

Citizenship

You can make a
Difference.

Do it!

CHARACTER *Connection*



“Citizenship comes first today in our crowded world...No man can enjoy the privileges of education and thereafter with a clear conscience break his contract with society. To respect that contract is to be mature, to strengthen it is to be a good citizen, to do more than your share is noble.”

~ Isaiah Bowman~



November Character Connection Theme: Citizenship

Definitions

“Citizenship” means “the status of a citizen with its attendant duties, rights, and privileges.”¹ A good citizen does his share, cleans up after himself, reports wrong doing, volunteers, votes, pays taxes, and voices his opinion. Duties of a citizen include obeying laws and rules, speaking respectfully, protecting the environment, staying informed about current events, and helping to make the community, state, and country a better place.

Quotes

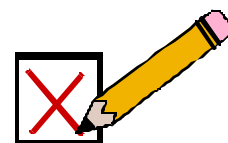
"The strength of the Constitution lies entirely in the determination of each citizen to defend it. Only if every single citizen feels duty bound to do his share in this defense are the constitutional rights secure."—Albert Einstein

"The most important office... that of private citizen." --Louis D. Brandeis

"A generation that acquires knowledge without ever understanding how that knowledge can benefit the community is a generation that is not learning what it means to be citizens in a democracy." --Elizabeth L. Hollander²

“Let the national flag float over every schoolhouse in the country and the exercises be such as shall impress upon our youth the patriotic duties of American citizenship.” -- Benjamin Harrison (1833–1901)³

“A vote is not an object of art. It is the sacred and most important instrument of democracy and of freedom.” --Abe Fortas



“Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country.” --John F. Kennedy

“Bad officials are elected by good citizens who do not vote.”--George Nathan

“One of the penalties for refusing to participate in politics is that you end up being governed by your inferiors” --Plato

¹ “Citizenship” The American Heritage Dictionary, page 245

² “Learning to Give,” http://philsearch.oac.msu.edu/quotes/Display_Quotes.asp?subject_id=48&search_type=subject, accessed October 1, 2003

³ <http://www.bartleby.com/66/7/26907.html>, accessed October 1, 2003

“Whenever men take the law into their own hands, the loser is the law. And when the law loses, freedom languishes.” --Robert Francis Kennedy



Activities

**It rained on an Orem elementary Earth Day '99, but student spirits were still high as they picked up trash in the community, planted flowers at the school, and comforted and entertained the residents of a senior citizen's home. "I think it's important for a school to be connected to the community and for children to be connected to their community," said the organizer. "They learned today that they're not just children, they're active members of the community who can make a difference."⁴ *Discuss with your class the idea that being a good citizen means being a good neighbor. A good neighbor follows the rules of the community and does his best to help out as needed. A good neighbor knows that his actions affect other people, and would never deliberately choose to cause harm either by doing or failing to do something. Have the class come up with ideas of how to be a good neighbor using the above definition of a neighbor.⁵ Then, have students select another class in your school that they would like to be more neighborly toward. Point out that to be a good neighbor you must get to know the people and plan how to do this. Have students implement some of their ideas of how to be more neighborly.*

**Brainstorm, then implement ideas to encourage voting. Have students discuss with their parents the issues in community elections as well as elections around the country.

**Have students interview an immigrant to find the differences of being a citizen in another country and in America. As a class, memorize the national anthem. Students could make a collage in the shape of America showing the many things that make up America: scenery, ethnic foods, American symbols. . .

(For citizenship lessons see also http://www.pbs.org/wnet/newyork/laic/lessons/lesson_menu.html)

**Make a miniature magnifying glass. First, cut a 1" hole in a 3x5 card. Stretch a piece of 2x2" clear plastic tautly over the hole and tape the plastic to the card securely. Place the plastic covered hole over the small print in a newspaper ad section. Now, using an eye dropper, place a drop of water on the plastic. Carefully lift, then set the card on top of the ad while noticing the letters that can be seen through the hole. The letters under the drop of water appear larger. *Discuss how as an individual citizen, we cannot magnify the entire page, but like the water drop, we can make a difference in our sphere of influence.*

Stories

George Washington's Glasses

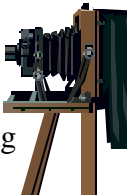


In 1783, many of the Revolutionary army officers were owed back pay. Appeals were sent to Congress. However, Congress had no money and it was rumored that the men would be sent home without pay. Some of the officers camped at Newburgh, New York threatened to march on Congress. On March 15, 1783, officers were gathered in a large wooden hall as George Washington took the lectern to speak to them. He talked of his love for the soldiers, his dedication, and his own service without pay. He spoke of the safety and security of their new country. The men seem unmoved. Finally, Washington brought out a letter from a congressman explaining the difficulties faced by the new government. Fumbling for a moment, he pulled out a pair of spectacles and commented, "Gentlemen, you must pardon me. I have grown gray in your service, and now find myself growing blind." Touched by those simple words, the officers voted to give Congress more time.

Thomas Jefferson later said, "The moderation and virtue of a single character probably prevented this Revolution from being closed, as most others have been, by a subversion of that liberty it was intended to establish."⁶

Improving the Plight of His Fellow Citizens: Jacob A Riis

Jacob was born in Denmark in 1849, the third of 15 children. He was a carpenter before coming to America in 1870. However, as an immigrant he was unable to find work and spent many nights in police station lodging houses. (These 19th century shelters were retreats of last resort for the poor.)



⁴Golden, Anne. "Elementary students mark Earth Day '99," The Daily Herald, Apr. 21, 1999.

⁵Brooks, David. Young People's Lessons in Character Pg. 54.

⁶Bennett, William J. Our Country's Founders, pages 37-39

Finally in 1873, he found work as a news reporter and began experimenting with flash photography. Through writing and photography, Jacob began to raise the public awareness of the plight of the people in the slums. His influence shut down the police station lodging houses,⁷ launched housing reform, improved sanitary conditions, created public parks and playgrounds, and made New York a better place for the immigrants welcomed by the Statue of Liberty.⁸

Theodore Roosevelt once said that Jacob A. Riis was “the best American I ever knew.”⁹



Writing or Discussion Topics

** Johnny Appleseed was born in Boston, Massachusetts, around 1775. At 26 years of age, he collected apple seeds in the East and carried them west, planted them, and often built a fence around the growing trees to protect them.¹⁰ *In what way was Johnny a good citizen? In what ways does a good citizen think of those to come?*

**Harriet Tubman led more than 300 slaves to freedom on her Underground Railroad. She often rescued people from the very same area in which she had been raised as a slave. Harriet was in great danger of being arrested because the populace could easily recognize her when she was in her home area.¹¹ *How do you think Harriet got her courage to stand up for what she believed even when her own life was at risk? Discuss how the actions of just one person can affect many others. Write about how one person can make a big difference in the community.*

**High school freshman Nathan Zohmer of Idaho conducted an experiment in science class in which he told classmates and teachers that they should sign his petition to ban a dangerous substance, “dihydrogen monoxide.” He informed them that it causes excessive vomiting, sweating and is a component in acid rain. In its gaseous state, it can cause serious burns. Accidental inhalation can kill. It also contributes to soil erosion, decreases the effectiveness of automobile brakes and its presence has been detected in some terminal cancer tumors. Forty-seven of the fifty students and teachers signed the petition with no questions asked. Not one thought to inquire what “dihydrogen monoxide” was. If they had, they would have discovered they had signed a petition calling for a ban on water.¹² *Discuss how being aware of and studying issues is imperative in voting and making responsible decisions.*

Role Plays

**Kyle heard some cruel things about the mayor from his friend. *What should he do? What could be the consequences of repeating what was heard? How do we show respect to the leaders of our country?*

**Susan sees litter all over the grass as she walks home from school. *What could Susan do?*

**Bryan’s mom ignores the speed limit and drives too fast. *Is there anything Bryan can do?*

Why do we have rules and laws? What difference does it make to view the law as a restriction or protection?

**Michelle saw her dad pour some old oil down the drain. *What could be the consequences of this action to the environment and to her fellowmen? What should Michelle do?*

Book List

Seven Brave Women by Betsy Hearne

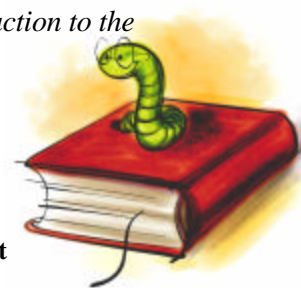
The Courage of Sarah Noble by Alice Dalgliesh

Officer Buckle and Gloria by Peggy Rathmann

December: **Peace** January: **Responsibility** February: **Forgiveness**

March: **Respect**

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⁷ <http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/USAriis.htm>, accessed October 1, 2003

⁸ “Images of Immigration from the Museum of the City of New York”

http://home.nyc.gov/html/nyc100/html/imm_stories/museum/page2.html, accessed October 1, 2003

⁹ <http://www.bartleby.com/people/Riis-Jac.html>, accessed October 1, 2003

¹⁰ Bennett, William J., “Johnny Appleseed,” *The Book of Virtues*. Pg. 346.

¹¹ Kay, Elizabeth. “Harriet Tubman,” *Americans of Character*. Pg. 4.

¹² Submitted by P.G. High School PTA Representative.

Name _____

Citizenship

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–Louis D. Brandeis

“Learning to Give,”
http://philsearch.oac.msu.edu/quotes/Display_Quotes.asp?subject_id=48&search_type=subject, accessed October 1, 2003)

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