



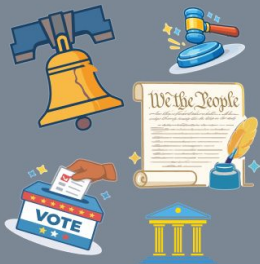
Student Workbook

Course 8

Grades 6–8

Being a
Responsible
Citizen





Being a Responsible Citizen

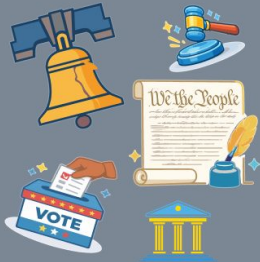
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Being a Responsible Citizen



Jump In

Should School Start Later?

Here's a real debate that schools argue constantly. Should your school start an hour later?

Research says middle schoolers don't get enough sleep, and a later start would help. A group of students at your school has asked the school board to push the first bell from 7:45 to 8:45.

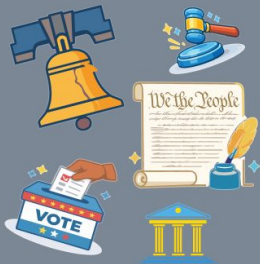
What do you think? If this was your school, do you think school start an hour later?

Yes

No

Not sure

Why? Give your best reasons for why school should 1) start later, 2) start earlier, or 3) stay the same in 1–2 sentences.



Being a Responsible Citizen

Jump In Should School Start Later?

Four Perspectives on a Later School Start



DEV

Falls asleep in second period. He stays up late because he thinks best in the evening. He strongly supports a later start.



PRIYA

Picks up her little brother at 3:10. If school ends at 4:15, nobody will be there to get him.



MARCUS

Works at his uncle's shop three afternoons a week. His family counts on that money, and a later dismissal would cost him work hours.



MS. ALVAREZ

Runs the buses shared by the middle and high schools. Starting an hour later would require more buses or a later high-school start.



Different Perspectives = Differing Opinions

Dev, Priya, Marcus, and Ms. Alvarez have different perspectives on this question. Read their stories to better understand where they are coming from. **Pick the person whose situation is most interesting to you or different from your own. Do you think that they want school to start earlier, later, or something different? What do they need that you weren't thinking about?** Answer in 2–3 sentences.

Now that you've thought about all four perspectives— is there an answer that works for everyone? **Circle one answer**

Yes, if people are willing to give something up | No, somebody is always going to lose out | I'm not sure yet

Make the Case You Disagree With

Anyone can argue for what they already believe. The harder skill — and the one democracy actually runs on — is understanding someone who wants something different, well enough to explain their reasoning better than they could. **That is what you are doing here.**

The Question: **Should school start an hour later?**

Dev — yes, start later. He falls asleep in second period. He is up until 12 finishing homework, because that is when his brain finally works. He wants the full hour.

Marcus — no, keep it as it is. He works at his uncle's shop three afternoons a week and his family counts on that money. A later dismissal costs him hours he cannot lose.

Priya — start EARLIER. She picks up her little brother at 3:10. She would rather school ran 7:15 to 2:15. She wants the opposite of what Dev wants.

Ms. Alvarez — wrong problem. She runs the buses, and any change costs money the district does not have. She thinks the real fix is the homework load keeping students up until 1 a.m.

1 Where do you actually stand?

Answer honestly. This will help you organize your thoughts.

Should school start an hour later? YES NO NOT SURE

My main reason(s) are:

2 Now argue the other side

Choose the person whose view is **FURTHEST** from yours. Circle their name:

DEV PRIYA MARCUS MS. ALVAREZ

Write their argument in first person, as if you were them. Make it the strongest version you can — not a weak one that is easy to knock down.

The reason I feel this way is...

3 What do you both already want?

You and the person you just wrote as disagree about the start time. But you almost certainly want some of the same things underneath it. Name two.

1.

2.

That is common ground. It is where almost every real solution starts.

4 Propose a compromise

Design a start time plan that both of you could live with. Nobody gets everything.

My proposal:

What I give up:

What they give up:

Why would this be worth it for both of you?

5 Reflect

1. Which of the six civil discourse norms (*see next page*) was hardest to use while writing someone else's argument? Why?

2. Did writing their argument change anything about how you see the issue? Be honest — "no" is a real answer if you explain it.

Before You Turn This In

- ☐ I wrote their argument the way THEY would say it, not the way I would mock it
- ☐ My common ground is something we both want, not two positions restated
- ☐ My compromise costs me something, not just them
- ☐ I answered the reflection honestly, even if the honest answer was "it did not change my mind"

Civil Discourse Norms

Reminding myself that this person's experience is real, even if it's different from my own.

Being open to learning something new, even if it challenges what I thought before.

Asking myself, "What can I learn from this perspective?"

Avoiding interruptions or side conversations so I can fully listen.

Listening to understand, not to judge or argue.

Paying attention to emotions as well as facts in what the speaker shares.

Scoring Rubric

9 points total

Criteria	Strong — 3	Developing — 2	Beginning — 1
Understanding Another View	The argument is written in first person, gives real reasons, and is strong enough that the person would agree it represents them fairly.	The argument is there but thin, or it is a weaker version than the person would actually make. Next step: give them their best reason, not their easiest one.	The argument is missing, one line long, or written to be knocked down. Next step: reread what that person needs.
Common Ground	Names two things both sides genuinely want, not just restated positions.	Names one real shared goal, or the second one repeats a position. Next step: ask what you both want underneath the disagreement.	Nothing shared is identified, or the answer is "we both want our own way." Next step: look for the goal behind the position.
Compromise & Reasoning	Proposes a workable plan and names clearly what each side gives up and why it would still be worth it.	Proposes a plan, but the trade-off is one-sided or unexplained. Next step: name what YOU give up.	No real plan, or one side gets everything. Next step: a compromise where nobody loses anything is not a compromise.

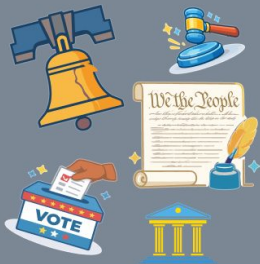
8–9 Strong

5–7 Developing

3–4 Beginning

If You Are Working With a Partner

Find someone who circled a different person than you did. Read your written argument out loud, in first person. Then let them read theirs. Afterward, ask each other one question — a real one, not a trap. Then do Parts 3 and 4 together.



Being a Responsible Citizen

Jump In

What Makes a Responsible Citizen?

Citizen Draft Pick

A brand-new country is writing its democracy from scratch.

The founders believe citizens should have responsibilities — but only have time to teach and encourage one above all others. Whichever they choose becomes the responsibility every school teaches, every leader repeats, and every kid grows up hearing. They want your draft (pick) as the most important responsibility to stay strong, fair, and free.



Which responsibility would you draft first?

Circle the one you select:

- **Stay informed** — Citizens seek out reliable information and think carefully before forming opinions.
- **Vote** — Citizens turnout for elections and help choose leaders and policies.
- **Respect the rights of others** — Citizens protect everyone's freedoms, including people they disagree with.
- **Take action in your community** — Citizens volunteer, attend meetings, and work on local problems.

Why did you select that responsibility? What makes it more important than the other three? Answer in 1–2 sentences.

Now the hard part. Imagine a country where citizens do your pick well — and ignore the other three. What goes wrong? Answer in 2–3 complete sentences.

Actions Speak Louder

A Citizenship Comic

You have spent this chapter judging other people's choices. Now make one up and show what it costs.

Your comic tells the story of one person facing a decision that affects other people — not a lecture about responsibility, but a story where somebody chooses and something happens because of it. Plan it here first. Comics fall apart when you start drawing panel 1 without knowing panel 6.

1 The situation

Somewhere real: your school, your neighborhood, a team, a group project, a family.

2 The choice

What does your character have to decide? Make it genuinely challenging.

3 Run the three questions

Which does your character do well? Which do they skip? Circle one in each row.

Are they informed?	YES	NO	SORT OF
Do they engage respectfully?	YES	NO	SORT OF
Do they take action?	YES	NO	SORT OF

Your character does NOT have to get all three right. Sometimes, the most interesting stories are about someone who gets one wrong.

4 Who else is affected?

Somebody besides your main character should feel the result of this choice. Who, and how?

Storyboard

One box per panel. Write what happens — stick figures and notes are fine. You are planning, not drawing yet.

Panel 1 — Set it up

Show the situation. Where are we? Who is this?

Panel 2 — The problem appears

Something happens that requires a decision.

Panel 3 — The hard part

Show why this choice is difficult. What is at stake?

Panel 4 — The choice

Your character decides. Show it, do not narrate it.

Panel 5 — The result

What happens because of that choice? Who feels it?

Panel 6 — The last beat

Leave the reader with the point — without spelling it out.

Scoring Rubric

12 points total

Criteria	Strong — 3	Developing — 2	Beginning — 1
A Real Choice	The character faces a decision that is genuinely hard, with something real at stake either way.	There is a choice, but the right answer is obvious. Next step: what makes doing the right thing costly here?	No real decision, or the character never has to choose. Next step: give them something to lose.
The Three Questions	The comic clearly shows whether the character got informed, engaged respectfully, and took action.	One or two are visible; the others are unclear. Next step: show the one you skipped.	The three questions are not visible in the story. Next step: reread your plan on page 1.
Consequences	Someone other than the main character is clearly affected, and the reader can see how.	A consequence happens but only to the main character. Next step: who else felt this?	The choice has no visible result. Next step: what changed because of what they did?
Show, Don't Tell	Dialogue, images, and action carry the message. No narrator explains the lesson.	Mostly shown, but a caption states the point outright. Next step: cut the caption and trust the picture.	The comic explains its message instead of showing it. Next step: what could a character DO to show this?

11–12 Strong

7–10 Developing

4–6 Beginning

Before You Turn It In

- ☐ My character faces a choice where the right thing costs something
- ☐ Somebody besides the main character is affected by what happens
- ☐ A reader could tell which of the three questions my character skipped
- ☐ Nobody in my comic delivers a speech explaining the moral

You are not graded on drawing.

Stick figures are completely fine. What is being scored is the story: whether the choice is real, whether the consequences land, and whether a reader gets the point without being told it.

Actions Speak Louder — My Comic

Name: _____

<div>1</div>	<div>2</div>	<div>3</div>
<div>4</div>	<div>5</div>	<div>6</div>

Use your storyboard. Stick figures are fine — you are graded on the story, not the drawing.

A Note to the Next Student

Somewhere, a student is about to open Course 1 for the first time. They do not know any of this yet. They may be wondering what civics has to do with their life at all.

Write them a letter. Not a summary of what you studied — what you are actually taking with you.

Jot your ideas here first. Then write the letter on the next page.

One idea from this course you actually think about now

It can be small. It should be true.

Something people get wrong about being a citizen

What did you believe before that you would tell them differently?

Which of the three questions matters most — and why

Informed? Respectful? Action? Pick one and defend it.

Things you might mention

Reconstruction and the promises that took a hundred years to keep · how many places a bill can die · who actually decides what · the county you ran and the people you disappointed · the letter you wrote to a real official · four people who all wanted different things and none of them wrong

Before you write

- ☐ Everything I wrote above is something I actually believe
- ☐ I picked ONE of the three questions, not all of them
- ☐ I could explain my answers out loud to a real person

