LESSON 1
What is an Ideal Citizen?

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Students will be able to explain what it means to be a citizen and what the characteristics are of an ideal citizen.

LESSON OVERVIEW

In this lesson, the students explore and define what it means to be a citizen of their community and of the United States, as well as what the characteristics are of an ideal citizen. The ideal citizen is just that – an ideal, a model of perfection. The ideal is different from the objective definition of what a citizen is. A citizen is a member of a city, town, or community who is entitled to certain rights and protections, and who has certain responsibilities. A U.S. citizen is someone who is born in the United States, or whose parents, one or both of them, are U.S. citizens, or have gone through the naturalization process.

ACTIVITY ONE: WHAT IS A CITIZEN?

Part I: Place students in groups of 3 to 5. Give each group a sheet of white butcher or post-it paper. Have the students brainstorm and develop a definition for the word “citizen.” Have each group report out on the definition they developed. Note the similarities between each definition and develop one classroom definition.

Part II: Have the students brainstorm, out loud, what it means to be a United States citizen. Record the data on butcher or post-it paper and again develop a classroom definition.

ACTIVITY 2: WHAT IS AN IDEAL CITIZEN?

Give each group a sheet of paper. Have them write the word “Ideal Citizen” at the top of the paper and a large T down the middle. On the left side of the “T” have them write the word “Characteristic” and on the right side write “Example”.

Alignment with National Standards:
National Council for the Social Studies:
Theme 10: Civic Ideals and Practices
Center for Civic Education:
Question V.A:1-2
Have each group write characteristics of the ideal citizen and for each characteristic have the groups describe examples of the characteristics they list. Have each group post their papers on the wall and conduct a “Gallery Walk.” Give each student a pen so that they can place a dot on the characteristics they think are important.

When students are finished placing their dots on the papers, discuss those characteristics they think are the most important. Compare their characteristics to the posters on pages 3 and 4.

ACTIVITY 3: WHO DO YOU THINK IS AN IDEAL CITIZEN?

Provide each student with a copy of Handout 1. Ask students to individually write about who they think is an ideal citizen. Describe what makes this person an ideal citizen. This person can be living or dead.

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

ACTIVITY I: Have your students draw a their ideal citizen, using the list they developed in Activity 2.

ACTIVITY II: Have students research quotes for how citizens and/or the roles of citizens have been described over time. Once they find a quote that resonates with them, have them put it into their own words.

ACTIVITY II: Students can be introduced to H. G. Wells’ essay on The Ideal Citizen in An Englishman Looks at the World: An Ideal Citizen.
Model Citizens

- Know their rights
- Are Honest
- Are responsible
- Are compassionate
- Have Courage
- Stay informed
- Make good decisions
- Take action in their community
Three R’s of Citizenship

**Reason**
- Thoughtfulness
- Multiple perspectives
- Basis for action
- Logical, rational, and analytic thought
- Good judgment
- Sound reason

**Respect**
- For one’s self
- For individuals
- For groups
- For other perspectives
- For knowledge
- For democratic values

**Responsibility**
- For actions
- For community
- For nation
- For humankind
- For the environment
Student Handouts

What is an Ideal Citizen?
Handout 1

The Ideal Citizen

Think of a person that you think is an ideal citizen. Describe the characteristics and actions of this person that makes him, or her, the ideal citizen. This person can be living or dead.