

## ***Citizenship: Right or Responsibility?***

**Purpose:** This lesson will allow students the opportunity to explore the role a citizen in both Costa Rica and the United States. Additionally, there will be opportunities for students to engage in a dialogue about the rights and responsibilities of good citizenship.

**Learning Objective(s):** The student will

- Examine the role of citizenship in Costa Rica and the United States
- Discuss the rights and responsibilities of citizenship

**Standards:**

National	New Mexico	Texas
V. What are the roles of the Citizen in American Democracy? B. What are the rights of citizens? C. What are the responsibilities?	Strand: Civics & Government Content Standard III: Students understand the ideals, rights, and responsibilities of citizenship and understand the content and history of the founding documents of the United States with particular emphasis on the United States and New Mexico constitutions and how governments function at local, state, tribal, and national levels. 5-8 Benchmark III-A: Understand the structure, functions, and powers of government (local, state, tribal and national). 5-8 Benchmark III-D: Explain how individuals have rights and responsibilities as members of social groups, families, schools, communities, states, tribes, and countries.	6.13 A, B, and C; 6.21 D; 6.14 A and B; 8.20 D; 8.20 F; WG15.B

**Materials Needed:** Transparencies of quotes, Constitution citations, and questions; post-it notes; Frayer model graphic

**Time Frame:** 1 class period

**Procedure:**

1. Post the four quotes on citizenship and ask the students to decide with which one they most clearly identify. Have various students share their quote and the reasons for their choice.

- “The first requisite (requirement) of a good citizen in this Republic of ours is that he be able and willing to pull his weight.” Theodore Roosevelt
  - “He loves his country best who strives to make it best.” Robert Ingersoll
  - “True charity is the desire to be useful to others without the thought of recompense (something in return).” Swedenborg
  - “We preach the virtues of democracy abroad. We must practice its duties here at home. Voting is the first duty of democracy.” Lyndon B. Johnson
2. Divide the students into small groups of three or four and have them complete their copy of the Frayer model graphic on the meaning of citizen. Post these around the room and after students have surveyed the various definitions of citizen, lead the students in a discussion of the meaning of citizen and citizenship. After discussing citizenship, extend the students’ thinking by exploring their ideas on rights and responsibilities.

Sample definition of citizen-the condition of being a citizen, including the rights and responsibilities of being a citizen.

Sample definition of rights-the freedom to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness without free of repression by the government

Sample definition and examples of responsibilities-doing one’s share in making the school, community, state, or nation a better place. Good citizens are good neighbors. They cooperate, obey laws and rules, and respect authority. They also protect their environment, stay informed about important issues, and vote.

3. Ask students their opinion on whether voting is a right or a responsibility. Explain that the country of Costa Rica has approximately a 70% turnout for elections (an appropriate number for a mature democracy according to government experts) while in the recent 2006 mid-term elections the U.S. voter turnout was approximately 40%. Ask students for their opinion of reasons for this difference.
4. Allow students to view and then discuss the following two excerpts of the Costa Rican Constitution:

*ARTICLE 90. Citizenship is the aggregate of political rights and duties pertaining to Costa Ricans over eighteen years of age.*

*ARTICLE 93. Suffrage is a primary and compulsory civic function and is exercised before Election Boards through direct and secret vote by the citizens registered in the Civil Registry.*

5. Distribute a post-it note to each student and have them write their opinion on the following question:

Should the United States require all eligible citizens to vote in national elections?

6. Draw a continuum line on the board or a piece of butcher paper as illustrated below:

Strongly Agree \_\_\_\_\_ Agree \_\_\_\_\_ Disagree \_\_\_\_\_ Strongly Disagree

With the question, have the students post their answer on the continuum line in the position they feel it represents. The teacher can then conduct a discussion of the differing ideas on requiring citizens to vote.

7. After this idea has been debated the following two questions can be used to further the discussion:

If voting was a citizenship requirement, what should the punishment be if eligible citizens do not vote?

If the U.S. does not make voting a requirement, what can be done to increase voter participation?