

## Subjects and Citizens

### Purpose

Students will distinguish between a subject and a citizen.

### Materials

*For the teacher:* chalk, chalkboard

*For each student:* pencil and writing paper or computer with word processor and printer

### Activity

#### A. Pre-Activity Discussion

1. Ask students if they know the difference between a *subject* and a *citizen*.
2. Clarify that a subject passively follows his or her ruler or rulers, as is often the case in nondemocratic political systems.
3. Explain that citizens are much more active in their government than subjects are allowed to be: they elect officials to make laws, they lobby their government, and they have a voice in the political process.
4. Ask students: "What other activities are citizens involved in?" Discuss students' responses.

#### B. Here Today, Gone Tomorrow

1. Explain to students that citizens have both responsibilities and rights (e.g., it is our right to vote and our responsibility to educate ourselves about the issues being voted on).
2. Explain that we have many rights in the United States. Have students name several rights and write their suggestions on the chalkboard.
3. Tell students that if our government changed and we became subjects, many of these rights could change very quickly, without our consent.
4. Explain that simple freedoms could be taken away. Have students discuss what freedoms they would miss the most and which ones they might not miss as much.
5. Tell students that they will write a short story about what their life would be like if we suddenly became subjects instead of citizens.

(continued)



#### INCORPORATING TECHNOLOGY

Have students learn more about American citizenship at [bensguide.gpo.gov/6-8/citizenship](http://bensguide.gpo.gov/6-8/citizenship).



#### connecting across the curriculum

#### English/ Language Arts

Have students review, evaluate, and revise their short stories after they have presented them to the class.

Standards Links  
8.2.3, 8.2.4

**Activity (continued)** 

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6. Explain that their story should be written in the first person and include descriptive language.
7. Explain that they should cite changes that would occur politically as well as changes that might occur in their own lives.
8. Tell students that they may be as creative as they want as long as they stay within the parameters of the assignment and that the short story should not exceed four written pages.
9. Give students a due date for the short story and emphasize that their stories must be organized in a clear manner, proofread, and neatly written. Allow students who have access to a word processor to write their stories using that method.
10. Have student volunteers present their stories to the class on the due date.

**Questions for Review** 

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**Basic Concepts and Processes**

After students have presented their stories, ask them:

 According to your stories, is life better as a subject or as a citizen?

 Explain why this is so.

 What kind of political changes would occur if we suddenly became subjects instead of citizens?

 What documents grant us the right to be citizens?

 According to our current system, who has the power to turn us into subjects rather than citizens?

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