

Lesson plan for

RESPONSIBILITIES

Introduction

This lesson is about the responsibilities of United States citizens. You will lead the class through the four questions from the naturalization test relating to responsibilities. Naturalized citizens must take an oath. The oath is written in language that is hard to understand for many students. This exercise will help students break down the oath to understand it better and see how it relates to their lives.

Objectives

The student will be better able to

- Recall the answers to the four USCIS test questions in the Responsibilities theme.
- Paraphrase the naturalization oath.

USCIS Questions

In the Responsibilities theme:

49. What is one responsibility that is only for United States citizens?
53. What is one promise you make when you become a United States citizen?
57. When must all men register for the Selective Service?
56. When is the last day you can send in federal income tax forms?

Related:

55. What are two ways that Americans can participate in their democracy?

Time

Theme: 10 minutes

Activity: 60 minutes

Materials

- Internet connectivity
- EITHER classroom projector OR enough computers for students to use as individuals or small groups
- *Preparing for the Oath* website, Responsibilities theme (<http://americanhistory.si.edu/citizenship/index.html?theme=13>)
- Naturalization Oath handout ([attached](#))
- Understanding the Oath handout ([attached](#))

Challenge Words

You can find all of the bold words in the vignettes in the word list at <http://americanhistory.si.edu/citizenship/pdf/Wordlist.pdf>

Listed below are some of those words that will come up often during the lesson.

Break the law/breaks the law: to not follow the law. *When someone steals, they break the law.*

Citizen/ Citizens: someone who has the legal right to live, work, and vote in the United States

Courtroom: a room where cases are reviewed

Federal: part of the U.S. government, not state or local governments

Jury: a group of people who listen to a case in court and decide if someone is guilty or not

Register: to put a name or other information on an official list

Requirements: something that someone needs in order to do something specific such as run for office

Responsibility/Responsibilities: something you have to do

Serve/Served: to work for a certain amount of time, usually in political office or in the military; served is the past tense form of serve. *She served as a congresswoman for six years.*

Social Security: a U.S. government program into which workers must pay money; the program gives money to older people and others who cannot work

Trial: a process in court to decide if someone is guilty of a crime

Teacher Tech Tips

To learn how to use *Preparing for the Oath*, visit the help page at <http://americanhistory.si.edu/citizenship/help.html>.

Depending on your students' proficiency level, you might want to offer a transcript of the narration for students to read along while watching and listening, or to have as a reference.

You can find printable transcripts at

<http://americanhistory.si.edu/citizenship/pdf/Transcript.pdf>.

You may notice that the web address never changes as you navigate through *Preparing for the Oath*. In order to go directly to a specific theme or question on the site, you can find a list of links at <http://americanhistory.si.edu/citizenship/pdf/Links.pdf>. These links may be useful for using your browser's "bookmark" tool or assigning student work. The link to go directly to the Responsibilities theme is <http://americanhistory.si.edu/citizenship/index.html?theme=13>.

Some learning environments will be conducive to the sound features, while others will not. It is always possible to turn on and off the website's audio feature by clicking on this symbol: •) However, please keep in mind that the test itself is spoken aloud. Students will need to be comfortable responding to spoken questions, and be able to respond orally.

Don't feel tied down by the structure of the themes. Once you are inside a theme, the image tiles along the bottom represent the individual questions within that theme. You may click on the tiles out of order to view the questions as you choose. Similarly, you may jump around the three modes within each question: Learn, Practice, and Try.

Procedure

1. Lead the class through the Responsibility theme, as presented on the *Preparing for the Oath* website (<http://americanhistory.si.edu/citizenship/index.html?theme=13>).
2. Discuss as a class:
 - a. What is an oath?
 - b. Have you ever taken an oath?
3. Distribute the Naturalization Oath handout ([attached](#)).
4. Read the naturalization oath aloud to the class. Have students read the oath while it is read aloud. Depending on the level of your students, ask a student to read the oath aloud. Discuss what they think various parts of the oath mean and what parts are unclear. Tell students they will work to better understand the oath in the next activity.
5. Distribute the Understanding the Oath handout ([attached](#)).
 - a. Depending on the level of the class, complete the activity as a class or in groups.
 - b. Review the answers as a class.
6. Discuss as a class:
 - a. Can you think of ways you will do the things stated in the naturalization oath when you become a citizen?
 - b. Besides the responsibilities listed in the naturalization oath, what other ways can a United States citizen participate in democracy?

Answers to the Understanding the Oath Handout

Line 1: Meaning E, Example 2
Line 2: Meaning B, Example 5
Line 3: Meaning A, Example 4
Line 4: Meaning D, Example 1
Line 5: Meaning C, Example 3

Learn More Links

Smithsonian's History Explorer

(<http://historyexplorer.americanhistory.si.edu>)

Your gateway to innovative online resources for teaching and learning American history, designed and developed by the National Museum of American History.

United States Citizenship and Immigration Services

(<http://www.uscis.gov/>)

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) is the government agency that oversees lawful immigration to the United States.

Background Information

The Naturalization Oath

- Prior to 1906, naturalization courts had little or no guidance on how to apply or administer the law. Naturalization legislation required an applicant to first declare an "oath" before any "court of record" to announce his intention to become a U.S. citizen.
- Though an official text was adopted by 1920 for the oath of allegiance taken by those assuming U.S. citizenship, an official text for the naturalization oath did not appear in the regulations until 1929. Rule 8, Subdivision C, of that year stipulated that before a certificate of citizenship could be issued, the applicant should "take in court and subscribe to the following oath of allegiance:"
- With the introduction of a signed oath, the text of which was prescribed in Federal regulations, came the standardization of the language of the oath of renunciation and allegiance.
- Though the text was prescribed, there was yet no separate, federal form for the oath. It was probably printed on the back of the petition, as it is today.

The Naturalization Oath

"I hereby declare, on oath, that I absolutely and entirely renounce and abjure all allegiance and fidelity to any foreign prince, potentate, state or sovereignty, of whom or which I have heretofore been a subject or citizen; that I will support and defend the Constitution and laws of the United States of America against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that I will bear arms on behalf of the United States when required by the law; that I will perform noncombatant service in the armed forces of the United States when required by the law; that I will perform work of national importance under civilian direction when required by the law; and that I take this obligation freely without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion; so help me God."

Understanding the Oath

Match lines from the oath to the meaning and to examples.

Lines from the Oath

Line 1: I absolutely and entirely renounce and abjure all allegiance and fidelity to any foreign prince, potentate, state or sovereignty, of whom or which I have heretofore been a subject or citizen.	Meaning: _____ Example: _____
Line 2: I will support and defend the Constitution and laws of the United States of America against all enemies, foreign and domestic.	Meaning: _____ Example: _____
Line 3: I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same [the Constitution].	Meaning: _____ Example: _____
Line 4: I will bear arms on behalf of the United States when required by the law.	Meaning: _____ Example: _____
Line 5: I will perform work of national importance under civilian direction when required by the law.	Meaning: _____ Example: _____

Meanings

- A. I promise to follow the laws of the United States.
- B. I will keep others from going against the Constitution and laws of the United States.
- C. I will do important work for the United States if I am needed.
- D. I will serve in the United States military if I am needed.
- E. I promise to give up loyalty to other countries. I will be loyal to the United States.

Examples

1. Abdul enlists as a soldier in the U.S. Army.
2. Charles used to be loyal to Spain. Now he is a citizen of the United States. Now he is loyal to the United States.
3. Daniel works for the government in Washington, D.C.
4. Susan always pays her taxes on April 15.
5. Mercedes becomes a policewoman to make sure people follow the law.