## 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!

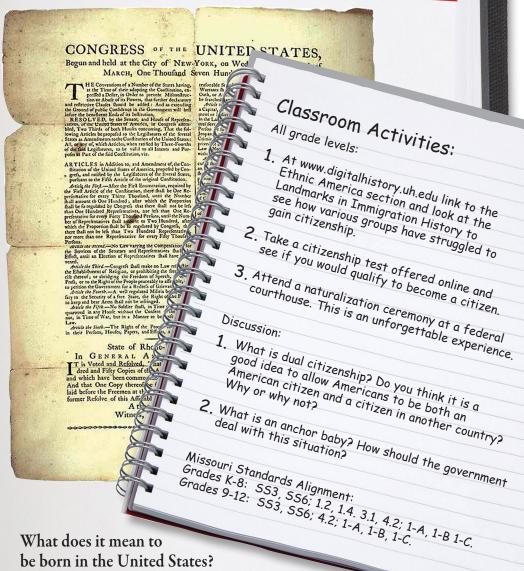
In 1868, the 14th Amendment to the Constitution was passed, which said that all persons born or naturalized in the United States were citizens. Now the Constitution had a definition of citizenship. However, other amendments, court cases and laws had to be passed to make sure men and women of every race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



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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