

Chapter Summary

Americans, Citizenship, and Governments

Lesson 1 *Being an American*

- About 13 percent of Americans were born in another country (immigrants) and about 98 percent come from families who were immigrants at one time.
- Native Americans, the first residents of what is now the United States, included many separate groups with distinct cultures.
- In the 1500s, settlers first came to North America from Spain and settled in what is now Florida and the Southwest.
- In the 1600s, settlers from France and England began coming to North America. The English settled mainly along the east coast, where they formed the thirteen colonies.
- In the late 1600s and the 1700s, immigrants began arriving from Germany, Ireland, Scotland, the Netherlands, and Sweden.
- Through the years, about 500,000 Africans were forcibly brought to the United States as slaves. Congress made this illegal in 1807.
- In the mid-1800s, immigrants arrived from Ireland, Germany, and China. After 1890, immigrants began arriving from Italy, Greece, Poland, and Russia. In the 1900s most immigrants came from Asia and Latin America.
- Today, there is ethnic and religious diversity in the United States. Shared U.S. values include freedom, equality, opportunity, justice, democracy, unity, respect, and tolerance.

Lesson 2 *Becoming a Citizen*

- Civics is the study of the rights and duties of citizens.
- Citizens are members of the community who owe loyalty to a government and receive protection from it.
- Women, African Americans, and Native Americans were not considered citizens in the early years of the United States.
- Citizens by birth include people born in the United States or in an American territory; people born on U.S. soil to non-U.S. citizens; and people born to parents who are U.S. citizens.

Chapter Summary



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Lesson 2 *Becoming a Citizen, Cont.*

- To become a naturalized citizen, a person must have lived legally in the United States for at least five years; be over the age of 18; have good moral character; be able to read, write, and speak English; and show an understanding of civics.
- Citizenship may be lost by giving allegiance to a foreign country (expatriation), for making false statements on the naturalization application (denaturalization), or for being convicted of certain crimes.
- Foreign-born residents include legal aliens, refugees, and illegal aliens. Illegal aliens are people living in the United States without permission.

Lesson 3 *Duties and Responsibilities of American Citizens*

- American citizens have duties, or things they must do, and responsibilities, or things they should do.
- Citizens' duties include obeying the law, paying taxes, defending the nation if drafted, serving on juries, and attending school.
- Obeying the law is a citizen's most important duty because laws keep order in society.
- Citizens' responsibilities include being an active and informed citizen, respecting the rights of others, and contributing to the common good by donating time and money.
- Voting is one of American citizens' most important responsibilities. Through voting, Americans give their consent to the government.
- Good citizens contribute to the welfare of their community by participating in volunteerism.
- The U.S. government manages and supports volunteerism through the Corporation for National and Community Service, AmeriCorps, Senior Corps, and Learn and Serve America.

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Lesson 4 *Forms of Government*

- Governments make laws, enforce laws, maintain security, provide services, protect public health and safety, and help people who are in need.
- The U.S. government is made up of the federal, or national, government; state governments; and local governments that include city, county, and town governments.
- The United States is the world's oldest representative democracy. It is a republic, which means that the people have a role in choosing the head of the government.
- Democracy is based on majority rule, which means citizens agree that they will abide by what most people want.
- In a democracy, ruling majorities are determined through free and fair elections.
- In authoritarian government, power is held by a person or group not accountable to the people. Absolute monarchies and dictatorships are types of authoritarian rule.
- Many dictatorships are totalitarian states in which the government controls almost all aspects of the people's lives.
- Systems of government vary according to how power is shared or not shared among various levels of government.
- The United States once had a confederal system of government.
- Today the United States has a federal system, with power shared by the state governments and the central government.
- In a unitary system, the central government is supreme.