

We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution

Upper Elementary Grades

Teacher's Guide

Lesson Overview

This lesson looks at an important question students will face as citizens: What responsibilities accompany our basic rights? The lesson begins with a class discussion of the importance of citizens fulfilling responsibilities in order to protect their rights. The class then engages in a problem-solving activity that examines specific responsibilities that might be connected with protecting the five basic rights studied in Unit Four, and poses the question of what might happen if citizens did not fulfill these responsibilities.

Lesson Objectives

1. Students should be able to explain the importance of the fulfillment of responsibilities by citizens if everyone's rights are to be protected.
2. Students should be able to describe specific responsibilities associated with five essential rights of citizens.

Materials Needed

Student text

Teaching Procedures

A. Introductory Activity

Examining the Importance of Citizenship Responsibilities

Have the students read the "Purpose of Lesson" and "Is a Good Constitution Enough?" Go over the three prerequisites discussed in the text for the protection of rights:

1. a good constitution;
2. good leaders;
3. good citizens.

B. Reading and Problem Solving

Identifying a Citizen's Responsibilities

Have students read the first paragraph of the next section, "What responsibilities go along with our rights?" Then divide the class into five groups. Assign each group one set of questions in the problem-solving activity, "Can you have rights without responsibilities?" If the groups have more than five students, subdivide the groups so all students will have a chance to discuss the questions. Each group is to develop answers to its set of questions, write down the answers, and assign one or more members of the group to report the group's responses to the class. Allow time for class discussion of each group's responses. You may wish to develop a class consensus on what responsibilities should be associated with each of the basic rights discussed.

In a class discussion, have students consider these questions:

- Do most people understand these responsibilities and the importance of fulfilling them?
- How do young children learn these responsibilities?
- Would they add any other responsibilities to the list?
- Which responsibilities do they think are the most difficult to fulfill?

C. Concluding Activity

Conclude the lesson by leading a class discussion of the questions asked in "Reviewing and Using the Lesson."

Optional Activities

For Reinforcement, Extended Learning, and Enrichment

1. Have students draw posters that illustrate responsibilities that are associated with each basic right.

2. Divide the class into groups of three to five students and have each group develop a skit that demonstrates a citizen's responsibility in a particular situation.
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Free classroom sets of the **We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution** materials are available on a limited basis in each congressional district in the nation. Information is available on the **[We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution program page](#)**.

Additional sets may be purchased from the Center at a nominal cost through our **[Online Catalog](#)**.