



Lesson 18.9 “Good Citizenship and Civic Engagement”

Unit 18: Civics and Government Today

Lesson Objectives

- Students will assess cartoons to develop a definition of good citizenship.
- Students will rank traits of good citizens and discuss their ranking.
- Students will role play conversations convincing reluctant citizens to vote.
- Students will complete a Venn diagram comparing how adults and children can act as good citizens.

Lesson Competencies

- I can locate relevant key ideas using text features, including visual and graphic information, to make connections within or across sources and explain how various parts of information contribute to overall meaning. (ELA 3)
- I can identify, explain, and analyze the core civic practices and foundational principles that guide governments and communities. (Moose SS)
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- I can integrate information, distinguish relevant-irrelevant information (e.g., fact/opinion), and (visually, orally, in writing) present what was learned. (ELA 8)

Essential Questions

How has New Hampshire come to be the way it is?
How has New Hampshire been shaped by many voices?

Focus Questions

How do people act as good citizens in a democracy?
What are the people’s rights and responsibilities?

Estimated Time

Two 40-minute class sessions

Materials & Equipment

Group sets of Mason and Sarah cartoons
Chart for additional good citizenship cartoon ideas
“Traits of a Good Citizen” for projection
“Traits of a Good Citizen in Order” for projection
“Voter Turnout” chart for projection
“Why You Should Vote/Why People Don't Vote” chart for projection
“Venn diagram: Good Citizenship for All”
Access to Unit 18, Learn It! [“Good Citizenship”](#)



Educator Introduction & Rationale

Because the people play such an important role in democratic government, democracy requires that the people practice good citizenship. While good citizenship and good character overlap in many areas, students need to begin to understand the difference in elementary school. Good citizenship requires students not only have good character but also carry out the duties and responsibilities of a member of their country and community. While some activities associated with good citizenship are only practical for adults, there are many opportunities for students to act as good citizens in their families, their schools, and in their communities. The “Moose on the Loose” curriculum emphasizes that good citizenship is tied with civic engagement, or working to make a difference in their community. Please see the [Educator Overview](#) for more information.

This is the ninth lesson in Unit 18: Civics and Government Today. It can stand alone from other lessons in the unit. In this lesson, students examine cartoons contrasting the behavior of Mason the Moose and Sarah the Squirrel. The class uses their descriptions of Mason’s and Sarah’s actions to write a definition of good citizenship. After students consider why good citizenship is essential to democracy, they rank various traits of good citizens. As voting usually tops most lists of good citizenship, students then discuss why people don’t vote but should and role play conversations encouraging people to vote. The lesson finishes with a Venn diagram comparing how adults and kids each can practice good citizenship.

There is a vocabulary reinforcement activity inviting students to add to the Mason and Sarah good citizenship cartoons and one to create a good citizenship bulletin board. Three extension activities propose volunteer projects, investigate good citizenship in different places, and examine voter turnout around the world. Please adapt all the material in this lesson, as necessary, to meet the needs of the students in your classroom. Please note, lesson vocabulary and definitions are at the end of the document. You may wish to preview these with your students.

Learning Activity

Actiuation

Mason and Sarah. Mason the Moose and Sarah the Squirrel of the “Moose on the Loose” website are shown in a variety of situations for students in cartoons. Put students in small groups or pairs and distribute the cartoons to students. Give students a chance to read through the cartoons.

When all have finished, ask what Mason and Sarah are demonstrating. Have students brainstorm and make a two-column chart on the white board or chart paper describing Mason and Sarah based on these cartoons. Once brainstorming has slowed, see if students can summarize what Mason IS and Sarah ISN'T.

Guide students to realize that Mason is an example of a good citizen and Sarah is an example of a bad or self-centered citizen. Work together as a class to write a definition of a good citizen and post it. What other examples can they think of to define a good citizen? Follows the law, serves jury duty, respects the opinions of all people?

Discussion

Democracy depends upon good citizens. Line up all the Sarah cartoons together and ask students to imagine what a town filled with citizens acting like Sarah the Squirrel would be like. What would it look like? Feel like? Sound like? Why?

Project the Abraham Lincoln quote and discuss with students how this quote represents democracy. Tell students this was the end of a speech he made during the Civil War, when the nation was split in two and its future was in doubt. He wanted people to believe that a government created of, by, and for the people would be strong enough to survive and thrive. A strong democracy needs people acting as good citizens.

Remind students that the Greek roots of **democracy** are “demos” (citizen or people) and “kratos” (power or rule). If we want to have a strong democracy, why do we need people to act as good citizens? What happens if they don't? Distribute “Democracy Depends Upon Good Citizens” and have students finish both sentences. Share as appropriate for your class; consider posting in a hallway.

Student Reading

How to be a good citizen. Before beginning the next Guided Practice and Discussion, direct students to read Unit 18, Learn It! “[Good Citizenship](#),” pages 1-3.

Guided Practice & Discussion

Traits of good citizenship. In 2018, the Pew Research Center asked adult Americans what actions were most important to good citizenship. If desired, ask your class what actions they consider important to good citizenship. If you'd prefer to use a curated list, project the “Traits of a Good Citizen” chart. Ask students:

- Which traits do you think are most important to being a good citizen?
- Which traits do you think are least important?



Note with students that this list is in alphabetical order so students don't think the top ones are judged most important. Put students in small groups or discuss as a class, but be sure all students have time to reflect in the way best for them and have a chance to hear from others.

When all are ready, have each student assign three votes. They can choose to assign their three votes to one trait, signifying they feel strongly about one trait, or assign their votes to two or three traits. When voting is complete, tally the votes each trait received and re-rank them according to the class vote. What does everyone think about the class ranking?

If desired, project the Pew Research Center's data according to American adults surveyed in 2018 and compare them to the class rankings. What is different? What is the same? Why do they think that is so?

Teaching tip: This is a good spot to pause if you divide the lesson between two teaching periods.

Discussion & Guided Practice

Voting is essential. Voting in elections typically tops the list for traits found in a good citizen, but not all people who can vote in an election do vote. Ask students, of how many people who can vote do you think actually do vote? This describes an "eligible voter," meaning someone who is legally allowed to vote in an election. In the United States, a person must be age 18 or older, a citizen, and registered to vote in their state or territory. Many states have additional requirements, such as not being in jail. Have students brainstorm percentages of voter turnout.

Once they have given their ideas, show them or give them the information from the chart "Voter Turnout." As they examine the chart, ask them to make observations. Gather observations from the class before accepting explanations of the chart.

Ensure students note:

- Voter turnout rates are higher during presidential election years over midterm election years when the highest office in the land is not up for election. Why do they think that is?
- In the last four presidential elections, turnout was about 60%, but it spiked upwards in 2020.
- At no point from 2008 to 2020 did more than 2/3 of people able to vote actually vote. Does that surprise them?

Discuss with students why people do and don't vote. Make your own two-column list titled "Why You Should Vote" and "Why People Don't Vote" or use the one provided.

Teaching tip: For a timeline of voting rights in the United States according to the U.S. Constitution, see lesson 18.2 “What Is a Living Document.”

Student Reading

Being an informed voter. Before beginning the next Guided Practice, direct students to read Unit 18, Learn It! “[Good Citizenship](#),” pages 4 and 5.

Guided Practice

Conversations about voting. Tell students that there are many organizations dedicated to getting citizens to vote, such as Rock the Vote and Vote.org. Now that they understand why people should vote and don’t, students will role play conversations trying to get reluctant voters to the polls.

Leave up the chart about voting and divide up groups as best for your class. Tell them to role play a few different conversations, reminding them the goal is to be as realistic as possible. Which reasons for not voting seemed the most reasonable to them? How can they respond to those reasons and help convince the person to vote? What else needs to happen to get the voter turnout higher?

Give students time to role play and circulate to support learning. When time is up, invite a few pairs to role play their conversations.

What can they do? As you discuss their role play conversations, ask the class what they, as students, can do to increase voter turnout in your town. Civic engagement is an important aspect of good citizenship because it is making a positive difference in your community. Students can’t drive voters to the polls or work the polling stations, but there are actions they can take to help their town and support democracy. Create a list of actions students can be effective with, which might include:

- Making flyers/posters to encourage voting
- Making flyers/posters to tell people how to register to vote
- Making flyers/posters to tell people when and where to vote
- Contacting local newspapers or newsletters to make sure information about voting is included
- Putting together unbiased information about candidates and issues for voters and distribute
- Talking with the town government about programs in your town to help people who need rides or childcare on voting day
- Canvassing with parents or other adults
- Talking with friends and family of voting age to make sure they are registered and they vote

Work with students to put as many as reasonable into effect.

Student Reading

Civic virtue. Before beginning Independent Practice, direct students to read Unit 18, Learn It! “[Good Citizenship](#),” pages 6 and 7.

**Independent
Practice &
Reflection**

Good citizenship for all. Reflect with students on all the examples of civic virtue explored through the Learning Activity. Good citizenship is for everyone, but the details of it might be different at different ages. What can adults do that children can't? What about what children can do that adults can't? What does it look like to carry out the duties and responsibilities of a member of the country and community for each?

Give students the "Venn diagram: Good Citizenship for All" worksheet and have them compare and contrast details of good citizenship for adults and children. Share as best for your class.



Reinforcement

1. **Add to good citizenship cartoons.** Use class activities to brainstorm more examples of good citizenship. Draw additional cartoons of Mason and Sarah demonstrating a good citizen and a selfish citizen.
2. **Good citizenship bulletin board.** Collect stories and pictures from local and state and national news and create a good citizenship bulletin board in the hallway, classroom, or lobby of a building. Add to it throughout the unit or throughout the year.
3. **Graphing voter turnout.** Use the data from the voter turnout chart and have students make bar or line graphs to show the information.

Extension

1. **Volunteer project.** Harness student interest from the lesson and discuss what volunteer projects might be most useful for the school or local community. Is there an election coming up? Is there a food bank in need? Connect interested students and adults.
2. **Global citizenship.** The world has become increasingly interdependent as globalization continues. Discuss the idea of "global citizenship," the idea that a person's identity is beyond country and geographical borders and instead that all humanity together forms one community. In what ways do students agree and disagree with this idea and whether it is possible? See 10 steps to take towards becoming a global citizen at www.kosmosjournal.org/article/what-does-it-mean-to-be-a-global-citizen/.
3. **Compare voter turnout around the world.** How does the U.S. voter turnout compare to the rest of the democratic developed world? Explain to students that the United States should be compared only to like countries that are also democratic and developed, then look at worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/voter-turnout-by-country and discuss. Why do students think the United States trails other countries by so much?



Supporting Materials

- Mason and Sarah good citizenship cartoons drawn by Lilly Grodzicki.
- Source for voter turnout rates: Dr. Michael McDonald, *United States Elections Project*. www.electproject.org/home/voter-turnout/voter-turnout-data
- Resources:
 - GoodCharacter.com www.goodcharacter.com/middle_school/citizenship/ A website of character resources for the elementary, middle, and high school classroom. Linked to the middle school “citizenship” activities. Also of note are more than 30 ethical and moral dilemmas for all ages with discussion questions.
 - Civic Engagement at Youth.gov. A government website that helps communities and individuals create and maintain youth programs. Filled with tools and information. youth.gov/youth-topics/civic-engagement-and-volunteering

Standards

“Moose on the Loose” Content:

- ✓ Students will understand that after the revolution, the United States of America established a federal government; colonies established state governments. They will understand that the New Hampshire State Constitution established the basic structure of government for the state and created laws to protect the people and interests of the state. (3-5.T3.2)
- ✓ Students will understand that New Hampshire today is a modern, diverse state with a rich culture and thriving economy. (3-5.T8.1)

“Moose on the Loose” Skills:

- ✓ Communicating and Critiquing Conclusions (3-5.S2.1, 3-5.S2.2)
- ✓ Understanding and Participating in Government (3-5.S6.1, 3-5.S6.2)

New Hampshire Social Studies Frameworks:

- ✓ Civics and Governments: The Nature and Purpose of Government (SS:CV:4:1.1, SS:CV:4:1.2)

NCSS Themes:

- ✓ Theme 6: Power, Authority, and Governance
- ✓ Theme 10: Civic Ideals and Practices

C3 Frameworks:

- ✓ Civic and Political Institutions (D2.Civ.2.3-5, D2.Civ.3.3-5, D2.Civ.4.3-5, D2.Civ.6.3-5)
- ✓ Participation and Deliberation (D2.Civ.7.3-5, D2.Civ.8.3-5, D2.Civ.10.3-5)
- ✓ Communicating Conclusions (D4.1.3-5, D4.2.3-5)

Common Core ELA:

- ✓ Integration of Knowledge and Ideas in Informational Text (RI.4.7)
- ✓ Research to Build and Present Knowledge (W.4.8)
- ✓ Comprehension and Collaboration in Speaking and Listening (SL.4.1, SL.4.1c, SL.4.1d)
- ✓ Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas (SL.4.4)
- ✓ Vocabulary Acquisition and Use (L.4.6)

Lesson Vocabulary

| | |
|--------------------------|---|
| citizen | (noun) A member by law of a nation or group |
| citizenship | (noun) The position of belonging to a nation or group by law |
| civic disposition | (noun) Having the traits necessary to take on the responsibilities of citizenship in a community |
| civic engagement | (noun) Actions taken to participate in the rights and responsibilities of citizenship in a community |
| civic virtue | (noun) Actions citizens do and qualities citizens have that benefit their community |
| civility | (noun) Behaving or speaking in a polite manner |
| democracy | (noun) A government ruled by majority vote of the people |
| election | (noun) When people vote for a person for office or other position |
| eligible voter | (noun) Someone who is legally allowed to vote in an election |
| good citizenship | (noun) Actions people take to appropriately behave as a member of a community, such as civic duty |
| tax | (noun) An amount of money, added to the regular cost of an item, that goes to the government |
| voter turnout | (noun) The number of people who voted in an election divided by the number of people allowed to vote; shown as a percentage |