

Name _____



Date _____

Jean Learns About Rights and Responsibilities of Citizens

By Patti Hutchison



"Hi, Jean, how's it going?" Rob asked.

"I'm doing well, thanks," Jean replied.

"When do you take your citizenship test?" Rob asked.

"In a few weeks," Jean said. "I'm getting nervous."

"You'll do fine. You knew most of the answers when I helped you study," Rob assured his friend.

"There are some things we didn't go over yet. Can we talk about them today?" Jean asked.

"Sure, let's get started," Rob agreed. "What's the topic?"

"Rights and responsibilities of citizens," Jean told him.

"Okay, what do you want to know?" Rob asked.

"What can you tell me about voting?" Jean asked.

"Voting is a huge responsibility. It is also one of our basic rights as citizens," Rob explained. "Our leaders are elected by the people. Every citizen should exercise his right to vote. Voting has been a big issue in our country's history. There have been four amendments that deal with voting."

"What were they?" Jean asked.

"Three deal with who has the right to vote. At first only white males could vote. Later, the right was given to male citizens of any race. Still later, women gained the right to vote. During the 20th century, the vote was extended to any citizen aged 18 or older," Rob said.

"What was the other amendment?" Jean asked.

"It said that no one had to pay money in order to vote. In order to keep some people from voting, there was once a poll tax. But that was outlawed in an amendment," Rob explained.

"So you have to be a citizen to vote," Jean said.

"Yes, and you have to register to vote before you can actually vote in an election," Rob told Jean.

What other rights are reserved only for U.S. citizens?" Jean asked.

"Only U.S. citizens can apply for a federal job or hold a public office. You also have to be a citizen of this country to carry a U.S. passport," Rob said.

"Let's talk about responsibilities," Jean said.

"Well, citizens have other responsibilities besides voting in elections," Rob explained. "We have to serve on a jury if we are called. When we turn 18, all males must register with the selective service."

"What is the selective service?" Jean asked.

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"It is sometimes called the draft. It means that the government can call you to serve in the military if they need you," Rob answered. "We also have a responsibility to get involved in our democracy. Citizens should stay informed about things that are happening in our country. They should let their representatives know how they feel about things. Informed citizens find out what issues candidates want to work on if they get into office. They should vote for the person whom they think can do the best job for our country."

"When you become a naturalized United States citizen you will have to make some promises," Rob said. "You must agree to give up your loyalty to another country and be loyal to the United States. You have to promise to obey the laws of the land. You must also give your word that you will defend the country by serving in the military if you are needed."

"I am prepared to do all that," Jean said. "I am looking forward to being a citizen of this country."

"You are on your way, my friend," Rob assured Jean.

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Questions

1. Who can vote in this country?

_____ 2. Long ago, people had to pay money in order to vote.

- A. false
- B. true

_____ 3. Another name for the selective service is:

- A. voting
- B. the draft

4. What does the selective service do?

5. Name one promise a person has to make when becoming a naturalized citizen.
