

Citizenship Under Construction

Trace how a historical term gains meaning across a text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.4 “Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including analyzing how an author uses and refines the meaning of a key term over the course of a text (e.g., how Madison defines faction in Federalist No. 10).”

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline each use of the word citizenship. Circle nearby words or phrases that explain its meaning, then number the three meanings the passage develops.

What Citizenship Promised

- ① In 1866, Congress debated what citizenship should mean after the Civil War. Before emancipation, many Americans had treated citizenship as a status linked to race, state law, and voting. The Civil Rights Act of 1866 declared that people born in the United States, with stated exclusions, were citizens regardless of race. Two years later, the Fourteenth Amendment placed that principle in the Constitution. At first, citizenship in these measures meant national membership, a legal answer to the question of who belonged to the United States. It also rejected the idea that a state could make a native-born person an outsider.
- ② Yet membership alone did not describe the full promise Congress attached to citizenship. The Fourteenth Amendment barred states from abridging the privileges or immunities of citizens and required due process and equal protection for persons. In this setting, citizenship began to point toward rights that national membership was supposed to carry. Still, the word did not automatically mean voting power. The Fifteenth Amendment, ratified in 1870, separately prohibited denying the vote because of race, color, or previous condition of servitude. By separating these provisions, the Constitution showed that citizenship, civil rights, and voting rights overlapped but were not identical.
- ③ This broader meaning remained contested in practice. During Reconstruction, Congress passed Enforcement Acts in 1870 and 1871 to protect Black voters and to combat violence that blocked political participation. In later decades, however, southern states used poll taxes, literacy tests, and other devices to disfranchise many Black citizens, while segregation restricted daily life. The passage from legal membership to promised rights therefore was not a smooth expansion. By the end of the nineteenth century, citizenship named a constitutional status, a set of claimed protections, and an unfinished demand that governments honor those protections equally.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 In paragraph 1, what does citizenship mean in the phrase “national membership”? Use one detail from the paragraph to explain.

2 What does the author mean by saying that citizenship did not automatically mean “voting power” in paragraph 2?

3 How does the phrase “rights that national membership was supposed to carry” refine the meaning of citizenship?

4 How does the final paragraph change the reader’s understanding of citizenship by the end of the passage?

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Choose a key term from a different history or civics text you have read. In 4 sentences, 55 to 75 words, name the text and term, explain its first meaning, show how later wording refines it, and cite two short phrases as evidence.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline each use of the word citizenship. Circle nearby words or phrases that explain its meaning, then number the three meanings the passage develops. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	In paragraph 1, what does citizenship mean in the phrase “national membership”? Use one detail from the paragraph to explain.	It means legal belonging in the United States. The paragraph explains that it answers who belonged to the nation and prevents a state from treating a native-born person as an outsider.
2	What does the author mean by saying that citizenship did not automatically mean “voting power” in paragraph 2?	Being a citizen did not by itself guarantee the right to vote. The author notes that the Fifteenth Amendment addressed voting separately.
3	How does the phrase “rights that national membership was supposed to carry” refine the meaning of citizenship?	It expands citizenship from simply belonging to the nation to including legal rights and protections connected to that belonging.
4	How does the final paragraph change the reader’s understanding of citizenship by the end of the passage?	It presents citizenship as more than legal status or promised rights. Because Black citizens faced disfranchisement and segregation, it also becomes an unfinished demand for equal protection in practice.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

In Franklin D. Roosevelt’s 1941 State of the Union address, freedom first refers to political liberties, such as “freedom of speech and expression.” He then broadens the term beyond government rights. The phrase “freedom from want” makes economic security part of freedom. “Freedom from fear” adds safety from armed aggression, so the word becomes a worldwide goal as well as an individual right.

Accept equivalent explanations that distinguish legal membership, connected rights, and the ongoing struggle to enforce those rights. For the open task, accept another accurate historical or civics text if the student traces a term’s development with two relevant textual phrases.