

Citizenship and Voting in a New Nation: The Case of Newbia

A Civic Decision-Making Simulation

Grade Level

Grades 9–12

Time Required

1–2 class periods (45–90 minutes)

Subject Area

World History / Civics / Government

Lesson Overview

New nations often face difficult decisions immediately after independence—especially regarding **who belongs**, **who may vote**, and **how citizenship is defined**. This lesson places students in the role of a national council responsible for creating the first citizenship and voting laws for the fictional country of Newbia.

Students must balance fairness, stability, justice, and democracy while considering the nation's complex history of conflict, migration, collaboration, and sacrifice.

Learning Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Define citizenship and voting rights
 - Analyze competing claims to political participation
 - Evaluate fairness, inclusion, and national security concerns
 - Design rules and enforcement mechanisms for democratic systems
 - Justify policy decisions using civic reasoning
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Background Scenario (Student Reading)

The country of Newbia has just gained independence from Lexatria after a long and violent struggle. Many people were killed on both sides of the conflict.

During the war:

- Some residents of Newbia fled the country.
- Some people living in Newbia fought for Lexatria.
- Many non-ethnic Newbians came from other countries to fight for Newbia's independence.

Newbia will hold its first national election in a few weeks. Anyone allowed to vote in this election will automatically become a citizen of Newbia, with all the rights and responsibilities that citizenship brings.

The challenge facing the nation is deciding who should be allowed to vote.

You are members of the national council responsible for creating the rules.

Student Task

As the National Council of Newbia, your group must:

1. **Create rules for citizenship**
 - Who qualifies?
 - Who does not?
 - Are there conditions or exceptions?
2. **Establish voting rules**
 - Age requirements
 - Residency requirements
 - Past actions during the conflict
 - Any waiting periods or oaths
3. **Design an enforcement system**
 - Who enforces the rules?
 - How will eligibility be verified?
 - What happens if someone violates the rules?

You must be prepared to **explain and defend** your decisions.

Instructional Procedure (Teacher Guide)

Step 1: Introduction (10 minutes)

- Explain that Newbia is a **fictional country**
 - Review key concepts:
 - Citizenship
 - Voting rights
 - Democratic legitimacy
 - Rule of law
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Step 2: Group Work (20–30 minutes)

- Divide students into small groups (3–5 students)
 - Provide each group with the task list
 - Encourage students to consider:
 - Fairness vs. stability
 - Inclusion vs. security
 - Short-term peace vs. long-term democracy
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Step 3: Presentation & Discussion (15–25 minutes)

- Groups present their citizenship rules
 - Compare similarities and differences
 - Discuss:
 - Which systems seem most fair?
 - Which might cause unrest?
 - Which best supports democracy?
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Guided Discussion Questions

- Should people who fought against Newbia ever be allowed to vote?
 - Do refugees lose political rights if they flee?
 - Should foreign fighters be rewarded with citizenship?
 - Can a democracy survive if too many people are excluded?
 - Is citizenship a right, a privilege, or both?
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Assessment Options

- Group policy presentation
 - Written justification of citizenship rules
 - Reflection paragraph:
 - “What was the hardest decision your group had to make and why?”
 - Exit ticket summarizing one trade-off faced by the council
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Teacher Notes

- There is no single “correct” solution
 - Encourage students to explain **why**, not just **what**
 - This lesson pairs well with units on:
 - Post-colonial states
 - Democratic transitions
 - Voting rights history
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Extensions & Enrichment

Extension 1: Historical Connections

Have students compare Newbia to real-world examples such as:

- Newly independent African nations
- Post–World War II governments
- Post–Cold War Eastern Europe

Extension 2: Constitution Writing

Ask students to draft a short citizenship clause for Newbia’s constitution.

Extension 3: Ethics Debate

Debate whether excluding certain groups strengthens or weakens democracy.

Extension 4: Modern Parallel

Connect the lesson to modern debates about:

- Immigration
 - Refugees
 - Voting access
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Conclusion

This lesson demonstrates that citizenship and democracy are not automatic—they must be deliberately designed. By simulating the challenges faced by a new nation, students gain a deeper understanding of the complexity, responsibility, and moral weight involved in building a democratic society.