

# HANDBOOK ON CITIZENSHIP

## CHAPTER 1

# Who Is a United States Citizen?

Who is, or who can be, a United States citizen always has been a very important issue in this country. **The original United States Constitution did not define citizenship.** It gave Congress the power to make laws about naturalization, the process of becoming an American citizen.

Congress passed the first of the Naturalization Acts in 1790, which said that all free white males were citizens. This left out many people, including the Native Americans who were here when the Framers' ancestors came to this country!

In 1868, the 14th Amendment to the Constitution was passed, which said that all persons born or naturalized in the United States were citizens. Now the Constitution had a definition of citizenship. However, other amendments, court cases and laws had to be passed to make sure men and women of every race and ethnicity were allowed to become citizens.

Some requirements for becoming a naturalized citizen:

- Be at least 18 years old.
- Lawfully admitted to the U.S.
- Live in the U.S. for 5 years, or 3 if married to a U.S. citizen.
- Read, write, speak, and understand basic English.
- Pass a citizenship test.

Who is or should be a United States citizen is a question still not completely answered in our nation. There are questions about who should be allowed to immigrate. Another issue is what to do with people who illegally sneak into our country and now have families here.

These questions will continue to be answered in our courts and by our lawmakers.

## CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES, Begun and held at the City of New-York, on Wed MARCH, One Thousand Seven Hundred

THE Conventions of a Number of the States having, at the Time of their adopting the Constitution, expressed a Desire, in Order to prevent Misconstruction or Abuse of its Powers, that further declaratory and restrictive Clauses should be added: And as extending the Ground of public Confidence in the Government will best insure the beneficent Ends of its Institution,  
RESOLVED, by the Senate, and House of Representatives, of the United States of America, in Congress assembled, Two Thirds of both Houses concurring, That the following Articles be proposed to the Legislatures of the several States as Amendments to the Constitution of the United States: All, any or, which Articles, when ratified by Three-fourths of the said Legislatures, to be valid to all Intents and Purposes in Part of the said Constitution, viz.

ARTICLES In Addition to, and Amendment of the Constitution of the United States of America, proposed by Congress, and ratified by the Legislatures of the several States, pursuant to the Fifth Article of the original Constitution.  
Article the First.—After the First Enumeration, required by the Fifth Article of the Constitution, there shall be One Representative for every Thirty Thousand, until the Number shall amount to One Hundred; after which the Proportion shall be regulated by Congress, that there shall not be less than One Hundred Representatives, nor less than One Representative for every Fifty Thousand Persons, until the Number of Representatives shall amount to Two Hundred, after which the Proportion shall be regulated by Congress, that there shall not be less than Two Hundred Representatives, nor more than one Representative for every Fifty Thousand Persons.

Article the Second.—No Law varying the Compensation for the Services of the Senators and Representatives shall have Effect, until an Election of Representatives shall have been made.  
Article the Third.—Congress shall make no Law respecting the Establishment of Religion, or prohibiting the free Exercise thereof; or abridging the Freedom of Speech, Press, or of the Right of the People peaceably to assemble, or to petition the Government for a Redress of Grievances.  
Article the Fourth.—A well regulated Militia being necessary to the Security of a free State, the Right of the People to keep and bear Arms shall not be infringed.  
Article the Fifth.—No Soldier shall, in Time of Peace, be quartered in any House without the Consent of the Owner, in Time of War, but in a Manner to be prescribed by Law.  
Article the Sixth.—The Rights of the People shall not be infringed in their Persons, Houses, Papers, and Effects.

State of Rhode-  
In GENERAL ASSEMBLY,  
It is Voted and Resolved, that  
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and which have been communi-  
And that One Copy thereof be  
laid before the Freemen at the  
former Resolve of this Affair.  
Attest  
Witness,  
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## Classroom Activities:

All grade levels:

1. At [www.digitalhistory.uh.edu](http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu) link to the Ethnic America section and look at the Landmarks in Immigration History to see how various groups have struggled to gain citizenship.
2. Take a citizenship test offered online and see if you would qualify to become a citizen.
3. Attend a naturalization ceremony at a federal courthouse. This is an unforgettable experience.

## Discussion:

1. What is dual citizenship? Do you think it is a good idea to allow Americans to be both an American citizen and a citizen in another country? Why or why not?
2. What is an anchor baby? How should the government deal with this situation?

Missouri Standards Alignment:  
Grades K-8: SS3, SS6; 1.2, 1.4, 3.1, 4.2; 1-A, 1-B 1-C.  
Grades 9-12: SS3, SS6; 4.2; 1-A, 1-B, 1-C.

## What does it mean to be born in the United States?

- Born in one of the 50 states.
- May be born in another country if both parents are U.S. citizens and one of them has lived at least some time in the United States.
- May be born to a parent who is a U.S. citizen who has been physically present in the U.S. for at least 5 years prior to the child's birth.

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