

# #9446

## THIS IS YOUR GOVERNMENT: WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A GOOD CITIZEN?

SVE & CHURCHILL MEDIA  
1999  
Grade Levels: 4-6  
14 minutes



### DESCRIPTION

Are you a good citizen? Four elementary students learn the responsibilities of all citizens: vote, stay informed, talk to community leaders, serve on juries, and help keep the community safe and clean.

### ACADEMIC STANDARDS

#### Subject Area: Civics

- Standard: Understands how certain character traits enhance citizens' ability to fulfill personal and civic responsibilities
  - Benchmark: Understands why personal responsibility is important, and knows examples of personal responsibility (e.g., taking advantage of the opportunity to be educated)
- Standard: Understands how participations in civic and political life can help citizens attain individual and public goals
  - Benchmark: Understands why it is important for citizens to monitor their local, state, and national governments; and knows ways people can monitor the decisions and actions of their government such as reading about public issues, watching television news programs, discussing public issues, and communicating with public officials
- Standard: Understands the importance of political leadership, public service, and a knowledge citizenry in American constitutional democracy
  - Benchmark: Know opportunities for leadership and public service in the student's own classroom, school, community, state, and the nation; and understands why leadership and public service are important to the continuance and improvement of American democracy

### INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS

1. To describe the different facets of being a good citizen.
2. To depict that citizens have rights regarding free speech, free press, and freedom of religion.
3. To emphasize the importance of voting and the responsibilities that come with that privilege.
4. To describe the importance of jury duty and how service on a jury helps the community.
5. To realize that keeping a community safe is not only the job of the local law enforcement agency, but a civic responsibility.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

What does it mean to be a good citizen? Why is it important to vote? Why should community members serve on a jury? Answers these and other questions on how local government works with this informative video that incorporates a real-life situation with factual information on what it means to be a good citizen.

Four student winners of a regional "good government" essay contest visit various places in their community to find out what a good citizen does. They meet the mayor at City Hall to learn about rights and responsibilities of good citizenship. They witness a city council meeting in progress. They then go to a courtroom to find out from a real judge how a trial works and why it is important for community members to serve on juries. Finally, they meet with a police officer who explains how good citizens can keep their communities safe and clean.



## VOCABULARY

1. abide
2. candidates
3. citizen
4. community
5. defendant
6. election
7. foreign
8. gavel
9. guilty
10. informed
11. issues
12. judge
13. jury
14. opportunity
15. preside
16. privileges
17. prosecutor
18. responsibility
19. rights
20. suspicious
21. vote



## BEFORE SHOWING

1. Have students describe what it means to be a good citizen in today's society. Write their answers on the board.
2. How do students view the responsibilities of the police department? Should police officers be the only people responsible for handling crime in our communities?
3. Explain to students the role of the mayor in a city. Why is it important for citizens to vote for good leaders? How can a voter know if a person is a good candidate for office?
4. Ask students to describe their impression of jury duty. Do they view jury duty as an important activity? Would they be excited about serving on a jury? Why or why not?

## AFTER SHOWING

### Discussion Items and Questions

1. Review student answers from the BEFORE SHOWING activity regarding what it means to be a good citizen. What components of citizenship did students list that were included in the video? Which ones listed in the video, if any, were not on the class list? How do people from foreign lands become citizens?
2. What is the role of the city council? How can citizens impact the council's decisions?

3. In a criminal courtroom, what is the role of the judge? What is the role of the jury? What is the person called who is accused of something? What is the name for the person or group who is trying to prove the defendant guilty?
4. After viewing the program, have students' attitudes changed toward jury duty? Why or why not?
5. What is the importance of voting? How can a voter know if a candidate would do a good job in the elected position?
6. Remind students of their initial impressions of police officers as they described them in the BEFORE SHOWING activity. Have their perceptions changed? If so, how?

### **Applications and Activities**

1. Perform a mock trial. Assign students to play specific roles. The remainder of the class should act as the jury. Ask students how they feel about the process.
2. Have students write a brief summary of a problem that faces their school or community. If the student had to make a recommendation to the school board or city council about this problem, what would he or she say? What law or rule could be implemented that would be fair and provide a solution to the problem?

### **RELATED RESOURCES**



#### **Captioned Media Program**

- A Community at Work #8682
- Keeping Your Community Clean #3365



#### **World Wide Web**

The following Web sites complement the contents of this guide; they were selected by professionals who have experience in teaching deaf and hard of hearing students. Every effort was made to select accurate, educationally relevant, and "kid safe" sites. However, teachers should preview them before use. The U.S. Department of Education, the National Association of the Deaf, and the Captioned Media Program do not endorse the sites and are not responsible for their content.

- **DO SOMETHING**

<http://www.dosomething.org/index.cfm>

Do Something is an organization that helps you get involved in your community. Identify the issues you care about and create community projects to turn your ideas into action.

- **YOUTH SERVE AMERICA**

<http://www.ysa.org/>

Strengthen your programs with the tip sheets, try an interactive tool to create service-learning projects, and read current articles on what projects today's youth are undergoing.

- **LEARNING ADVENTURES IN CITIZENSHIP**

<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/newyork/laic/index.html>

Explore the things you can do in your community, such as paving new roads, planning a park, fighting for freedom, and other projects. Explains how to get the ball rolling. A PBS site.