



PhiloJeunes



Centre International PhiloJeunes



STUDY GUIDE 24: NATIONALITY–CITIZENSHIP

This study guide is intended for young people aged 11 to 16 years

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STUDY GUIDE 24: NATIONALITY – CITIZENSHIP

Educational goal: Raise students' awareness that citizenship can be exercised at different levels, in different ways and in different contexts, and that it involves rights and obligations.

Introductory note for teachers

We all know how crucial family and school education is for learning about citizenship and civics. To assist teachers, parents and other educators, this study guide contains many questions on the theme of citizenship (since questioning is the foundation of philosophical culture), concrete examples of civic action, information for clarifying thinking, case studies, and references to books and websites that can be used for teaching citizenship and civics. It includes questions, possible avenues of exploration, suggested definitions for discussion . . . But don't forget! It is important to approach the study guide as a research tool and not to turn it into a series of lectures. We have put some suggestions for responses and avenues to explore between parentheses . . .

PART 1: NATIONALITY, CITIZENSHIP, IDENTITY

1.a: NATIONALITY

Note for teachers:

We recommend creating a concept map to be used during the workshop or workshops to keep track of students' responses.

Definitions:

Here are some different definitions for **constructing the concept** of nationality:

“**Nationality**” is related to “nation”. What is a nation?

Nation — Merriam-Webster English Dictionary

“a community of people composed of one or more nationalities and possessing a more or less defined territory and government . . .”

“a territorial division containing a body of people of one or more nationalities and usually characterized by relatively large size and independent status . . .”

Nationality — Merriam-Webster English Dictionary

“a people having a **common origin, tradition, and language** and capable of forming or actually constituting a nation-state . . .”

“an ethnic group constituting one element of a larger unit (such as a nation) . . . *membership in a particular nation* . . .”

Examples: Being of Canadian or French nationality. Having double nationality. Not having a nationality (= being stateless).

From the French language article on “Nationalité” in Wikipédi a (wikipedia.org)

“[TRANSLATION] In international law, **nationality** is a person's or entity's membership in a country for the purposes of determining which law is applicable to the parties when there is an international dispute that falls under public law. In law, the notion can be contrasted with that of

citizenship, which applies only in domestic law for the purposes of determining the rights and duties of the citizens of a given country.

The notion of “nationality” is multifaceted and is related to the membership of an individual or group of persons in a cultural or political nation with recognized status or that desires to exist. The semantic breadth of the term is due mainly to a disagreement between two nineteenth century schools of thought based on opposing traditions: the universalism of French Enlightenment philosophy and the cultural relativism of German romantic nationalism. The notion can therefore be seen as having both political and cultural or sociological meaning.

On one hand, **political nationality** can be defined as legal proof of belonging to a state. An individual or a people that does not have a nationality is stateless. While nationality does not automatically overlap with citizenship, the two terms are often used as synonyms in everyday language and in official documents.

On the other hand, **cultural** or **sociological nationality** is used in the context of communities that do not necessarily form independent states. A cultural or social nationality may be a group of people in a more or less well-defined area who share a specific combination of objective characteristics (language, religion, culture, history) or a subjective characteristic of self-determination often described as nationalism.”

The feeling of love one may have for one’s country is not nationalism, but patriotism.

Criteria for identifying nationhood:

What criteria should we use to identify a specific nation or to draw the line between a nation and an ethnic group? In his book *On Nationality*, in addition to pointing out that nationality is based in part on the feeling of identity, political scientist David Miller suggests the following five criteria for identifying whether a community of individuals is a nationality:

- Constituted by shared belief and mutual commitment;
- Extended in history;
- Active in character;
- Connected to a particular territory;
- Marked off from other communities by its distinct public culture.

Miller also argues that the means of communication within such communities cement the feeling of national identity and that the criteria vary over time.

QUESTIONS FOR CONCEPTUALIZING NATIONALITY

We recommend creating a concept map to be used during the workshop or workshops to keep track of students’ responses.

To talk about nationality, we need to know what a nation is, so: What is a nation? What are its characteristics?

What is your nationality? What is nationality?

Can you have dual nationality?

Can you keep your birth nationality if you live in a different country?

Can you lose your nationality?

Clarification of the notions of nationality and citizenship

From the French website “Cour français facile” — <https://www.coursfrancaisfacile.com/2022/11/la-difference-entre-citoyennete-et.html>

“[TRANSLATION] Citizenship is a person’s status, recognised by custom or law as a legal member of a sovereign state or national entity. Nationality, on the other hand, is a person's membership in a nation, which may be evidenced by a passport, birth certificate or naturalization papers. Nationality is an ethnic or racial concept, whereas citizenship is a legal or political concept. A person's nationality indicates their place or country of birth, while a person's citizenship indicates that they are registered as a citizen by the government of the country in question.”

1.b: CITIZENSHIP

Definitions of “citizen and “citizenship”

What is the etymology of the word “citizen”?

(From the Latin *civis*, a resident of a city.)

The **notion of citizen** has changed over time:

In ancient Greece?

[Member of the city, a man (not a woman), a free man (not a slave or a foreigner), who participates in the political entity’s decisions on laws, war, justice, administration.]

In the Roman Empire?

[A free man belonging to the Empire, with political rights.]

At the time of the French Revolution [1789].

[In contrast with a “subject” (of the King), any man with no reference to social hierarchy, in contrast with the nobility.]

[A citizen is a person who comes under the protection and authority of a state and is a national of that state. A citizen enjoys civic and political rights and has duties towards the State.]

In France:

(A French citizen is a person who holds French nationality and enjoys civil and political rights.)

You can become French:

— **by attribution** by virtue of **jus sanguinis** — “**right of blood**” (“[TRANSLATION] A French child is one who has at least one French parent” (*French Civil Code*, article 18)) or by double **jus soli** — “**right of soil**” (“[TRANSLATION] A child born in France is French if one at least of his parents was himself or herself born there.” (*French Civil Code*, article 19-3)).

— **by acquisition**. A foreigner can acquire French nationality “**by reason of birth and residence in France**” (*French Civil Code*, article 21-6), by reason of **marriage** with a French spouse, by a decision of the public authorities resulting from a **naturalization** procedure. To apply for naturalization, you must be 18 years of age, have lived in France for 5 years, demonstrate good conduct and morals, and justify your integration into the French community (knowledge of the language, etc.). Acquisition of French nationality by immigrants is supposed to be the culminating point of successful integration.

In Canada:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/canadian-citizenship.html>

In general, a person is a Canadian citizen if

- they were born in Canada (Note: A child born in Canada of an accredited foreign diplomat is not a Canadian citizen by birth unless the child's other parent was a Canadian citizen or permanent resident of Canada at the time of the child's birth (section 3(2) of the *Citizenship Act*));
- they obtained Canadian citizenship thanks to the Canadian naturalization process (in other words, they were a permanent resident before becoming a citizen);
- they were born abroad and one of their parents (one of their legal or biological parents) was a Canadian citizen when they were born (because the parent was born or naturalized in Canada), so they are the first generation born abroad;
- they were born abroad between January 1, 1947, and April 16, 2009, (inclusively) to a Canadian parent who was also born abroad to a Canadian parent (in this case, they are the second or subsequent generation born abroad);
- they belong to certain classes of persons adopted abroad by a Canadian parent on or after January 1, 1947.

Deemed citizenship of a child:

<https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/c-29/page-2.html>

The Minister grants citizenship to a minor child who is a permanent resident under section 2(1) of the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* if the following conditions are met:

- **(a)** the application is submitted by the person authorized by regulation to represent the minor;
- **(b)** the minor meets, subject to the regulations, all the conditions related to the status of permanent resident under the Act.

Preparing to exercise citizenship through the «Culture and Citizenship in Québec» program

“Citizenship can be defined as the institutionalization of the connection between individuals and a political community through the granting of rights (civil, political and social) and their associated obligations and responsibilities, particularly those related to participation. This participation requires knowledge, know-how and interpersonal skills that foster recognition of oneself and of others as well as the pursuit of the common good.

In Québec, citizenship is exercised in a negotiated space where rules and common standards are discussed through dialogue. It allows connections to be made between a variety of points of view and experiences and the idea of belonging to Québec society, and with due consideration given to individual and collective rights and responsibilities. Citizens, regardless of age, participate in the continuing quest for community life. This search is based on respect for human dignity and the construction of nuanced dialogue on the agreements, tensions and disagreements that characterize the pursuit of the common good. The Culture and Citizenship in Québec program equips students to develop relevant knowledge, know-how and interpersonal skills to exercise their citizenship now and in the future.” (*Culture and Citizenship in Québec: Elementary School*, Québec: Ministère de l'Éducation, p. 3)

Are children and young people citizens?

(Gaudet, S. (2018). "Introduction: citoyenneté des enfants et des adolescents." *Lien social et Politiques*, (80), 4–14. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1044106ar>)

"[TRANSLATION] The reason it is hard to conceptualize the citizenship of children and adolescents is perhaps because it is a recent development in social history. Since 1989, the *International Convention on the Rights of the Child* has given children and young people new rights and a new status: they are now subjects of law in the same way as adults. Therefore, we no longer need to ask whether they are citizens or not, but to reflect on the particularity of their status, to analyse the role of social institutions in relation to them, and to understand their practices within society. This is a fairly recent area of research and highlights three intellectual challenges: (1) to think about substantive citizenship in tension with formal citizenship; (2) to think about the differentiated citizenship of children and adolescents; (3) to think about children's citizenship beyond discourse on capacity."

QUESTIONS FOR CONCEPTUALIZING CITIZENSHIP

We recommend creating a concept map to be used during the workshop or workshops to keep track of the students' responses.

Are you born a citizen, or do you become one?

Do you know what a citizen is? How would you define the word "citizen"?

A citizen is... A citizen is not...

(Someone who exercises rights, in particular the right to vote, and who performs duties. Someone who participates in civic life, by getting involved, by standing as a candidate in elections, by taking on responsibilities in political, union or community life...).

In your opinion, what is a "**good** citizen"? A good citizen is...

We often hear that a good citizen obeys the law, but what about if the law is unjust or discriminates against some people or groups?

E.g.: First Nations claims for respect for their ancestral rights in Canada.

E.g.: members of the European Union's possible recourse to the European Court in Strasbourg concerning respect for human rights.

Discuss the various definitions suggested by the students. This is a normative matter, and so very controversial...

Is there such a thing as the right to disobey?

(E.g. Antigone, who, despite King Thebes's decree that doing so was prohibited, performed funeral rites her brother, who was an enemy of the State; Gandhi, who defended Indians' rights through non-violent resistance; the Indigenous parents who refused to give up their children to be sent to residential schools run by the Catholic Church, etc.)

Can you give some examples of positive disobedience? Negative disobedience?

What kind of power does a citizen have?

(Electing someone who is seeking the common good; contributing to civil life.)

What is a citizen's role?

("[TRANSLATION] A citizen is someone who participates voluntarily in the life of the community. They share with their fellow citizens the power to make the law, the power to elect and, where applicable, to be elected. If you make the law, it is only natural that you obey it. It is called civic-mindedness." (Régis Debray, *La République expliquée à ma fille*, 1998).)

Is it enough to just live in a country to become a citizen of it?

How do you become a citizen of a country?

Are you born a citizen or do you become one?

Can you lose your citizenship?

What does "exercising your citizenship" mean?

How old do you have to be to exercise your citizenship?

Citizenship and school

When you are school age, are you already a citizen, or not yet?

(You may be French or Canadian by birth or right of soil, but you can't vote until you are 18.)

Why do we talk about children and adolescents being citizens when the legal age to vote is 18?

Do you think school prepares young people to exercise their citizenship?

(History classes, France's moral and civic education classes, Québec's ethics and religious culture classes or, since fall 2023, culture and citizenship classes, elections to choose class representatives, school governing board elections, etc.)

Can you exercise a form of citizenship at your school?

If so, can you give some examples?

(Elect representatives, participate in classroom life, help each other in cooperative learning, etc.)

Citizenship at the local, national and international levels

Isn't citizenship really at the level of a State or country?

(Citizenship can be... — State: a country, France, Canada, etc.)

(A person who has civil and political rights in the State where they are a citizen, in particular the right to vote, in contrast with foreigners.)

European (in the case of France)

("Every person holding the nationality of a Member State shall be a citizen of the Union." (*Treaty on the European Union*, article 17))

World?

(Citizen of the world: a person who claims attachment to all of humanity and rejects borders between nations.)

Citizenship and nationality

Do you think there is a link between citizenship and nationality?

(The status of being a citizen is linked to nationality from the start. The connection between the two is very strong in France. While nationality is a necessary condition for citizenship, it is not sufficient. A person also has to have civil rights (the right to marry, to own property, etc.) and

political rights (the right to vote, for example). This means that minors, (who cannot vote until they are 18), persons of full age who are under tutorship and persons deprived of these rights by a court decision do not have full citizenship.)

Can a person who has immigrant status become a citizen before obtaining the nationality of the country in question?

What do citizenship and nationality have in common? How are they different?

1.c.: IDENTITY

What is identity?

Merriam-Webster English Dictionary

“the distinguishing character or personality of an individual”

Examples: Someone searching for their identity; national identity.

The set of factual and legal data that make it possible to identify a person (date and place of birth, surname, first name, parentage, etc.)

Example: Search for the identity of a drowned person.

QUESTIONS FOR CONCEPTUALIZING IDENTITY

We recommend creating a concept map to be used during the workshop or workshops to so keep track of the students' responses.

What does “identity” mean?

How does a person’s identity develop?

What group do you identify with? Is it possible to identify with several groups at once?

Can belonging to a group influence a person’s identity?

Can a person have several different identities? Explain.

What are the different types of identity that a person can have?

Key points for teachers:

Resource (in French): <https://www.maxicours.com/se/cours/les-identites-multiples-de-la-personne--premiere--emc/>

A person’s identity is unique (it is specific to each individual), and this is what make it possible to define that identity and for the whole world to recognize it.

It is also multiple because it is composed of many different facets.

It is also shared because it is constructed day by day through contact with others.

A person’s identity is made up of several things:

1. Their **legal identity**, which makes it possible to identify them and for everyone to recognize them;
2. Their **personal identity**, which is constructed day by day through the choices that they makes.

1. Legal identity

a. Identify and recognize a person

As the *Civil Code of Québec* states, each individual is given a surname and a given name by their parents from birth (articles 50-51); this is filiation.

For each individual, these elements, together with nationality, gender, and place and date of birth, constitute their legal identity.

These elements are unique and specific to each individual, like fingerprints. This makes identity theft a serious offence punishable by law.

b. Identity protection

Legal identity enables an individual to be identified and recognised in the eyes of everyone, and the elements that make it up are therefore protected by the State. The State validates and registers this legal identity at birth in official documents: civil status register, identity card, etc. Similarly, fingerprints and a photograph are now required to obtain a biometric passport and travel around the world.

It is possible to change certain elements of your legal identity, such as your name or nationality. However, these changes must follow a very strict official procedure. The French Civil Code states, for example, that only a “person who justifies having a lawful interest may apply for a change of his name. [. . .] The change of name shall be authorized by decree.” (Article 61)

Note: “undocumented migrants” are people who do not have the documents required to reside in France or Canada. They nevertheless have a legal identity in their country of origin.

2. Personal identity

a. The amplitude of personal identity

While legal identity is governed by standards and recorded in official documents, personal identity is multiple and varied.

However, like legal identity, it remains unique and specific to each individual.

It is made up of the various elements that make up an individual's environment:

- Family and friends;
- Sex and gender;
- Milieu;
- School;
- Leisure activities;
- Culture;
- Religious beliefs;
- Work environment, etc.

Together, all these aspects make up personal identity, but it should be remembered that none of them is sufficient to define an individual. *Reducing a person to their sex, age or beliefs is tantamount to discrimination.*

b. Under construction every day

Personal identity is enriched every day by the different choices made by an individual. These choices change the course of our lives, and each new experience develops new facets of our personality.

Today, a new type of identity is emerging and playing an increasingly important role: digital identity. This contains elements of both legal identity (name, date and place of birth, etc.) and personal identity (tastes, opinions, etc.).

It can, however, involve risks, as it can be shared and is therefore subject to the dangers of exposure on the Internet. If we are not careful, personal or even confidential information can be recovered and then shared without our knowledge and at our expense.

The essential points

An individual's identity is at the same time

- **Singular** (it is unique to each individual), which enables it to be defined and recognised by everyone and all around the world;
- **Multiple**, because it is made up of a very wide range of aspects;
- **Shared**, because it is constructed on a day-to-day basis through contact with others.

ASSIMILATION AND PROPOSALS

If you had to explain these 3 concepts to someone, how would you do it?

What proposals do you have for the concepts of nationality, citizenship and identity?

What questions remain about these concepts?

PART 2: RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

CONCEPTUALIZATION: RIGHTS AND DUTIES

RIGHTS

As citizens, we have rights and responsibilities. To know what our rights are, we need to agree on the definition of a right.

What is a right?

There are many possible answers

1. A **right** is the capacity, legally or by regulation granted by a public authority, to act in some a way, to enjoy an advantage: *At what age does one have the right to vote?*
2. A **right** is a moral privilege to act in a particular way: *You do not have the right to speak like that.*
3. A **right** is the permission given by some authority, to do something: *She has the right to go out this evening: her parents allow it.*
4. A **right** is something that confers a power, a prerogative, a title, an authority considered legitimate: *To defend one's rights. The company holds the mineral rights.*

A PhiloJeunes study guide on rights is also available (in French) at [www. Philojeunes.org](http://www.Philojeunes.org)

How can we know the rights relating to a nation, a country?

What are the different types of rights?

By consulting official documents, such as the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Quebec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms, the Civil Code, the Criminal Code, the Highway Safety Code . . .

Do children and adults have different rights?

- a. Discussion
- b. Consult the UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD (see the document included in the study guide) and ask these questions:

What do you think of this convention?

Did you know that children and young people have these rights?

As a citizen, do you have the power to ensure that these rights are respected?

DUTIES

(obligations and responsibilities)

“[TRANSLATION] With rights come responsibilities. A responsibility is a duty or an obligation. It is a kind of action that must be taken to ensure that certain rights are respected.”

Source: LES DROITS ET RESPONSABILITÉS EN DÉMOCRATIE

You have seen that you have rights. However, those rights are associated with duties and obligations.

What are a young person's duties and obligations?
Why do they have them?

Let the students consult the UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD again.
Ask them to select 6 rights and to associate each of these rights with obligations.

Exercise

I have the right to, I have the duty to.....
I have the right to, I have the duty to.....
I have the right to, I have the duty to.....
I have the right to, I have the duty to.....
I have the right to, I have the duty to.....
I have the right to, I have the duty to.....

A CITIZEN'S RIGHTS AND DUTIES

Is citizenship a right, an obligation or a duty? What rights does a citizen have?
(Think about human and civil rights. Examples: having civil rights, the right to vote, depending on nationality and age. The right to stand for election and to be elected. The right to education, health and social protection. The right to freedom of conscience and expression. The right to assemble, demonstrate and form trade unions.)

What are a citizen's duties?

(Paying tax if it is due, doing military or civilian service if it is compulsory, voting if it is compulsory as in Belgium, obeying the law on pain of punishment, being a juror in a trial, etc.).

CASE STUDY – problem situations

In Québec

[TRANSLATION]

"But what are these rights!!!

In a lesson on citizenship, the teacher discusses the rights of Canadian citizens. He asks: "As citizens, do we all have the same rights? How do we know if these rights apply to us?"

One student answers: "I certainly have all the rights recognized in Canada, because my family has been here for several generations."

Another student continues: "My family and I are immigrants, but we obtained our citizenship last year, so I think we also have all the rights recognised in Canada."

A third student continues: "My family and I are refugees. We were welcomed by Canada. We've applied for citizenship, but we haven't got it yet, so I don't know exactly what our rights are."

After these 3 interventions, the teacher says: "These are 3 different situations concerning citizenship that are very representative of the Canadian population."

Then a student raises his hand and calls out: "That's not quite fair! You've forgotten about us. I'm Indigenous, I belong to a First Nation. You know, people often talk about rights recognised in

Canada, forgetting to mention our ancestral rights. We are fighting to have them recognised, because we are the original inhabitants of Canada.”

The teacher answers: “You're right, our portrait of the Canadian population really wasn't complete. Talking about rights isn't so easy...”¹

Describe

Where is the situation taking place? When is it happening? What course is it? What rights are they talking about? Why talk about citizenship rights at school?

Make the connection

Have you ever heard of the *Indian Act*? Do you know the difference between an immigrant and a refugee? Why might one become a refugee? Are there any laws obliging us to accept refugees?

Make hypotheses, give opinions

Why do you think the teacher suggests they discuss the issue in class? If you became an immigrant or refugee, how would you like to be welcomed?

Why are the First Nations claiming their rights?

Talk about the notion of citizen (through comparison, opposition, generalization)

Using the examples of citizenship we've talked about, compare Canada's situation with that of other countries you know. Do citizens of other countries have the same rights as Canadian citizens? What kind of government do we have in Canada? Do you know of any other types of government?

Can you name a right that a citizen has in our country? Can you name a duty that a citizen has in our country? How do we know what rights citizens have, and who determines them? Do you know the principles that the law must respect in a democracy like ours?

If you are interested in continuing the discussion on Indigenous peoples:

Video “On nous appelait les sauvages” (in French): <https://video.link/w/ZJGCc>

In France

Does being a responsible citizen mean obeying the law?

Today in History class, we had a guest speaker. His parents were resistance fighters during World War II in France, when it was occupied by Germany. The speaker explained to us that his grandparents were exemplary citizens because of what they had done, and that he was very proud of them. Despite the risk of being arrested, they first sheltered people wanted by the police because they were Jewish and did not want to wear a yellow star, then they sabotaged certain arms factories by planting bombs, and finally they spied on airports to give information to the British secret services and help prepare the landing of soldiers in France to drive out the Germans. When the speaker left, a student said to our teacher: “I don't understand why you asked this speaker to come. What his grandparents did was against the law and we've been taught that a citizen must obey the law. Wasn't inviting that speaker kind of strange?”

The teacher looked at him and seemed a bit surprised. Then she said: “What you're saying is very interesting, and I suggest we all discuss it together in the next lesson.”

¹ See Appendix 1 for additional definitions and references.

Describe

Where is the situation taking place? When? What class is it? Did the invited speaker person experience what he or she is talking about? Is he talking about something that happened to him? What did the people he is talking about do? Were they authorised to do it at the time?

What happens after the speaker leaves? In terms of what a citizen should be, what problem does this student point out to the teacher? What is the teacher's reaction?

Make the connection

What period was the speaker was talking about? Do you know of any other situations, at other times or in other countries, where people feel justified in not obeying their own country's laws? Why do they feel that way? What happens when people do not obey the law? Do you know of any other situations in our country where people have not obeyed the law? Are there any situations in our country where people who do this are said to be exemplary citizens?

Make hypotheses, give opinions

Why do you think the teacher suggested that there should be a discussion in class? Do you think, like the student who spoke, that we should not consider the people the speaker mentioned as examples of exemplary citizens?

In your opinion, is the kind of situation the invited speaker was talking about a common situation, or is it a very special case? Why can we say that, in the situation in question, the people mentioned by the invited speaker can be examples for everyone? If you were in the same kind of situation as those people during the war, do you think you would try to behave like them too, or would you prefer not to? Why or why not? Do you think that those who didn't take part in the Resistance were necessarily "bad" citizens? What reasons could they have had for not behaving in the same way as the invited speaker's grandparents?

Talk about the notion of citizen (through comparison, opposition, generalization)

Based on the examples of situations we have discussed, if you compare those that we find "good" and those we find "bad", what do you think is different about them? Can you think of an example of behaviour that is the opposite of what a citizen should, in principle, do? Do you know anyone who was deprived of certain rights as a citizen? Why did that happen?

What do you know about how a citizen should behave in relation to the law? Do you know whether, in certain special circumstances, a citizen might be asked to not obey a law? What other types of behaviour are generally expected of a citizen in a democratic society? Is it enough to live in a country to be a citizen?

Can you name a right that a citizen has in our country? Can you name a duty that a citizen has in our country? How do we know what rights citizens have, and who determines them? Do you know the principles that the law must respect in a democracy like ours?

ASSIMILATION AND PROPOSALS

If you had to explain citizens' rights and responsibilities to someone, how would you do it? What proposals do you have regarding citizens' rights and responsibilities?

PART 3: ENVIRONMENTAL CITIZENSHIP

Introduction

Thinking about environmental citizenship means thinking about our future as citizens of the world. Some people believe that it is important to be concerned about the future of our planet and the relationships we have with other living beings (flora, animals). These people are called eco-citizens.

However, there are others who don't believe that climate change exists at all, or that entire species are disappearing. They are called climate sceptics.

In contrast, other people feel really stressed by these changes and fear for the future of the planet and humanity. These people develop eco-anxiety.

So, let's take the time to discuss citizenship in relation to the environment, the climate and the relationships between living beings.

ENVIRONMENTAL CITIZENSHIP, CLIMATE CHANGE SCEPTICISM, ECO-ANXIETY

What is environmental citizenship?

According to European Cooperation in Science and Technology: "Environmental Citizenship" is defined as the responsible pro-environmental behaviour of citizens who act [. . .] in the direction of solving contemporary environmental problems, preventing the creation of new environmental problems, achieving sustainability as well as developing a healthy relationship with nature." (<https://www.cost.eu/environmental-citizenship/>)

What does it mean to be an eco-citizen?

Being an eco-citizen means being aware that each of your daily actions has an impact on the planet, and consequently making a commitment to respect the environment in order to limit the impact that your actions will have on the planet.

Are you concerned about

Animal abuse?

The disappearance of certain animal and plant species (loss of biodiversity)?

Pollution of the planet (e.g. the greenhouse effect from too much CO₂ produced by humans)?

What do you know about environmental ethics in terms of

A set of concrete actions (give examples);?

Environmental science?

A political movement (e.g. the Green Party)?

What does environmental ethics recommend

With respect to nature, the planet?

Animals?

Our food?

(Respect the natural balance, do not use up fossil fuels, produce renewable energy, do not mistreat animals, eat organic food, etc.)

What is an environmental action?

(An environmental action is something you do or a habit that limits the environmental impact of your lifestyle).

Should a citizen feel concerned by environmental actions?

Why? Why not?

Give some examples of environmental actions:

When you are out walking in nature;

When you are gardening;

When you are shopping in the supermarket;

When you are cooking;

When you produce waste at home?

(Don't leave rubbish out in the open or in town, pick it up when you find it. Help sort waste at home and at school. Avoid packaging as much as possible. Eat as little meat as possible, eat organic food...)

Examples of citizens committed to protecting the environment

Do you know people trying to fight climate change?

(Greta Thunberg, your friends, you, etc.)

As a citizen, is there anything you cannot do to defend the environmental cause?

Explain your answer.

Example: Greta Thunberg

In London, where she was prosecuted after a climate protest that disrupted a conference organised by the oil and gas industry in October 2023, environmental activist Greta Thunberg pleaded not guilty to a public order offence...

Greta Thunberg was charged along with 25 other activists after demonstrating in October 2023 outside the Energy Intelligence Forum, a conference bringing together the major oil and gas companies in a luxury hotel in London.

Following these events, she had to appear in court to defend her case. Should she have been found guilty of public mischief or not?

CLIMATE CHANGE SCEPTICS

What is climate change scepticism?

What criteria do climate sceptics use to say that climate change does not exist?

Are these criteria valid? Explain your answer.

What are the consequences of climate change scepticism?

Video for further reflection (in French): [Climatosceptiques : la science, le doute et le déni](#)

ECO-ANXIETY

What is eco-anxiety?

What criteria do eco-anxious people use to say that climate change is dangerous and will lead to the loss of humanity? Are these criteria valid? Explain your answer.

What are the consequences of eco-anxiety?

Video for further reflection (in French): [3 minutes pour comprendre l'écoanxiété chez les jeunes](#)

Some images for further discussion



<https://myfamilyup.com/eco-anxiete-parent-aider-comprendre-son-enfant/>

<https://www.pinterest.com.au/pin/burning-earth-globe-west-hemisphere-stock-photo-image-of-destruction-danger-26610180-604678687482888798/>



<https://www.ouest-france.fr/editionusoir/2019-10-09/leco-anxiete-nous-puette-et-ce-nest-pas-forcement-une-mauvaise-chose-f577240c-8725-4a5c-86da-85cf22c44de7>

References:

[Les climatosceptiques, qui sont-ils et comment raisonnent-ils ? \(in French\)](#)

[L'écoanxiété, le nouveau mal du siècle \(in French\)](#)

[Comprendre les changements climatiques, Gouvernement du Québec \(in French\)](#)

[Understand climate change, Gouvernement du Québec \(in English\)](#)

CASE STUDY – problem situations

Eco-citizenship

The other day at school, we were talking about respect for nature. We wondered what it might mean to be an “eco-citizen”. We all seemed to agree that it meant being responsible, taking care, preserving our environment for future humans. We agreed, for example, that we should impose taxes or limit the use of polluting vehicles. But suddenly Eleonor, who hadn't said anything until then, spoke up: “You're very kind with your big ideas about being responsible, but in my family,

we have no choice because we're poor. Our car pollutes, but it's cheap and if we can't use it anymore, my parents will lose their jobs. We'll have nothing, we'll lose what little we have! You want to preserve nature, but maybe you should be thinking first those who are alive before thinking about those who aren't even born yet.”

We were all stunned: we didn't know that Eleonor was poor and then... we respect her and we don't want her to be destitute... So what should we do?

Describe

Where is the situation taking place?

What positions do the different students seem to be taking?

What meaning do they give to the word “eco-citizen”?

What do they propose to do in the name of eco-citizenship?

In reality, are all the students in agreement?

Which student speaks out: how does she contradict the proposals made by the other students?

How do the other pupils react when Eleonor has finished speaking?

Make the connection

What are some political decisions that have been taken to ensure respect for eco-citizenship?

How should an eco-citizen behave?

Give some examples of situations where people have not agreed with an “eco-citizen” measure and/or not complied with it.

What reasons do these people give for behaving in this way? Is it always linked to poverty, as in the case of Eleonor?

Make hypotheses, give opinions

Why do you think the students don't know what to say after Eleonor speaks?

Do you think that after Eleonor speaks, the other students will necessarily change their minds and say that we should let particularly polluting vehicles drive around without caring about it?

What might happen if we decided not to care about the environment at all?

What might happen in the classroom after Eleonor speaks?

What do you think should be done in this situation?

In your opinion, are people like Eleonor necessarily opposed to caring for the environment?

Do you think that, to save future humans, it would be better not to deal with the problem raised by Eleonor?

Do you think that if we decide to behave like eco-citizens, then, necessarily, others won't be able to survive?

Do you see ways to take both eco-citizenship and poverty into account? Can you give an example of an attitude an eco-citizen should have, and one they should not have?

Do you think that being an eco-citizen is easier said than done?

Talk about the notion of eco-citizenship (through comparison, opposition, generalization)

What is the difference between being an eco-citizen and simply being a citizen?

What would be the opposite of being an eco-citizen?

Are an eco-citizen and an ecologist the same thing or not?

Does being an eco-citizen mean joining an environmental party?

Does being an eco-citizen mean that you necessarily vote for an environmental party?
Based on the examples and explanations we've given, if you had to explain what it means to be an eco-citizen, what would you say?

Hey! Polluters!

Listening to the radio the other day, Chloé heard the presenter speak out against all the cars polluting the environment. He recommended that everyone use public transport to reduce their environmental footprint. He said there were no good reasons for driving alone in a car, or even worse in a large vehicle.

He said that those who use their cars regularly and those who own larger vehicles should be penalised because they don't take care of the environment. They should pay more tax and even face penalties!

In his view, the government should be tougher on motorists, whom he describes as delinquents and polluters.

The presenter said that he cycles all year round, even in winter.

On hearing these comments, Chloé seriously wonders about the host's arguments.

Is he right to hold these views? Explain your answer.

In what context might he be he right? In what context might he not be right?

Are car users less environmentally aware?

Why should users of larger vehicles be penalised? Are there contexts where owning a larger vehicle is necessary? If so, give examples.

In what circumstances is it possible to not use a motor vehicle?

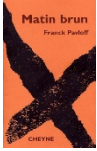
ASSIMILATION AND PROPOSALS:

If you had to explain the concept of eco-citizenship to someone, how would you do it?

What are your suggestions for eco-citizenship?

Books On Citizenship for Philosophical Discussion

Franck Pavloff, *Brown Morning*, trans. Chris Mulhern (Dublin: The O'Brien Press, 2003)



- Why aren't the country and time in which the story is set specified?
- Identify the different bans and their progression: in your opinion, why do the rulers go through all these stages instead of banning all the animals they don't like at once?
- How do the two characters react to the series of prohibitions decreed by those in power? Why do you think they react as they do?
- Do you think they could have reacted differently? If so, in what ways, and if not, why not?
- The two characters obey all the rules imposed by the authorities. Would you say that they behave like good citizens? If you think 'yes', say why; if you think 'no', say what you think good citizen behaviour would be in the circumstances of this story.
- How do you understand the ending? (What happens to the narrator?)
- What does this story warn readers against?

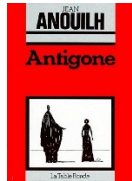
Alex Shearer, *Bootleg*, (Macmillan, 2003)



- At one point, Smudger and Huntly wonder if it would be okay to break a law if you thought it was unjust.
 - o Do you think it is legitimate to ask this question, or that, fair or unfair, a law must always be obeyed?
 - o Do you think there can be unjust laws? If so, what criteria should be used to decide whether laws are just, and who should decide?
- What do you think about the means found by Smudger, Huntly and Mrs. Bubby to fight against the law prohibiting sweets (in chapters 1 to 17)? Would you describe what they do as an act of resistance? (Explain your answer.)
- The laws of the Good For You Party aim to protect public health: to prevent people from getting diseases related to sugar. Taking a bit of distance from the anecdotal aspects of the story (the chocolate and cake prohibition), do you think it is legitimate for a government to establish measures it thinks will protect people from themselves? Justify your opinion no matter how you answer the question (yes, no, or "partly").
- If someone were to say to you: "Power does not belong to any government. It belongs to the people. To you. To me. To us." How would you understand that sentence? Do you

think it is (a) true (b) false (c) dangerous (d) partly true and partly false (e) true and dangerous (f) false and dangerous?

Jean Anouilh, *Antigone*, Adapted into English by Lewis Galantière (London: Methuen & Co., 1946)



- As a “warm-up”: Are you aware of any situations, whether historical or contemporary, where citizens have criticized or rebelled against laws they consider unjust? What means do they have to do this?
- In the scene between Creon and Antigone where Creon tries to convince Antigone to obey the law and she resists:
 - o What values does Creon defend? What values does Antigone defend?
 - o Which one of them adopts the best attitude? (Either choice is fine, so long as you explain why.)
- Would you say that Creon has the qualities of a good ruler?
- Creon exercises his authority as a lawful king, Antigone exercises her freedom of conscience. Why do they come into conflict? Do you think that today, in our countries, legitimate authority of the state and freedom of conscience can come into conflict? (Let's assume that the state is legitimate and democratic, but the same question could be asked in the case of a dictatorship or a non-legitimate government. In that case, the reflection would be different.)
- Paul Ricoeur wrote: “[TRANSLATION]] Why does this tragedy still interest us? Because it presents us with two characters who are both right and both wrong, and who are wrong because they are right” (“L'éthique, la morale et la règle” *Autre Temps*, 1989:24, p. 58). How do you understand this statement and what do you think about it?

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- La citoyenneté des enfants et des adolescents (academic article, in French)
- L'écocitoyenneté, quels droits pour les générations futures ? (in French)
- C'est quoi être citoyen ? Video concerning France (in French)

Definitions

Immigrant:

A person who immigrates to a country other than their own. (Immigration is often motivated by a search for work and the prospect of a better quality of life.)

Refugee:

“Refugees are people who are forced to leave their home countries because of serious human rights abuses.

The right to asylum from persecution is an international human right. It is guaranteed by the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (the “Refugee Convention”).

According to this Convention, a refugee is a person:

who is outside his or her home country and who has a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion.

The Convention also spells out the key responsibilities of states towards refugees, which include the obligation not to send refugees back to the country where they face persecution. (This is known as the principle of “non-refoulement”.)

The 1951 Refugee Convention was developed in the aftermath of the Second World War period. People were determined not to repeat the mistakes that occurred during the Holocaust, when many countries had failed to offer asylum to Jewish refugees, contributing to the death toll in the genocide (Canada, to our shame, was one of the worst offenders).

Canada did not sign the Convention until 1969.” (Canadian Council for Refugees web page: <https://ccrweb.ca/en/refugee-facts>)

For further information see: Canadian Council for Refugees

Additional references: Indian Act; Rights of Indigenous Peoples in Canadas; Taking action to ensure all federal laws uphold Aboriginal and treaty rights

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