulfilled the responsibilities that you have discussed. What might happen to our right to the equal protection of the law?

#### Scenario 2: The Right to Due Process of Law

Suppose someone accused you of doing something wrong in your school.

1. What responsibilities should the accuser have toward you?
2. If you were the one who accused another student of doing something wrong, what responsibilities should you have toward her or him?
3. Government must be fair to you when it is gathering information and making decisions. What responsibilities should you have that go along with this right?
4. Suppose no one fulfilled the responsibilities that you have discussed. What might happen to our right to due process of the law?

Attachment D

Post-Quiz

Low Complexity Items:

1. What are the three ways citizens can participate in government?
  - a. Vote, organize a recycling program at school, and become a resident alien
  - b. Serve as a juror, vote, and work for the police department
  - c. Visit different religious groups, vote, and volunteer
  - d. Volunteer, vote, and write letters to public officials expressing opinions on an issue
  
2. What is the purpose of government?
  - a. To know citizens have rights and responsibilities
  - b. To learn about democracy and the Constitution
  - c. To protect citizens' rights and the general welfare
  - d. To participate and to make informed decisions
  
3. What is the difference between native citizens and naturalized citizens?
  - a. Native citizens cannot vote but naturalized citizens can.
  - b. Native citizens cannot hold public office but naturalized citizens can.
  - c. Native citizens can vote but naturalized citizens cannot.
  - d. Naturalized citizens cannot be president but the native citizens can.

Moderate Complexity Items:

4. Which of the following is an example of citizens actively participating in the U.S. democratic process?
  - a. Voters participating in a political rally.
  - b. Resident aliens listening to the evening news.
  - c. A native citizen applies for dual citizenship in another country.
  - d. Naturalized citizens visit their home countries.
  
5. A local organization has been told that they can not hold a peaceful meeting in a public park in order to plan their next activity. Which right guaranteed by the first amendment is being denied to this organization?
  - a. The right to petition.
  - b. The right to assemble
  - c. The right to due process.
  - d. The right to worship any religion they chose.
  
6. If the local police department pays a woman less money to do the same work a man does, which amendment can an attorney use to prove that this is unfair and illegal?
  - a. First Amendment
  - b. Fifth Amendment
  - c. Fourteenth Amendment
  - d. Thirteenth Amendment

High Complexity Items:

7. In which of the following statements is it **not** reasonable to limit freedom of expression to protect the general welfare?
  - a. You tell the teacher that you do not understand one of the school rules and you get suspended.
  - b. You spread rumors about another fifth grader.
  - c. You are a witness in a case involving a friend and decide to tell a lie in court to help your friend.
  - d. Your friend's father goes to the office and screams bad words at the lunch monitor because he does not agree with the cafeteria procedures.
  
8. If Congress tried to create an official religion for the entire country, what part of the first amendment would be in clear violation?
  - a. Freedom of expression.
  - b. Freedom of speech.
  - c. Freedom to petition.
  - d. The establishment clause.

9. “Nor shall any person be subject for the same offense to be twice put in jeopardy of life and limb; nor shall be compelled in any criminal case to be a witness against himself, nor be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law...”

Based on this passage from the Fifth Amendment, which is an example of an individual’s due process?

- a. A person will testify against himself
  - b. A person will not lose their freedom without a fair trial
  - c. A person will be charged twice for the same crime
  - d. A person will be treated unfairly by the federal government
10. “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. No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.”

Based on this passage from the Fourteenth Amendment, which statement best describes protection from unfair treatment by state and local governments?

- a. You must appear at the local courthouse for allegedly jaywalking. The judge listens to all witnesses against you but, decides not to let you explain your version of the story because he has too many cases to rule on.
- b. You are a 22 year old female who applied to work as a firefighter in your county. You scored a 99% on your exam, have an excellent driving record and have never had a problem with the law. However, you did not get hired. You found out that this year they are only hiring men because officials feel they are stronger and more agile.
- c. Every child in your state is entitled to a free public education regardless of race, gender, or the size of the county.
- d. Everyone on your block has a fenced yard. Your parents applied for a fence permit but, they were denied one. Your family is upset because the dog cannot run around freely in your yard.

**Answer Key**

1. D
2. C
3. D
4. A
5. B
6. C
7. A
8. D
9. B
10. C