

# Lesson 2: Government by the People

## Vocabulary

**democracy** a government that is run by the people

**republic** a form of government; in a republic, the people elect other people to make laws and run the government

**constitution** a written plan for government

**citizen** a member of a country

## Life in a Republic

The United States is a **democracy**. In a democracy, the people have the power to make decisions about government. The United States is set up as a representative democracy, or **republic**. In a republic, the people elect other people to make laws and run the government. This is different from a direct democracy. In a direct democracy, the people themselves make laws and run the government. Our republic is based on the United States **Constitution**. A constitution is a written plan of government.


## The Role of Citizens

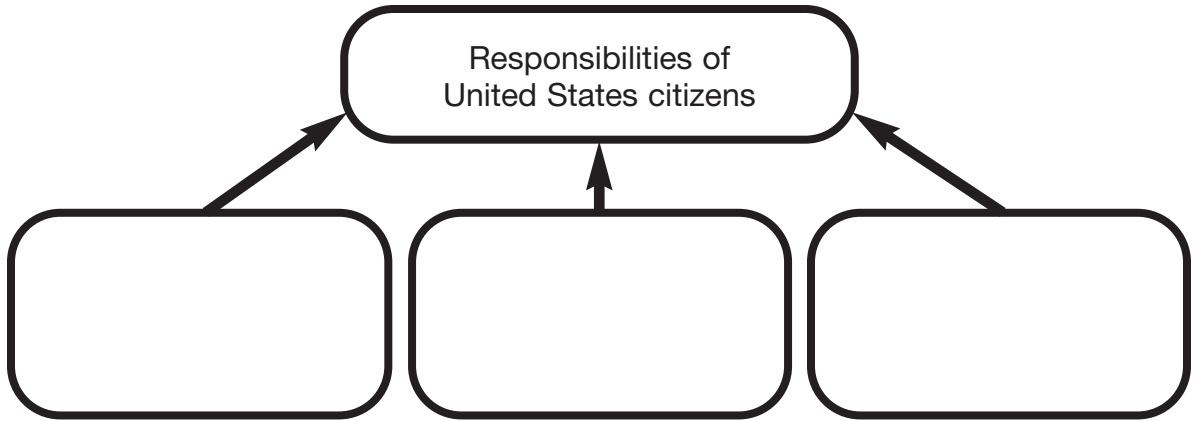
**Citizens** are members of a country. They play the most important part in the U.S. government. People born in the United States are U.S. citizens. People not born in the United States can become U.S. citizens. Citizens have several basic rights. Their rights include freedom of speech, freedom of religion, and the right to a fair trial. All citizens who are at least 18 years old have the right to vote. Citizens also have responsibilities. Some of these responsibilities are obeying the law, electing leaders, going to school, and respecting other citizens' rights.

## We the People

Our government is run by the people. It is based on the ideals of freedom, representative democracy, and equal rights for all. The government has not always treated all people fairly. Yet we can change laws to protect all Americans.

# Lesson 2: Review

1.  **Main Idea and Details** Fill in examples of important responsibilities that United States citizens share.



2. What is the difference between a direct democracy and a republic?

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3. What are some important rights and responsibilities of United States citizens?

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4. What are the ideals on which our government is based?

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5. **Critical Thinking: Decision Making** Do you think lowering the voting age from 21 to 18 was a good idea? Do you think it should be lower than 18? Use the decision-making steps on page H5 of your textbook.

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