INTRODUCTION

The United States District Court for the Southern District of Indiana is pleased to present this educational lesson plan on naturalization and citizenship. The lesson plan is designed to help teachers engage students in learning about the naturalization process in the United States and the role of the federal courts in that process. Students will also participate in meaningful conversation about the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.

Teaching students about citizenship gives them the foundation to understand and participate in this country’s democratic society. Democracies require engaged, informed, and responsible citizens in order to thrive. Teaching students about naturalization helps them to value their status as citizens and involves them in critical thinking about the benefits and duties that come with citizenship.

GRADE LEVELS:

This lesson plan can be adapted for middle school or high school use.

INDIANA ACADEMIC STANDARDS:

Middle School
8.2 Civics and Government

High School
United States Government (USG) Standard 5: Roles of Citizens in the United States

OBJECTIVES:

After completing this lesson, a student should be able to:

- Discuss the rights and responsibilities of citizenship
- Know the meaning of key vocabulary terms
- Understand the naturalization process and the necessary steps that a foreign-born adult must take to become a citizen of the United States
- Explain the history of immigration and naturalization in the United States
- Identify the federal court’s role in the naturalization process
VOCABULARY

ALLEGIANCE
Loyalty to a person or place

CITIZEN
A person who is legally recognized as a member of a certain state or country

CITIZENSHIP
The status of having the rights, privileges, and duties of a legal member of a group

ELLIS ISLAND
A federally-owned inspection site in New York that was formerly used to process immigrants arriving to the United States

EMBASSY
The official place of business of an ambassador (official representative) to a foreign country

GREEN CARD
The document held by a permanent resident that authorizes them to reside indefinitely in the United States

IMMIGRATION
The act of permanently settling in a foreign country

JURISDICTION
The official power of an entity to make legal decisions and judgments

MIGRANT WORKER
A person who temporarily moves to a country in order to take a short-term job; many migrant workers in the United States work as seasonal farm laborers

NATIONALITY
The status of belonging to a country; the place/culture that a person identifies with

NATIVE CITIZEN
A person who was born in their country of citizenship, and who obtained their citizenship upon birth

NATURALIZATION CEREMONY
The event during which applicants for citizenship swear the Oath of Allegiance to become citizens of the United States

NATURALIZED CITIZEN
A person who immigrated to a country and then later became a citizen of that country
OATH OF ALLEGIANCE

The sworn declaration of loyalty that every applicant for United States citizenship must make publicly in order to become a citizen

OPEN IMMIGRATION

Free movement from place to place with no restrictions on who may enter

PERMANENT RESIDENT

A person who is not a citizen of a country but has been granted the legal right to live there indefinitely

REFUGEE

A person who has been forced to leave their home to escape persecution, violence, war, or natural disaster

VISA

A document granting someone legal permission to enter, leave, or stay in a country for a specified time
PART 1: CITIZENSHIP

WHAT IS CITIZENSHIP?

A citizen is a person who is a member of a country and has certain rights as a result of that membership. In the United States, people can become citizens either through birth (native citizens) or through a legal process of granting citizenship to foreign-born adults (naturalized citizen).

Citizenship is the state of having been granted the rights and duties of a citizen. Citizenship comes from the Latin word for city because long ago, people identified themselves as citizens of cities rather than countries.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF UNITED STATES CITIZENSHIP?

There are many benefits to being a citizen of the United States. They include:

- Obtaining a passport (so a person can travel outside of the United States without applying for a visa)
- Eligibility for assistance from a United States Embassy or Consulate when traveling outside of the United States
- Ability to run for public office
- Ease of applying for, and obtaining, a job in the United States
- Right to vote in federal elections (note: this is a responsibility too!)
- Right to live abroad, but still return to the United States whenever you wish
- Safety from threat of deportation
- Access to Social Security and Medicare benefits
- Ability to sponsor close relatives to apply to become permanent residents of the United States without having to wait for a visa

Along with the rights of citizenship come responsibilities to the United States. They include:

- Giving up loyalty to your former home country
- Swearing allegiance (loyalty) to the United States
- Following United States laws
- Voting in federal elections
- Serving in the military, if called
- Serving on a jury
- Respecting the rights of others
- Paying taxes
WHO IS ELIGIBLE FOR CITIZENSHIP IN THE UNITED STATES?

The eligibility requirements for citizenship in the United States are found in the United States Code Title 8: Aliens and Nationality. The United States Code is a collection of laws passed by Congress and signed into law by the President of the United States.

People born in the United States automatically receive citizenship under United States law. There are also other circumstances that allow a person to obtain citizenship from birth, including:

- If a person is born outside of the United States to two United States citizens, at least one of whom has previously lived in the United States
- If a person is born outside of the United States to one United States citizen and one non-citizen, provided that the United States citizen has lived in the United States for a total of five years or more (including two years over the age of 14)

Adults who were not born in the United States, but who hold a green card, may be eligible to become citizens if they meet the following criteria:

- Be 18 years of age or older
- Be able to read, write, and speak basic English (or be exempt from this requirement if the person is age 50 or older and has lived in the United States for over 20 years
- Have a basic understanding of United States history and government
- Have lived in their current state of residence for at least three months
- Have not spent more than one year at a time outside of the United States
- Have resided in the United States continuously for at least five years as a permanent resident immediately proceeding the date of filing their application
- Have been physically present in the United States for at least 30 months out of the five years immediately proceeding the date of filing their application
- Are a person of good moral character

 Expedited naturalization is available to certain groups of applicants, including spouses of American citizens and government employees.

Children under the age of 16 automatically become citizens when their parent is naturalized. Children between the ages of 16 and 18 become citizens after their naturalized parent submits a petition on their behalf.
PART 2: BECOMING A CITIZEN

HOW DOES A FOREIGN-BORN ADULT BECOME A CITIZEN OF THE UNITED STATES?

If a foreign-born adult meets all of the eligibility criteria for citizenship and wishes to become a citizen of the United States, they must apply to the United States Citizenship and Immigration Service. To apply, the person must fill out government form N-400 and pay a filing fee ranging from $640-$725.

After submitting form N-400, applicants are fingerprinted. Their fingerprints are checked by the FBI to ensure that applicants haven't committed a major crime.

Applicants then move on to the interview stage. In the interview, applicants are asked basic questions about themselves, their job, and their family. They are tested on their knowledge of basic American history and government. There are 100 possible questions that an applicant may be asked. Applicants are given the questions in advance to study. In the interview, 10 questions are chosen at random. To pass the test, applicants must get at least six questions correct. A test on the applicant's knowledge of basic English is also administered (unless an exemption has been granted).

If an individual passes the citizenship test, the applicant is scheduled to take the Oath of Allegiance in a public ceremony. Citizenship is granted following recitation of the Oath of Allegiance.

NATURALIZATION CEREMONIES

Public ceremonies during which prospective citizens take the Oath of Allegiance are referred to as naturalization ceremonies. These ceremonies are festive occasions that often include friends and family.

Ceremonies can be simple and short, mainly consisting of the Oath of Allegiance followed by distribution of Certificates of Naturalization. Other ceremonies can be elaborate, including music, guest speakers, and special treats.

All applicants for citizenship are required by federal law to recite the Oath of Allegiance in order to obtain citizenship. The complete Oath of Allegiance states:

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.
The basic principles of this oath are:

- Abandoning/leaving behind all loyalty to a person’s previous country or leader
- Supporting and defending the Constitution of the United States
- Following the principles set forth in the Constitution and obeying the country’s laws
- Serving in the military, when required by law
- Performing civilian work of national importance when required by law

There are two different branches of Federal Government that are allowed to naturalize new citizens. Officers of the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) can conduct naturalization ceremonies. Judges of the United States Federal Judiciary can also perform these ceremonies. If a new citizen is requesting a name change, they must participate in a ceremony presided over by a federal judge. The United States District Court for the Southern District of Indiana performs about two naturalization ceremonies each month. Approximately 100 new citizens are naturalized in each of these ceremonies. The Indianapolis Field Office of the USCIS (which covers the entire state of Indiana) naturalizes about 400 additional new citizens each month.

PART 3: HISTORICAL CONTEXT

IMMIGRATION IN UNITED STATES HISTORY

The federal laws governing immigration today are much different than they were when this country was founded in 1776. In general, during the 18th and 19th centuries, Americans took a relaxed approach to immigration, generally happy to encourage open immigration into the country.

Following the Civil War, some states began to pass their own immigration laws, prompting the United States Supreme Court to declare in 1875 that laws governing immigration were within the exclusive jurisdiction of the federal government.

In the 1880s, as the United States saw a sharp rise in immigration paired with a decline in its economy, Congress began passing laws governing immigration to the United States. These included the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, the Alien Contract Labor Laws of 1885, and the Alien Contract Labor Laws of 1887. All three of these laws prohibited certain laborers from immigrating to the United States in an effort to protect the jobs of American workers.

The Immigration Act of 1882 passed further restrictions designed to regulate the type of immigrants entering the country. The act required new immigrants to pay a tax of 50 cents upon arrival. It also denied entry to a list of excluded persons, including those with mental illness, convicts, and those deemed unlikely to be able to support themselves.

Throughout most of the 19th century, states enforced immigration laws. The Immigration Act of 1891 transferred responsibility for inspecting and admitting/rejecting immigrants to the federal government. A new Immigration Services Bureau was created within the Department of Treasury. The law also expanded the list of people who could not enter the United States to include those suffering from certain physical illnesses.

On January 2, 1892, the new Ellis Island immigration station opened in New York Harbor. It would quickly become the most famous port of entry into the country. Between 1892 and 1954, the station processed around 12 million immigrants to the United States.
The first 20 years of the 20th century (1900-1920) were characterized by a sharp rise in immigration to the United States. This overwhelming influx of foreigners seeking a better life in America changed many Americans' historically welcoming attitudes towards new arrivals. Many of the nation's immigration laws were strengthened in response. The Immigration Act of 1917 required immigrants to take a literacy test in their native language upon arrival. Rigorous medical exams were conducted at points of departure. In 1921 and 1924, Congress passed its first quota laws, limiting the number of immigrants by nationality. A limited number of visas were issued through United States Embassies worldwide. Only those immigrants who had obtained a visa were admitted to the United States.

Following World War II, the United States government had to contend with another immigration issue - war refugees. Congress passed laws such as the Displaced Persons Act of 1948 and the Refugee Relief Act of 1953 to admit refugees from war-torn Europe outside of the quota system. A bill was also passed to aid the entrance of migrant workers who were coming from Mexico to take agricultural jobs.

In 1965, the quota system based on national origin was replaced with a system designed to reunite families and attract skilled workers. Another big change occurred in 1980, when Congress passed its first uniform law regarding refugees. In 1990, Congress overhauled the entire immigration and naturalization process. Most notably, the total number of visas available per year was increased by 40%. The annual cap on immigration rose to 700,000. Today, Congress continues to work to create an immigration system that is fair to current citizens and new immigrants alike.

**NATURALIZATION IN UNITED STATES HISTORY**

In 1790, the United States passed its first law governing naturalization. The Naturalization Act of 1790 required applicants for citizenship to have resided in the United States for two years and to have lived in their current state of residence for one year. The Naturalization Act of 1795 increased the requirement to five years of residency in the country and added the requirement that applicants provide a three-year notice of intent to become a naturalized citizen. In 1798, this requirement was increased to 14 years of residency, with five years of notice. The requirement reverted to five years of residency in 1802.

In 1802, Congress passed a law stating that any court of record (state, federal, or municipal) could naturalize a new American citizen. This system made it difficult to confirm that a person had been naturalized. It was more than 100 years before Congress remedied the situation. In 1906, Congress passed the Basic Naturalization Act, which required naturalization petitions to be recorded on standardized forms and placed their jurisdiction exclusively within the federal court system. A newly created Naturalization Service was responsible for collecting copies of naturalization certificates and placing them in a centralized location.

Throughout the 20th century, the naturalization process largely remained the same, except for a few minor alterations and the addition of expedited processes for certain individuals. Most notably, in 1964, Congress passed a law allowing expedited naturalization for non-citizens who had served in the United States military.

A major overhaul of the naturalization process occurred following the Immigration Act of 1990. Immigration and Naturalization Services (now called United States Citizenship and Immigration Services) officers were granted the authority to preside over naturalization ceremonies. The federal judiciary continues to retain exclusive jurisdiction over petitions for naturalization that include a name change request.
HISTORY OF THE OATH OF ALLEGIANCE

The first recorded Oath of Allegiance in the United States was used during the Revolutionary War to gain vows of loyalty from new officers of the Continental Army. These officers were required to swear that they had given up all loyalty to the King of England, George III.

In 1790, the Naturalization Act passed by Congress required applicants for citizenship to agree to "support the Constitution of the United States." In 1795, Congress added the requirement that applicants for citizenship must renounce loyalty to the leader of their prior home country. It wasn't until 1906 that language was added requiring applicants for citizenship to swear allegiance to the Constitution and agree to defend the Constitution against enemies.

Between 1790 and 1929, courts that naturalized citizens each developed their own oath based on the above requirements. In 1929, Immigration Services created a standardized oath for every court to use. The sections of the oath requiring applicants to serve in the United States military (if called) and to perform civilian work of national importance were added in the 1950s.
Further Reading

HISTORY AND FACTS:

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, "Overview of INS History,"


ACTIVITIES AND LESSON PLAN IDEAS:

iCivics, Citizenship & Participation Curriculum, https://www.icivics.org/curriculum/citizenship-participation

REFLECTIONS OF NEW CITIZENS:


VIDEOS OF NATURALIZATION CEREMONIES:

U.S. Naturalization Ceremony at IUPUI (Full Ceremony - 1 hour),
https://iu.mediaspace.kaltura.com/media/US+Naturalization+Ceremony+at+IUPUI/1_x9dmrcso

Arizona Public Media, New Americans (Ceremony Recap - 10 min), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_j4HP_S9mao
CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1) What does citizenship mean to you?

2) What makes someone a good citizen?

3) What are some of the privileges of citizenship? What are the responsibilities?

4) What are some things that a person gains when immigrating to the United States and becoming a citizen? What are some things that a person leaves behind?

5) What are some reasons a person might decide to immigrate to the United States? What are some reasons why an immigrant might decide to become a citizen?

6) Do you know any naturalized citizens? What are they like?
VOCABULARY QUIZ

1) ________________ is the place/culture that a person identifies with, or the status of belonging to that place.

2) A document granting someone legal permission to enter, leave, or stay in a country for a specified time is known as a ________________.

3) A ________________ is a person who is legally recognized as a member of a country.

4) The document held by a permanent resident that authorizes them to live indefinitely in the United States is known as a ________________.

5) The ________________ is a sworn declaration of loyalty that every applicant for United States Citizenship must make publicly.

6) Loyalty to a person or place is known as ________________.

7) The act of permanently settling in a foreign country is known as ________________.

8) The status of having the rights, privileges, and responsibilities of legal membership in a group is known as ________________.

9) A person who was born in their country of citizenship is a ________________.

10) ________________ is a famous former federal inspection site used to process immigrants arriving to the United States.

11) A ________________ is a person who immigrated to a country and then later became a citizen of that country.

12) A person who has been forced to flee their home to escape persecution, violence, war, or natural disaster is known as a ________________.

WORD BANK

VISA
ALLEGIANCE
ELLIS ISLAND
REFUGEE

GREEN CARD
NATIVE CITIZEN
NATIONALITY
IMMIGRATION

NATURALIZED CITIZEN
CITIZENSHIP
OATH OF ALLEGIANCE
CITIZEN

TEACHERS - For an advanced version of this activity, omit the WORD BANK.
STUDENT COMPREHENSION QUIZ

SHORT ANSWER
1. Name four benefits of becoming a United States Citizen.

2. Name four responsibilities of becoming a United States citizen.

3. Name three eligibility requirements a person must meet in order to apply for United States citizenship.

4. List three steps an applicant must take to become a citizen of the United States.

MULTIPLE CHOICE
1. Which of the following groups is currently authorized to conduct naturalization ceremonies?
   A. federal judges
   B. state court judges
   C. United States Citizenship and Immigration Services
   D. both A and C

2. Which of the following was a provision of the original Oath of Allegiance authorized by Congress in 1790?
   A. renouncing loyalty
   B. defending the United States against enemies
   C. supporting the Constitution
   D. all of the above

3. To obtain a visa to immigrate to the United States, interested individuals must apply to
   A. United States Congress
   B. their nearest United States Embassy
   C. the Office of the President of the United States
   D. United States Citizenship and Immigration Services

TRUE/FALSE
1. The federal government has the exclusive authority to determine the country's immigration laws.

2. A person can claim citizenship from birth, even if born outside of the United States, if both parents are United States citizens and one parent has previously resided in the United States.

3. Children under the age of 18 who are not native citizens of the United States can only obtain citizenship by waiting until they turn 18 to apply.
4. Which of the following is NOT a basic principle of the Oath of Allegiance?

A. promising to serve in the military if required by law
B. promising to never reside outside of the United States
C. abandoning loyalty to a previous country or leader
D. all of the above are included in the oath

5. What was the first recorded use of an Oath of Allegiance in the United States?

A. to gain vows of loyalty from delegates to the Constitutional Convention
B. to naturalize British prisoners of war following the end of the Revolutionary War
C. to gain loyalty from new officers in the Continental Army
D. none of the above

6. The official source containing eligibility requirements for United States Citizenship is:

A. the United States Code
B. the Rules of Federal Procedure
C. the Federal Register
D. they are not formally documented

7. Which of the following was a provision of the first Naturalization Act in United States history, passed in 1790?

A. applicants must have resided in the United States for two years
B. applicants must have resided in the United States for one year
C. applicants must have resided in the United States for five years
D. applicants must have resided in the United States for 14 years

8. Quota laws were designed to:

A. restrict the number of legal permanent residents who could obtain citizenship
B. encourage open immigration into the United States
C. limit the number of visas issued to immigrants from a particular country
D. none of the above

9. Approximately how many new citizens are naturalized by the United States District Court for the Southern District of Indiana each month?

A. 200
B. 600
C. 400
D. 50

10. Which of the following was not a provision of the Immigration Act of 1882?

A. new immigrants had to pay a 50-cent fee to enter the country
B. convicts were prohibited from entering the country
C. immigrants were required to swear loyalty to the country upon arrival
D. people without visible means to support themselves could be denied entry into the country
Test Your Knowledge:

How many citizenship test questions can you answer?

Download the "Naturalization Test Questions & Answers" document found at https://www.insd.uscourts.gov/educational-resources. Test your students’ knowledge by:

A. Asking them to complete the entire 100-question test
B. Pulling 10 questions from the test to ask each student at random, similar to what prospective citizens actually experience
C. Breaking students into teams to answer as many questions as they can in a timed race against other teams
STUDENT ACTIVITY: Reflecting on the 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.

~Oath of Allegiance for United States Citizenship

Reflection Questions (for discussion or essay):

Imagine that you are an applicant for citizenship. How would you feel to make the promises required in the Oath of Allegiance? Would it be difficult or easy? Why?

Imagine that you moved to a new country. You settle there and decide that you will not return to the United States. Would you take an Oath of Allegiance like this to your new country? Why or why not?

Imagine that you are a member of Congress, tasked with revising the Oath of Allegiance. What parts would you take out? What new additions would you make? Explain your choices.
STUDENT PROJECT IDEAS

Make naturalization and citizenship concepts come to life with these fun project ideas!

1. Ask students to write a letter of welcome to new citizens of the United States. Encourage students to tell the new citizens what they value most about their citizenship.

2. Have students write an essay reflecting on the topic of citizenship, and what it means to them.

3. Ask students to interview a naturalized citizen to learn about their experiences, culture, and why they chose to settle in the United States.

4. Have students write a poem, story, or song about citizenship to perform in class.

5. Attend a naturalization ceremony as a class. To make arrangements for your class to attend a naturalization ceremony hosted by the United States District Court for the Southern District of Indiana, send an email to tours@insd.uscourts.gov.
ANSWER KEY

STUDENT VOCABULARY QUIZ

1) NATIONALITY
2) VISA
3) CITIZEN
4) GREEN CARD
5) OATH OF ALLEGIANCE
6) ALLEGIANCE
7) IMMIGRATION
8) CITIZENSHIP
9) NATIVE CITIZEN
10) ELLIS ISLAND
11) NATURALIZED CITIZEN
12) REFUGEE

STUDENT COMPREHENSION QUIZ

SHORT ANSWER

1) CHOOSE FOUR: Obtain a passport, Obtain assistance from a U.S. Embassy or Consulate when traveling outside of the U.S., Run for public office, Easier to obtain a U.S. job, Right to vote, Right to live abroad and return to the U.S. when you wish, Safety from deportation, Access to Social Security and Medicare, Ability to sponsor close relatives to become permanent residents of the U.S.

2)CHOOSE FOUR: Giving up loyalty to your former home country, swearing allegiance to the United States, following United States laws, Voting in federal elections, Serving in the military, Serving on a jury, Respecting the rights of others, Paying taxes

3) CHOOSE THREE: Be 18 years of age or older, Be able to read, write, and speak basic English, Have a basic understanding of United States history and government, Have lived in their current state of residence for at least three months, Have not spent more than one year at a time outside of the United States, Have resided in the United States continuously for at least five years as a permanent resident immediately preceding the date of filing their application, Have been physically present in the United States for at least 30 months out of the five years immediately preceding their date of filing their application, Are a person of good moral character

4) CHOOSE THREE: Fill out form N-400; Pay a fee of $640-$725; Submit to fingerprinting; Attend an interview consisting of basic questions about themselves, a 10-question test on U.S. history and government, and an English test; Recite the Oath of Allegiance

TRUE/FALSE

1) TRUE
2) TRUE
3) FALSE - they may obtain citizenship through a naturalized parent
4) TRUE
5) FALSE - Applicants answer 10 questions and must answer six correctly

MULTIPLE CHOICE

1)D 6)A
2)C 7)A
3)B 8)C
4)B 9)A
5)C 10)C
United States District Court for the Southern District of Indiana

46 E. Ohio St., Room 105
Indianapolis, IN 46204

For more information about tours, field trips, and educational resources, please visit https://www.insd.uscourts.gov/educational-resources or email tours@insd.uscourts.gov