

What does it mean to be a citizen?

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**“the only title in our democracy superior to that of president is the title citizen.”
(Justice Louis D. Brandeis, former Supreme Court Justice from 1916 to 1939).
He was a staunch defender of civil liberties and individual rights.**

Brandeis was acknowledging one of the oldest principles of American democracy, classical republicanism, where self-government depends the citizen much more than the President, Congress, or the Supreme Court. These ideas are not new to society. They go back hundreds of years.

Classical Republicanism

Aristotle described citizens as those “who share in the civic life of ruling and being ruled in turn.” He also stated that a good education was essential to good citizenship.

Cicero argued that a republic could be sustained only by virtuous citizens who engage in morally upright civic conduct. He also validated the importance of an education, especially in philosophy, history, law, and rhetoric.

Natural Rights Philosophy

John Locke – Life, Liberty, and Property

Locke understood virtue to be a combination of self-denial and rationality. Good people, as well as good citizens, must follow what reason directs as best, though the appetite lean the other way.”
(John Locke - *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, 1693)

Jean Jacques Rousseau – the Importance of Education for Citizenship

“You will have everything if you train citizens, and that training is not just a day’s work. Liberty depends upon the virtue that only a very complex and structured schooling can produce.”

Commonwealth – an early Colonial Term.

Some colonies used the word commonwealth to mean a government based on the common consent of the governed rather than on royal charters issued by Great Britain. Four states today have kept this term, they are the Commonwealths of Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Kentucky. There is no legal difference between a commonwealth and a state.

Public Schools – founded by Horace Mann, the father of American education.

He led the **Common School Movement** in the early 1800's ensuring that every child could receive a basic education funded by local taxes.

Mann believed in Six Principles:

1. the public should no longer remain ignorant
2. that such education should be paid for, controlled, and sustained by an interested public
3. that this education will be best provided in schools that embrace children from a variety of backgrounds
4. that this education must be non-sectarian
5. that this education must be taught by the spirit, methods, and discipline of a free society
6. that education should be provided by well-trained, professional teachers. Mann worked for more and better equipped school houses, longer school years (until 16 years old), higher pay for teachers, and a wider curriculum.

The Nation's motto is E Pluribus Unum – "One from many"



It was proposed for the first Great Seal of the United States by John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, and Thomas Jefferson in 1776. It is a Latin phrase making a strong statement of the American determination to form a single nation from a collection of states.

Essential question for students

How does the meaning and significance of the nation's motto, E Pluribus Unum reflect American society today?. Explain your answers using specific examples from what you personally know about civics and American government.

How have ideas about citizenship changed in the United States?

An interesting point of interest here is that of **State Citizenship**. State Citizenship is flexible and no government approval is required to move from one state to another, except for convicts on parole.

The Oath of Allegiance (adopted in 1952)

"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."

Key words to know contained in the Oath of Allegiance:

Abjure - solemnly renounce (a belief, cause, or claim)

Fidelity - faithfulness to a person, cause, or belief, demonstrated by continuing loyalty and support.

Potentate - a monarch or ruler, especially an autocratic one.

Special Assignment: the [Oath of Allegiance lesson and discussion](#) from the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. (13 pages)

How did the citizenship status of Native Americans evolve?

Since the arrival of Europeans in 1492, Native Americans had been treated unfairly. The Dawes Severalty Act of 1887 encouraged Native Americans to integrate into mainstream society. For those who "integrated," individuals were given 160-acre parcels of land deemed "surplus" and the money from the sale was used to establish Indian schools. By 1932 an estimated 138 million acres of former tribal lands had been sold.

This image is of the Carlisle School in Pennsylvania, known for its assimilation of Native Americans into everyday society. It is a "before" and "after" picture attempting to convince Native Americans to assimilate into everyday American society.



SIoux BOYS AS THEY ENTERED THE SCHOOL IN 1883.

THREE YEARS LATER.

In 1924, Native Americans were finally granted U.S. Citizenship. Inspired by the high rate of American Indian enlistment during World War I, President Calvin Coolidge signs the Indian Citizenship Act. American Indians, the first peoples of this country, are the last to receive citizenship. U.S. citizenship does not automatically make American Indians eligible to vote in some states, including Arizona, New Mexico, and South Dakota. (<https://www.nlm.nih.gov/>).

Today, several hundred tribes in the United States are still seeking official tribal recognition, a process that often takes decades to complete. Federal recognition is important for tribes because it formally establishes a government-to-government relationship. Their status as a sovereign entity carries with it significant privileges, including exemptions from state and local jurisdiction. These exemptions generally apply to lands that the federal government has taken into trust for a tribe or its members. Federally recognized tribes are eligible to participate in federal assistance programs to provide for community services such as health clinics and services.

What is Dual National Citizenship?

This is when a person is a citizen of two or more countries. This may take place as the United States recognizes as citizens those born within its boundaries, even if they are also citizens of another country. The United States also recognizes as citizens the children born abroad to American citizens, even though those children may also be citizens of the country in which they were born.

Jus sanguines – the “law of the blood” is the principle where citizenship is determined by parentage rather than by place of birth also known as **jus soli**.

Global mobility has seen a greater acceptance in dual citizenship. Countries that now permit dual national citizenship include Australia, Canada, France, Mexico, Spain, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom.

China, Germany, India, Japan, Uganda, and Venezuela do **NOT** permit dual national citizenship.

Those **FOR** dual national citizenship claim that some immigrants would cite hardships if dual nationality was not allowed. Some dual nationals would lose important benefits if they had to give up their dual citizenship.

Those **AGAINST** dual national citizenship cite the issue of the loss of loyalty to the United States. The Oath of Allegiance is incompatible with dual citizenship.

How may United States citizenship be lost?

The Supreme Court in the case of *Trop v. Dulles*, 1958, held that the Eighth Amendment prohibition on cruel and unusual punishment means that natural-born citizens cannot be stripped of their citizenship. It is a “form of punishment more primitive than torture, for it destroys for the individual the political existence that was centuries in development.” The following voluntary acts may result in the loss of U.S. citizenship: Becoming a naturalized citizen of another country, swearing an oath of allegiance to another country, serving in the armed forces of a nation at war with the United States, working for the government of another country that requires a sworn oath of allegiance, renouncing citizenship formally, being convicted of the crime of treason. However, Congress has recognized that giving up U.S. citizenship is a “natural and inherent right of the people.”

Immigration and naturalization rules are closely related. It is assumed that those who come to the United States do so with the goal of becoming citizens.

Below is a timeline of some of the early highlights of United States Immigration policy.

1790	The Naturalization Act provided that any free, while, adult alien, male or female, who had resided within the limits and jurisdiction of the United States for a period of two years was eligible for citizenship. The application was made to a court of record in the state where the alien had resided for at least one year
1795	Congress increased the residency requirement to five years. Aliens seeking citizenship had to renounce any foreign allegiance and give up any heredity title of nobility
1802	Records of entry into the United States were started
1855	Alien wives of U.S. Citizens were automatically granted citizenship
1870	The naturalization process was opened to persons of African descent
1882	The Chinese Exclusion Act was passed prohibiting Chinese laborers entering the country for ten years. The first act at a specific ethnic group. It was extended several times until it was repealed in 1943
1892	Ellis Island opened. It was closed in 1954, marking an end to mass European migration
1906	The Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization was put in charge of "all matters concerning naturalization of aliens." It was made part of the Department of Justice in 1940
1924	The first Immigration Quotas were imposed. The quota for each country was based on the ratio of the number of citizens of that nationality already residing in the United States to the total population in 1920. As a result, immigrants from the United Kingdom, Germany, and Ireland made up more than two-thirds of those eligible for U.S. citizenship. In 1952 the quotas were changed to one-sixteenth of a percent of the population of 1920.
1929-1945	Immigration to the United States virtually stopped during the Great Depression, World War II, and the start of the Cold War
1965	National origin quotas were abolished and replaced by regional quotas, such as people from Western or Eastern Hemispheres.
1986	Penalties were imposed on employers who knowingly hire aliens who lack proper documentation
1996	Categories of criminal activity as grounds for deportation were increased.

In closing, two important questions to consider:

1. Should it be a law requiring registered voters to show a government-issued photo identification card in order to vote?
2. Should a resident alien be allowed to vote in some local elections such as those for school board? Some areas of Maryland and Massachusetts already allow this while New York, San Francisco, and Washington D.C. are currently debating and trying to pass laws to allow this to take place in their cities.