

# #12121

## ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP: MAKING A DIFFERENCE

NEW DIMENSION MEDIA/QUESTAR, 2002

Grade Level: 8–13+

20 Minutes



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**TEACHER'S GUIDE**  
**Grades 9 to 12 & Up**

**Active Citizenship: Making a Difference**  
**American Democracy in Action Series**

**Subject Areas:** Social Studies, Government/Citizenship, U.S. History

**Synopsis:** Considers whether the resurgence of volunteerism and civic-mindedness following the events of September 11, 2001 will be sustained over the long term. Describes the lasting surge of community involvement during World War II and examines the political and social causes of civic disengagement in the decades since the 60's. Reveals how young people at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century responded to civic disengagement and looks at how today's youth are boosting community involvement through volunteerism.

**Learning Objectives:**

- Objective 1)** Students will be able to explain how national crises can cause citizens to feel more connected to their communities and become more engaged.
- Objective 2)** Students will be able to recognize that civic engagement following a crisis can only be sustained when reinforced by concrete practices and actions that are performed over a long period of time.
- Objective 3)** Students will be able to describe the role that voluntary associations played in addressing the crisis of civic disengagement at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.
- Objective 4)** Students will be able to discuss the increase in volunteerism among high school and college students, which may represent a renewal of civic engagement and a new source of social capital.
- Objective 5)** Students will be able to distinguish between bridging social capital and bonding social capital.

**Vocabulary**

World Trade Center, terrorism, united, civic-mindedness, voluntarism, charity, interdependence, community, empathy, conscience, obligation, Pearl Harbor, hitchhiking, civic engagement, scandals, suburbs, civic associations, social capital deficit, alienation, immigration, spiritually impoverished, reciprocity, bridging social capital, bonding social capital, diversity, activists

**Pre-Viewing Questions and Activities:**

Do you or your family belong to any civic groups, such as the PTA, the Lions, the Jaycees, the Girl/Boy Scouts? If so, what does this organization do for you, your family and your community? In what ways do you connect with your community? What civic groups might you be interested in joining?

**Post-Viewing Questions and Discussion:**

- 1) Why does civic engagement rise after crises? Why doesn't the heightened sense of community usually last? Civic engagement rose after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, but did not decline right away. Why? How did Americans maintain a sense of responsibility and connectedness to their nation and communities?

- 2) What events have contributed to American civic disengagement since the 1960s? Why are many Americans uninvolved in their communities?
- 3) Do you think the rise in civic engagement following the events of September 11, 2001 will be lasting? Do you feel a greater social responsibility as a citizen now than before 9/11?
- 4) What is social capital? How do civic associations like Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, NAACP, Rotary, and United Way contribute to the formation of social capital?
- 5) Give examples of bridging social capital and bonding social capital. What are the differences between bridging social capital and bonding social capital? What are the benefits of each? Which type do you see most often in your community?
- 6) Does volunteerism promote bridging social capital or bonding social capital?
- 7) What can volunteerism contribute to your sense of community and your feelings of responsibility to the community?

**Additional Activities:**

- 1) Have groups of students research the numerous ways citizens were involved in the World War II war effort. Ask each group to also research civic associations or volunteer organizations that perform similar or analogous functions today (for example, compare citizen involvement in scrap drives to community recycling efforts). What similarities/differences do you see?
- 2) Have students interview their parents and grandparents about their involvement in civic associations. Do they see a decline in membership from their grandparents' generation to the parents' generation? What reasons do the interviewees give for their membership or lack of membership? Can the students reach any conclusions about changes between the two generations?
- 3) In class, have students mention all of the volunteer projects they have ever been involved in through school, church, scouting, family, etc. Make a list of all the social problems they have been involved in addressing (literacy, hunger, homelessness, the environment, etc.).
- 4) Plan a class service project to serve your community. Have students share ideas and vote on a service project. Afterwards, have a class discussion about how students felt about helping their community.

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