Who Becomes a Citizen?

Read three stories about U.S. citizenship and changing laws.

SS24.6.18c "Explain how an individual becomes a citizen of the United States, including birthright citizenship and naturalization, and identify moments in history in which citizenship has been extended to individuals not previously considered citizens."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the ways a person can become a U.S. citizen. Circle each year when a law changed who could become a citizen, and number the groups affected.

Three Stories of Citizenship

1. Imagine three stories on a museum wall about U.S. citizenship. Maya was born in Ohio, so she is a citizen from birth under the Fourteenth Amendment. This rule is called birthright citizenship. It generally applies to children born in the United States, even if their parents are not citizens. One exception is a child born here to a foreign diplomat. A child born outside the United States may also be a citizen from birth if a parent is a U.S. citizen and certain legal requirements are met.

2. The next story belongs to Luis, who was born in another country to parents who were not U.S. citizens. He can seek citizenship through naturalization, a legal process for people who were not citizens at birth. Most applicants must first become lawful permanent residents and live in the United States for a required period, usually five years. They must also meet other rules, which generally include showing knowledge of English and U.S. government and history. At a ceremony, successful applicants take an oath of allegiance and become citizens.

3. The final story looks backward. Before 1868, the United States did not recognize many people born here, including enslaved people, as citizens. The Fourteenth Amendment, ratified in 1868, made people born or naturalized in the United States citizens, with limited exceptions. In 1924, the Indian Citizenship Act extended U.S. citizenship to Native Americans born in the United States who were not already citizens. Earlier laws had allowed some Native Americans to become citizens, but not all. In 1952, a new law ended race-based limits on who could naturalize. Citizenship rules changed as people challenged exclusion.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Why is Maya a citizen from birth? Name one exception to the rule that applies to her.

2. How could Luis become a citizen? Describe two steps or requirements from the passage.

3. How did the Fourteenth Amendment change citizenship for people who had been excluded?

4. How did the changes in 1924 and 1952 each extend citizenship?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

A museum visitor says, "Only birth can make someone a citizen, and citizenship laws have never changed." Write four sentences correcting the visitor. Explain birthright citizenship and naturalization, and use two historical changes as evidence.

ANSWER KEY

Who Becomes a Citizen?

GRADE 6 · SS24.6.18c

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the ways a person can become a U.S. citizen. Circle each year when a law changed who could become a citizen, and number the groups affected. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Why is Maya a citizen from birth? Name one exception to the rule that applies to her.	**Maya was born in Ohio, so birthright citizenship applies to her. A child born in the United States to a foreign diplomat is an exception.**
2	How could Luis become a citizen? Describe two steps or requirements from the passage.	**Luis could become a citizen through naturalization. Most applicants first become lawful permanent residents and live in the United States for a required period. Successful applicants take an oath of allegiance.**
3	How did the Fourteenth Amendment change citizenship for people who had been excluded?	**It made people born or naturalized in the United States citizens, with limited exceptions. This included people formerly enslaved.**
4	How did the changes in 1924 and 1952 each extend citizenship?	**The 1924 law extended citizenship to Native Americans born in the United States who were not already citizens. The 1952 law ended race-based limits on who could naturalize.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Most children born in the United States are citizens at birth, but this rule has exceptions. People who were not citizens at birth may become citizens through naturalization after meeting legal requirements. In 1868, the Fourteenth Amendment recognized citizenship for people born in the United States, including people formerly enslaved. In 1924, the Indian Citizenship Act extended citizenship to Native Americans born here who were not already citizens.

Accept accurate descriptions of either listed naturalization requirement for question 2. For the open response, accept any two historical changes in the passage if the student explains how each expanded citizenship or access to naturalization.