



# Citizenship and the American Way

Sample Readings To Teach Comprehension Strategies

## Reading 1: Immigrants and Citizenship



The United States is a country of immigrants. Only Native Americans did not come from another country. Some migrants came willingly, others came as slaves, still others were pushed out of their country by war or civil unrest.

Many immigrants become citizens because citizenship has certain advantages. Citizens can sponsor close family members, like parents, brothers and sisters. If a family member has a sponsor, he or she can live legally in the United States. This is one big advantage of citizenship. In fact, family reunification is the number one reason why immigrants become citizens.

There is another important advantage of citizenship. As a citizen, you can vote in local and national elections. You can influence the political future of your adopted country.

If immigrants become citizens, do they have the same rights as U.S.-born citizens? Almost. There are only two major exceptions: A naturalized citizen cannot become president or vice-president. To run for presidential office, you must have citizenship by birth. But the law might change, and maybe one day a foreign-born immigrant will be president. If the law changes, perhaps Arnold Schwarzenegger, the former body builder and governor of California may consider running for president.

## Reading 2: Comparing Citizenship: Spain and the United States



Is citizenship the same in all countries? No, there are important differences. Let's compare the requirements for citizenship in the United States to the requirements in Spain.

In the United States, you can file a citizenship application after 5 years. In Spain, you have to wait 10 years. That is a long time! If you are married to a citizen, the rules change: In the United States, you only have to wait 3 years if your husband or wife is an American Citizen. In Spain, however, you only have to wait one year if your spouse is a citizen of Spain. That is one big advantage of having a Spanish spouse. Spain has one more interesting rule: If you come from a Spanish colony or if you have Spanish blood, you can file for citizenship after one year. The United States does not have a similar rule.

There are other important differences. In the United States, you have to pass an English test. You must demonstrate that you can read, write and speak English. Spain, on the other hand, has no language requirement and no test. You don't have to speak Spanish to be a citizen. That is very surprising.

Are you automatically a citizen of a country if you are born there? Here is another big difference. In the United States, any baby born on U.S. soil is automatically a U.S. citizen. Not so in Spain. You must have a mother or a father who is a citizen – only then can you have citizenship by birth. That is one big advantage of living in the United States. Actually, only a very small number of countries in the world have the same rule. Most other countries agree with Spain. At least one parent must be a citizen. If not, the baby cannot be born a citizen.

What do the U.S. and Spain have in common? Both countries accept large numbers of immigrants and try to welcome them. They also want to help immigrants integrate into their new communities so they can prosper and their children can thrive.