SECTION 3

Rights and Responsibilities of Citizenship

What You Will Learn...

Main Ideas

1. Citizenship in the United States is determined in several ways.
2. Citizens are expected to fulfill a number of important duties.
3. Active citizen involvement in government and the community is encouraged.

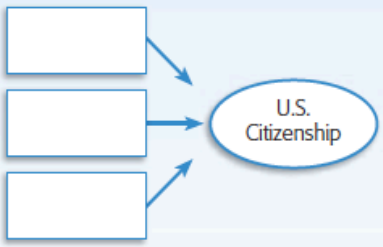
The Big Idea

American citizenship involves great privileges and serious responsibilities.

Key Terms

naturalized citizens, *p. 222*
deport, *p. 222*
draft, *p. 223*
political action committees, *p. 224*
interest groups, *p. 224*

TAKING NOTES As you read, look for information on three ways a person can become a U.S. citizen. Take notes in a graphic organizer like the one below.



If YOU were there...

Your older brother and his friends have just turned 18. That means they must register with selective service. But it also means that they are old enough to vote in national elections. You are interested in the upcoming elections and think it would be exciting to have a real voice in politics. But your brother and his friends don't even plan to register to vote.

How would you persuade your brother that voting is important?

BUILDING BACKGROUND Whether you are born an American citizen or become one later, citizenship brings many rights and privileges. But it also brings duties and responsibilities. Voting is both a right and a responsibility.

Gaining U.S. Citizenship

People become U.S. citizens in several ways. First, anyone born in the United States or a territory it controls is a citizen. People born in a foreign country are U.S. citizens if at least one parent is a U.S. citizen. Foreign-born people whose parents are not citizens must move to the United States to become **naturalized citizens**. Once in the United States, they go through a long process before applying for citizenship. If they succeed, they become naturalized citizens, giving them most of the rights and responsibilities of other citizens.

In the United States, legal immigrants have many of the rights and responsibilities of citizens but cannot vote or hold public office. The U.S. government can **deport**, or return to the country of origin, immigrants who break the law.

Legal immigrants over age 18 may request naturalization after living in the United States for five years. All legal immigrants have to

support themselves financially. If not, someone must assume financial responsibility for them. Immigrants must be law-abiding and support the U.S. Constitution. They must demonstrate understanding of written and spoken English. They also must show basic knowledge of U.S. history and government.

When this is done, candidates go before a naturalization court and take an oath of allegiance to the United States. They then get certificates of naturalization.

Only two differences between naturalized and native-born citizens exist. Naturalized citizens can lose their citizenship, and they cannot become president or vice president. Many famous Americans have been naturalized citizens, including scientist Albert Einstein and former secretary of state Madeleine Albright.

READING CHECK **Drawing Conclusions**
Why does U.S. law have such demanding requirements for people to become naturalized citizens?

Duties of Citizenship

For a representative democracy to work, Americans need to fulfill their civic duties. "The stakes … are too high for government to be a spectator sport," former Texas congresswoman Barbara Jordan once said.

Citizens elect officials to make laws for them. In turn, citizens must obey those laws and respect the authorities who enforce them. Obeying laws includes knowing what they are and staying informed about any changes to the law. Ignorance of a law will not prevent a person from being punished for breaking it.

Another duty is paying taxes for services such as public roads, police, and public schools. People pay sales taxes, property taxes, and tariffs. Many Americans also pay a tax on their income to the federal, and sometimes state, government.

Citizens have the duty to defend the nation. Men 18 years or older must register with selective service. In the event of a **draft**, or required military service, those able to fight are already registered. Although women do not register, many serve in the armed forces.

Becoming a Citizen

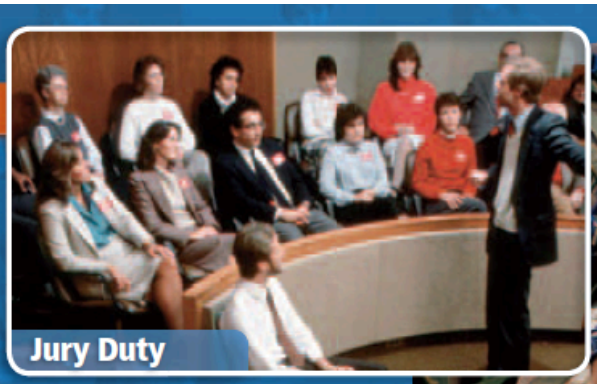
For many people around the world, becoming a citizen of the United States is a lifelong dream. The highlight of the naturalization process is the ceremony where candidates promise to "support and defend the Constitution and laws of the United States of America."

Americans have the right to a trial by jury under the Sixth Amendment. To protect this right, citizens should be willing to serve on a jury when they are called. Otherwise, fulfilling each person's Sixth Amendment rights would be difficult.

READING CHECK **Making Inferences** Why does citizenship carry with it certain responsibilities?

Responsibilities of Citizens

For representative democracy to work, citizens must do their part. Each activity pictured here serves an important role in the community.



Jury Duty

Military Service

Citizens and Government

Taking part in the elections process by voting may be a citizen's most vital duty. Through free elections, U.S. citizens choose who will lead their government.

Function of Elections

It is essential for citizens to learn as much as they can about the issues and candidates before voting. Information is available from many sources: the Internet, newspapers, television, and other media. However, voters should also be aware that some material may be propaganda or material that is biased deliberately to help or harm a cause.

In addition to voting, many Americans choose to campaign for candidates or issues. Anyone can help campaign, even if he or she is not eligible to vote. Many people also help campaigns by giving money directly or through **political action committees** (PACs), groups that collect money for candidates who support certain issues.

ACADEMIC VOCABULARY

influence change or have an effect on

Influencing Government

Even after an election, people can influence officials. Political participation is part of our nation's identity and tradition. When colonists protested British rule in the 1700s, they formed committees and presented their views to political leaders.

As the new American nation grew, so did political participation. French diplomat Alexis de Tocqueville visited the United States in 1831 to study American democracy. He was amazed at the large number of political groups Americans participated in. He wrote about them:

> "What political power could ever carry on the vast multitude [large number] of lesser undertakings which the American citizens perform every day, with the assistance of the principle of association [joining a group]? Nothing, in my opinion, is more deserving of our attention than the intellectual and moral associations of America."
>
> —Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*

U.S. citizens sometimes work with **interest groups**. These groups of people share a common interest that motivates them to take political action. Interest groups organize speeches and rallies to support their cause. However, citizens need not join a group to influence government. They can write letters to leaders of government or attend city council meetings. Active political participation is an important duty for U.S. citizens and immigrants alike.

Helping the Community

Commitment to others moves many Americans to volunteer in community service groups. Some small communities rely on volunteers for services such as fire protection and law enforcement.

Volunteer groups also help government-sponsored agencies. For example, Citizens on

ANALYSIS SKILL **ANALYZING VISUALS**

Which responsibilities can you fulfill now, without waiting until you turn 18 years old?

Patrol and Neighborhood Watch groups ask volunteers to walk their neighborhoods and tell police if they observe possible criminal activity in the area. The American Red Cross helps citizens in times of natural disasters or other emergencies. The Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts plan many projects such as planting trees to improve the environment. Even simple acts such as picking up trash in parks or serving food in shelters help a community.

READING CHECK **Summarizing** In what ways do volunteer groups benefit the community?

SUMMARY AND PREVIEW In this section you learned about citizens' duties toward their nation and their communities. In the next chapter you will learn about the first government formed under the Constitution.

Section 3 Assessment

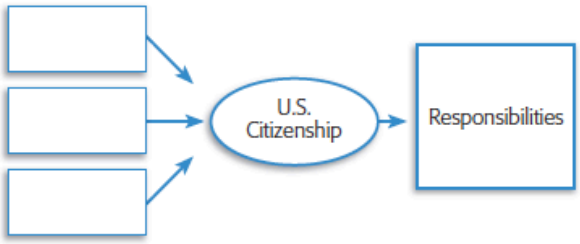
go.hrw.com
Online Quiz
KEYWORD: SC7 HP6

Reviewing Ideas, Terms, and People

1. **a. Identify** What are the different ways in which a person can become a U.S. citizen?
   b. Make Inferences Why do you think the law requires an immigrant to live in the United States at least five years before he or she can apply to become a **naturalized citizen**?
2. **a. Describe** What are three duties expected of U.S. citizens?
   b. Evaluate In your opinion, which duty expected of citizens is the most important? Why?
3. **a. Identify** In what ways can citizens participate in the election process?
   b. Draw Conclusions Why do you think it is important that citizens participate in the political process?

Critical Thinking

4. **Categorizing** Review your notes on becoming a U.S. citizen. Then add the responsibilities of citizenship to your graphic organizer.



FOCUS ON WRITING

5. **Thinking about Citizenship** The last page of your pamphlet will have two parts—one part on requirements for citizenship and one part on the responsibilities of citizens. Look back through this section and make two lists, one on requirements and one on responsibilities.