



# What Does It Mean to be a Good Citizen?

## Responsibilities and Rights of U.S. Citizens



Sarah Brewer

Published by K20 Center

*This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons CC BY-SA 4.0 License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/)*

<b>Grade Level</b>	8th – 12th Grade	<b>Time Frame</b>	120 minutes
<b>Subject</b>	Social Studies	<b>Duration</b>	2 - 3 class periods
<b>Course</b>	U.S. Government, U.S. History		

### Essential Question

What does it mean to be a good citizen of our democracy? What are the responsibilities and rights of citizens in our democracy?

### Summary

Students begin this lesson by brainstorming what it means to be a good citizen. Next, students analyze two documents to understand what it means to be a good citizen of a democracy, including responsibilities like participating in the democratic process, protesting injustice, and understanding how the government works. Then, students summarize their learning in a graphic organizer. To extend their knowledge, students analyze a Pew Research Center study about citizenship and make text-to-text, text-to-world, and text-to-self connections. Lastly, students rank a citizen's most important responsibilities and justify their choices.

### Snapshot

#### Engage

Students generate a word cloud by describing the traits of a good citizen.

#### Explore

Students read and analyze documents to understand what it means to be a good citizen.

#### Explain

Students complete a graphic organizer based on their document analysis, summarizing the responsibilities of citizenship. These responsibilities include understanding how the government works, participating in the democratic process, protesting injustice, serving on juries, and others.

#### Extend

Students analyze a Pew Research Center study about citizenship and make connections between the text and their own worlds and selves.

#### Evaluate

Students rank a citizen's most important responsibilities and justify their choices.

## Standards

*Oklahoma Academic Standards (Social Studies: United States Government (9th through 12th grade))*

**8.3.10:** Describe the responsibilities of United States citizens such as:

**8.3.10A:** registering and voting in public elections

**8.3.10B:** engaging in informed civil discourse

**8.3.10C:** serving on a jury

**8.3.10D:** paying taxes

**8.3.10E:** obeying laws

**8.3.10F:** registering for military service

*Oklahoma Academic Standards (Social Studies: United States Government (9th through 12th grade))*

**USG.5.1:** Define civic virtue and explain the individual's duty and responsibility to participate in civic life by voting, serving on juries, volunteering within the community, running for office, serving on a political campaign, paying state and federal taxes prior to the April 15th annual deadline, and respecting legitimate authority.

## Attachments

- [Document-Analysis-Packet-Teacher-What-Does-It-Mean-to-Be-a-Good-Citizen - Spanish.docx](#)
- [Document-Analysis-Packet-Teacher-What-Does-It-Mean-to-Be-a-Good-Citizen - Spanish.pdf](#)
- [Document-Analysis-Packet-Teacher-What-Does-It-Mean-to-Be-a-Good-Citizen.docx](#)
- [Document-Analysis-Packet-Teacher-What-Does-It-Mean-to-Be-a-Good-Citizen.pdf](#)
- [Document-Analysis-Packet-What-Does-It-Mean-to-Be-a-Good-Citizen - Spanish.docx](#)
- [Document-Analysis-Packet-What-Does-It-Mean-to-Be-a-Good-Citizen - Spanish.pdf](#)
- [Document-Analysis-Packet-What-Does-It-Mean-to-Be-a-Good-Citizen.docx](#)
- [Document-Analysis-Packet-What-Does-It-Mean-to-Be-a-Good-Citizen.pdf](#)
- [Four-Corners-Signs-What-Does-It-Mean-to-Be-a-Good-Citizen - Spanish.docx](#)
- [Four-Corners-Signs-What-Does-It-Mean-to-Be-a-Good-Citizen - Spanish.pdf](#)
- [Four-Corners-Signs-What-Does-It-Mean-to-Be-a-Good-Citizen.docx](#)
- [Four-Corners-Signs-What-Does-It-Mean-to-Be-a-Good-Citizen.pdf](#)
- [Lesson-Slides-What-Does-it-Mean-to-Be-a-Good-Citizen.pptx](#)
- [Responsibilities-of-Citizens-Graphic-Organizer-Teacher-What-Does-It-Mean-to-Be-a-Good-Citizen.docx](#)
- [Responsibilities-of-Citizens-Graphic-Organizer-Teacher-What-Does-It-Mean-to-Be-a-Good-Citizen.pdf](#)
- [Responsibilities-of-Citizens-Graphic-Organizer-What-Does-It-Mean-to-Be-a-Good-Citizen - Spanish.docx](#)
- [Responsibilities-of-Citizens-Graphic-Organizer-What-Does-It-Mean-to-Be-a-Good-Citizen - Spanish.pdf](#)
- [Responsibilities-of-Citizens-Graphic-Organizer-What-Does-It-Mean-to-Be-a-Good-Citizen.docx](#)
- [Responsibilities-of-Citizens-Graphic-Organizer-What-Does-It-Mean-to-Be-a-Good-Citizen.pdf](#)
- [Text-to-Texts-Self-and-World-Handout-Condensed-What-Does-It-Mean-to-Be-a-Good-Citizen - Spanish.docx](#)
- [Text-to-Texts-Self-and-World-Handout-Condensed-What-Does-It-Mean-to-Be-a-Good-Citizen - Spanish.pdf](#)
- [Text-to-Texts-Self-and-World-Handout-Condensed-What-Does-It-Mean-to-Be-a-Good-Citizen.docx](#)
- [Text-to-Texts-Self-and-World-Handout-Condensed-What-Does-It-Mean-to-Be-a-Good-Citizen.pdf](#)
- [Text-to-Texts-Self-and-World-Handout-Space-Provided-What-Does-It-Mean-to-Be-a-Good-Citizen - Spanish.docx](#)
- [Text-to-Texts-Self-and-World-Handout-Space-Provided-What-Does-It-Mean-to-Be-a-Good-Citizen - Spanish.pdf](#)
- [Text-to-Texts-Self-and-World-Handout-Space-Provided-What-Does-It-Mean-to-Be-a-Good-Citizen.docx](#)
- [Text-to-Texts-Self-and-World-Handout-Space-Provided-What-Does-It-Mean-to-Be-a-Good-Citizen.pdf](#)
- [Text-to-Texts-Self-and-World-Handout-Teacher-What-Does-It-Mean-to-Be-a-Good-Citizen - Spanish.docx](#)
- [Text-to-Texts-Self-and-World-Handout-Teacher-What-Does-It-Mean-to-Be-a-Good-Citizen - Spanish.pdf](#)
- [Text-to-Texts-Self-and-World-Handout-Teacher-What-Does-It-Mean-to-Be-a-Good-Citizen.docx](#)

- [Text-to-Texts-Self-and-World-Handout-Teacher-What-Does-It-Mean-to-Be-a-Good-Citizen.pdf](#)

## Materials

- Internet-enabled device
- Pens or pencils
- Highlighters or markers
- Poster paper (optional for the Four Corners signs)
- Lesson Slides (attached)
- Document Analysis Packet (attached, one per student)
- Document Analysis Packet with Teacher's notes (attached)
- Four Corners Signs (attached)
- Responsibilities of Citizens Graphic Organizer (attached, one per student)
- Responsibilities of Citizens Graphic Organizer with Teacher's Notes (attached)
- Text-to-Texts, -Self and -World handout ("Condensed" and "Space Provided" versions; attached, one per student)
- Text-to-Texts, -Self and -World handout with Teacher's Notes (attached)

5 minutes

## Engage

### Teacher's Note: Preparation

Before you begin, prepare for the first activity below by creating a Mentimeter word cloud generator for your class. To do so, go to <https://www.mentimeter.com/> and select "Log in" or "Sign up." Once your Mentimeter room is created, add the prompt "*What does it mean to be a good citizen of our democracy? Submit words or phrases that answer this question.*" Additionally, be sure to save the code. You will need to distribute this code to students for them to access the word cloud.

For more information on how to set up Mentimeter, see the K20 Center's [Mentimeter Tech Tool card](#).

Divide students into groups of 3-4. Display **slide 3** of the attached **Lesson Slides**. Ask students to consider: "What does it mean to be a good citizen of our democracy?"

Have students use their phones or open their devices and go to <https://www.menti.com/>. Give students the custom Mentimeter code for your prepared word cloud to connect them with the presentation. As students enter their responses, use the "presentation" mode on Mentimeter to display the word cloud on the board as it is being created.

Once all responses have been submitted, you may call on students to share their observations about the ideas that were contributed to the word cloud. Additionally, you can offer your insights.

### Optional: Word Cloud Alternatives

If you would rather not use Mentimeter, you could add a new blank slide to the slideshow, and as students verbally share out, type their answers into the slide to make a class list. Alternatively, you could create a shared Google document with the prompt and ask that students submit their answers there while displaying it on the board.

After students have shared their initial thoughts with the class, display **slide 4** and explain to students that they are going to continue exploring this essential question: "What does it mean to be a good citizen of our democracy?" Additionally, "What are the responsibilities and rights of citizens in our democracy?" You might also show students **slide 5** and review the learning objectives for this lesson.

45 minutes

## Explore

### Teacher's Note: Preparation

Before beginning this section of the lesson, print the attached **Four Corners** signs on poster paper and hang them in four different areas of the room for students to reference at the end of this section. Additionally, before class, please read and consider Why-Lighting the two documents in the Document Analysis Packet that your students will analyze in this part of the lesson. This will help you facilitate the activity.

Display **slide 6**. Explain to students that, to begin answering those essential questions, they are going to read an article titled "Responsibilities of U.S. Citizens." Pass out a copy of the attached **Document Analysis Packet** to each student. Ask student groups to read through the first article in the packet, "Responsibilities of U.S. Citizens," once. Then, distribute highlighters to each student. Ask students to read through the article again, using the [Why-Lighting](#) strategy to highlight important information that helps them answer the question "What does it mean to be a good citizen of our democracy?" Tell students that, for any information they highlight, they should make notes in the document margins explaining their reasoning. If you think it would be helpful to provide your students with additional structure for this activity, consider asking them to have at least three (or a different number of your choosing) Why-Lights with annotations.

When students finish Why-Lighting the first document, bring the whole class back together and display **slide 7**. Call on several groups to share some of the ideas that they highlighted and why.

### Sample Student Responses

For possible student responses in this Why-Lighting activity, please see Document 1 in the attached **Document Analysis Packet (Teacher)**.

### Teacher's Note: Evaluating Credible Sources

When students discuss a citizen's responsibility to be informed, you might choose to extend this conversation by sharing the [A-CLAP](#) strategy with students to help them think about how to identify credible sources when consuming information. There are at least a couple of ways in which you could apply this strategy. You could have them consider the authority, currency, leaning, accuracy, and purpose of the article by assigning each student group one of those five components to consider and discuss as they read and analyze the documents. Each group could then discuss their assigned component over the course of the whole-class discussion. Alternatively, you could introduce A-CLAP to the students during the discussion and have a more casual conversation regarding how they could determine whether or not the documents qualify as credible sources.

Next, display **slide 8** and direct students to the second article in the document packet, “President Obama’s Farewell Address.” Explain to students that it is tradition for presidents to give a farewell address or to speak to the nation one last time and offer insight based on their experiences serving as president. Point out to students that this tradition goes back to George Washington, noting that students previously studied his farewell address. You might choose to review some of the main ideas from [Washington’s Farewell Address](#), such as avoiding foreign alliances, keeping the national government strong, limiting the power and influence of political parties, promoting education of the nation’s citizenry, etc.

Ask student groups to read through the farewell address once. Then, as students read through the farewell address again, ask students to use the Why-Lighting strategy to highlight important information that helps them answer the question “What does it mean to be a good citizen of our democracy?” Tell students that, for any information they highlight, they must make notes in the document margins explaining their reasoning. If you think it would be helpful to provide your students with additional structure for this activity, consider asking them to have at least three (or a different number of your choosing) Why-Lights with annotations.

When students finish Why-Lighting the first document, bring the whole class back together and display **slide 9**. Then call on several groups to share some of the ideas that they highlighted and why.

### Sample Student Responses

For possible student responses in this Why-Lighting activity, please see Document 2 in the attached Document Analysis Packet (Teacher).

Display **slide 10**, and transition the discussion to the final page of the handout, “Comparing the Texts.” This final section contains questions based on the New York Times’ [Comparing Two or More Texts handout](#). Ask students to consider both texts and choose one of the four questions that are listed both on the page and on slide 10. When students have decided which question they want to answer, use a modified version of the [Four Corners](#) strategy, and invite students to take their Document Analysis Packets with them and gather in the four corners of the room with others who chose the same question. For example, all students who chose to answer question #1 should gather together in one corner of the room next to the sign that has question #1 printed on it; all students who chose to answer question #2 would gather in another corner of the room next to the sign that has question #2 printed on it; and so on.

Display **slide 11**. Give students a few minutes to discuss how they would answer their selected question. Have a representative from each group summarize what their group discussed for the whole class. Summarize this discussion by reviewing and synthesizing major points that students have brought up in discussion throughout this part of the lesson.

### Possible Student Responses

For possible student responses to each of these discussion questions, please see the “Comparing the Texts” section in the attached Document Analysis Packet (Teacher).

At this point, you might choose to move to the next section of the lesson. Alternatively, if you would like students to record their responses on the handout in addition to discussing their answers, have students return to their seats to do so. Students can use the space provided in the document packet to record their responses. It is recommended that student responses be at least four complete sentences; however, you may wish to adjust these expectations. Communicate clearly with students about what you expect their responses to look like.

Summarize this discussion by reviewing and synthesizing major points that students have brought up in discussion throughout this part of the lesson.

### Optional: Shortening the Lesson

If you think this activity might take your students too much time, consider these alternative lesson procedures:

**Alternative 1:** Have students Why-Light only the first document, “Responsibilities of U.S. Citizens.” This means skipping the analysis of President Obama’s Farewell Address as well as comparing two texts in the Four Corners activity.

**Alternative 2:** Using the [Paired Text H-Chart](#) strategy, have half of the students in each group read and Why-Light “Responsibilities of U.S. Citizens” and half the students read and Why-Light “President Obama’s Farewell Address.” Next, invite the students in each group to teach each other about the main ideas in the document they read. As the group discusses the main ideas of each document, they should create their own H-Charts and write these ideas in each of the corresponding sides of the chart as detailed by the strategy. Students should then work together to create a *third* text synthesizing what they have learned about what it means to be a good citizen. Students should record their responses in the middle section of the H-Chart. You may choose to have student groups share out the main ideas from each document and/or their third text with the whole class. You may then have students do the Four Corners activity or you may choose to skip it.

40 minutes

## Explain

Display **slide 12** and distribute a copy of the attached **Responsibilities of Citizens Graphic Organizer** to each student. Explain to students that they should work with their groups, using the information from the Document Analysis Packet to complete the graphic organizer. Students should first summarize each responsibility of citizenship in their own words and then explain why that responsibility is important to our democracy. It is suggested that students use 1-2 complete sentences to fill in each section of the chart.

When students have finished the graphic organizer, assign at least one responsibility to each group to share during the whole-class discussion. Encourage students to modify their responses based on feedback they get from their peers and instructor during the whole-class discussion.

### Sample Student Responses

For possible student responses to each of the responsibilities of citizenship, see the attached **Responsibilities of Citizens Graphic Organizer (Teacher)**.

Summarize this discussion, noting that each of these responsibilities is important for citizens to carry out to ensure that our democratic government thrives. However, people might feel that some of the responsibilities are more important than others.



20 minutes

## Extend

### Teacher's Note: Text-to-Texts, -Self, and -World Handouts

Two versions of the Text-to-Texts, Self, and World Handout exist in the attachments—a “Space Provided” and a “Condensed” version. Prepare copies of the “Space Provided” version if you want students to respond on the handout itself. Prepare copies of the “Condensed” version if you prefer for students to complete their responses in a notebook, on notebook paper, or submitted in a digital format.

Explain to students that the Pew Research Center conducted a survey in 2018 to gauge how the American people felt about some of the responsibilities of citizenship and which were seen as most important. Distribute a copy of the attached **Text-to-Texts, -Self, and -World Handout** of your choice to each student. Display **slide 13**, and direct students’ attention to the survey results on the first page of the handout.

### Teacher's Note: Pew Research Center Information

For more information about the mission of the Pew Research Center please visit the [Pew Research Center's website](#). For additional information related to the survey results used in this section of the lesson, please view the article “[The responsibilities of citizenship](#).”

Give students a few minutes in their small groups to discuss their observations. What trends do they notice? What surprises them about the results? What does not surprise them about the results? What are their general reactions?

Ask several students to share their initial observations with the whole class. Synthesize the major points contributed by students. Share any additional information as well.

Display **slide 14**. Ask students to turn to the next page of their handouts to look at the Text-to-Texts, Text-to-Self, and Text-to-World activity. (These questions are based on [Facing History and Ourselves](#)’ version of the activity.) Ask students to work individually to complete a text-to-text connection and **either** a text-to-self **or** a text-to-world connection.

Explain to students that, for text-to-text connections, they should consider the Responsibilities of Citizens survey results and make a connection to the ideas in the documents they previously analyzed (the “Responsibilities of U.S. Citizens” article and “President Obama’s Farewell Address”). If students choose to do the text-to-self connection, they should consider how the survey results relate to their own lives, ideas, and/or experiences. If students choose to do the text-to-world connection, they should consider how the survey results relate to the broader world in the past, present, or future.

Students may use the sentence starters on the handout to help them structure their responses. It is suggested that student responses be 3-5 complete sentences. Depending on the version of the handout used, students can complete their responses on the handout itself, in a notebook, on notebook paper, or submitted in a digital format.

**Teacher's Note**

For examples of possible student responses, see the attached **Text-to-Texts, -Self, and -World Handout (Teacher)**.

When students have completed their responses, call on several students to share their responses for each type of connection (texts, self, and world). Synthesize students' main ideas and offer any additional insight you might have.

15 minutes

# Evaluate

## Teacher's Note: Sticky Bar Preparation

Before class, set up a Sticky Bars display area using, for example, a poster, whiteboard, or projector. Write each of the nine responsibilities of citizenship from the graphic organizer along the bottom of the display or down the side, leaving enough room for students to place their sticky notes. For an example of what this chart should look like, see slide 16.

Display **slide 15**. Invite students to participate in a new survey about the responsibilities of citizenship. Introduce the [Sticky Bars](#) strategy. Give each student two sticky notes. Ask students to consider all they have learned and determine what they believe are the two most important responsibilities of citizens in order for our democracy to thrive. Have each student write their name, a responsibility of citizenship they chose, and a brief explanation justifying their choice on each sticky note.

When students are ready, have them place their sticky notes next to the responsibilities of citizenship they chose in the Sticky Bars display. The end result should be a visual representation of which responsibilities of citizenship the class feels are most important. For an example of what this should look like, display **slide 16** if you wish.

You might choose to discuss the results as a class. Conclude this lesson by reminding students that democracies get their power from the people—so as a person, it is extremely important that we all show up and participate!

The Document Analysis Packets, Responsibilities of Citizens Graphic Organizers, and Text-to-Texts, -Self, -World Handouts, and the final Sticky Bars chart all serve as assessments for this lesson.

## Resources

- Facing History and Ourselves. (n.d.). Text-to-text, text-to-self, text-to-world handout. [https://www.facinghistory.org/sites/default/files/TexttoText\\_handout\\_v.final\\_.pdf](https://www.facinghistory.org/sites/default/files/TexttoText_handout_v.final_.pdf)
- K20 Center. (n.d.). A-CLAP. Strategies. <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/183>
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Four Corners. Strategies. <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/138>
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Mentimeter. Tech Tools. <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/tech-tool/645>
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Paired Texts H-Chart. Strategies. <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/132>
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Sticky Bars. Strategies. <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/129>
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Why-Lighting. Strategies. <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/128>
- The Learning Network. (2013). Comparing two or more texts. The New York Times. [https://static01.nyt.com/images/blogs/learning/pdf/2013/13-1553\\_K12\\_CompareText\\_LearnNet\\_RP2.pdf](https://static01.nyt.com/images/blogs/learning/pdf/2013/13-1553_K12_CompareText_LearnNet_RP2.pdf)
- Pew Research Center. (n.d.). About Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/about/>
- Pew Research Center. (2018, April 26). The responsibilities of citizenship. <https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2018/04/26/9-the-responsibilities-of-citizenship/>
- Washington, G. (n.d.). President George Washington's farewell address [Speech transcript]. *Our Documents*. <https://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=false&doc=15&page=transcript> (Original work published September 1796)