

Claudia Bruce
St. Joseph Regional Catholic School
Salem, New Hampshire
September 7, 2015

Citizens' Rights and Responsibilities Lesson Plan

Objective: The objective of this lesson plan is to help students understand that in addition to rights, American citizens have duties and responsibilities to perform that are necessary to maintain the quality of our government. This lesson has been designed for 7th grade and focuses on the **responsibilities of citizenship.**

In 7th grade at our school, I teach American history, including the Revolutionary War and the Constitution. This lesson fits into that chapter.

Resources/Text: *The American Republic to 1877*. McGraw-Hill Glencoe, 2005. (ISBN: Student Edition: 0-07-860983-6) Between chapters 7 (A More Perfect Union) & 8 (A New Nation), there is a civics handbook-- "Civics in Action: A Citizenship Handbook." Section one focuses on the Constitution, section two describes the federal government, and section three deals with citizens' rights and responsibilities. Although I have a newer edition of this text, The Citizenship Handbook has been removed, and the information on citizen rights and responsibilities has been significantly slimmed down. I prefer the older edition, which is more comprehensive.

This lesson plan focuses on the responsibilities of citizenship or the voluntary activities that we all undertake to insure the quality of government.

I begin the lesson by having students read out loud the section on the rights and responsibilities. As we read, I stop and ask them questions about what they are reading, and we discuss the difference between duties and responsibilities. Sometimes students think that duties are harsh because they are required by law and have penalties attached to them. The reading of this section and discussion takes about one class period. This lesson focuses on the voluntary things we do as citizens to improve society—the things we should do because they improve the quality of life for everyone.

1. After reading and discussing section 3, ask students to describe the voluntary things we should do to fulfill our responsibilities as good citizens. Ask them why each is important.

- Stay informed about what your government is doing. Know who your elected representatives are and what they are doing. Voice your opinion.
- Be informed about what your rights as a citizen are and speak up if necessary.
- Share your opinions on important issues with your elected officials.
- Accept responsibility for your actions.
- Respect the rights of others, even if you don't agree with them.
- Support your family.
- Run for public office or help other people run for public office who feel the way you do about certain issues.
- Get involved. Volunteer to do something for your community. Help a political campaign, raise money and awareness about a charity, volunteer to do work for a hospital, library, school, etc.
- Make a contribution by doing something to help your community.

2. Break students up into groups of 3-4 to continue the discussion. Ask students to talk about things they and/or their family has done voluntarily to help the community. Most should be able to come up with something they have done to contribute, but if they can't think of anything, ask them to

come up with a realistic plan for an activity they could participate in that would help their community. They can talk with members of their group to come up with ideas.

3. Have students write an essay describing the activity they have done or plan to do. They can bring in drafts to share with others in their group before making the final edits. Ask students to describe the activity in detail and explain how the community will benefit.

4. Have students read their essays in class.