
A test of citizenship?

WORKSHEET A

What does it take to be a good citizen of a country? Do you think there are any kinds of knowledge, ideas or values that all or most people in your country share, and that an immigrant from a country with a different culture probably has to learn, or agree with, if they want to fit in? Or do you think immigrants should not be expected to 'fit in', and that different groups in society should just accept each other's way of life? And how important do you think it is for immigrants to become fluent in your country's language?

In Britain, for example, the government decided a few years ago that immigrants from most countries needed to know certain things about Britain before they could be granted full citizenship, and therefore it created a 'Life in the UK' test for them. The test consists of written questions, the idea being that passing it not only shows a sufficient knowledge of the British way of life but also a sufficient level of understanding in English. A special book of facts about Britain was published for people to study before taking the test. However, it was soon noticed that the book contained some practice questions that many people who have lived in Britain all their lives might not have been able to answer correctly. Examples include 'How many people belong to an ethnic minority?', 'How many people in the UK own their own home?' and 'What type of constitution does the UK have?' Did this show, perhaps, that knowing a lot of facts is an important part of being a full citizen?

Some people in the British government have suggested that one of the things that should be considered when deciding if immigrants can stay permanently in the country is whether they are 'active citizens'. This is a vague idea but it seems to involve participating in the local community through some form of social activity, such as voluntary work. Needless to say, not everyone has lived in Britain all their lives could be considered 'active' in this way.

The British prime minister, Gordon Brown, has said that immigrants should 'be able to speak the English language' and 'be able to understand and speak about British cultural traditions'. He has also spoken of 'the shared values that make us more than a collection of people but a country'.

But what shared values does he mean? Things like 'personal freedom' and 'the rule of law' are often suggested, but there is a lot of disagreement. The only thing that is sure is that the debate about what it means to be a British citizen is not going to end any time soon.

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WORKSHEET B

Exercise 1

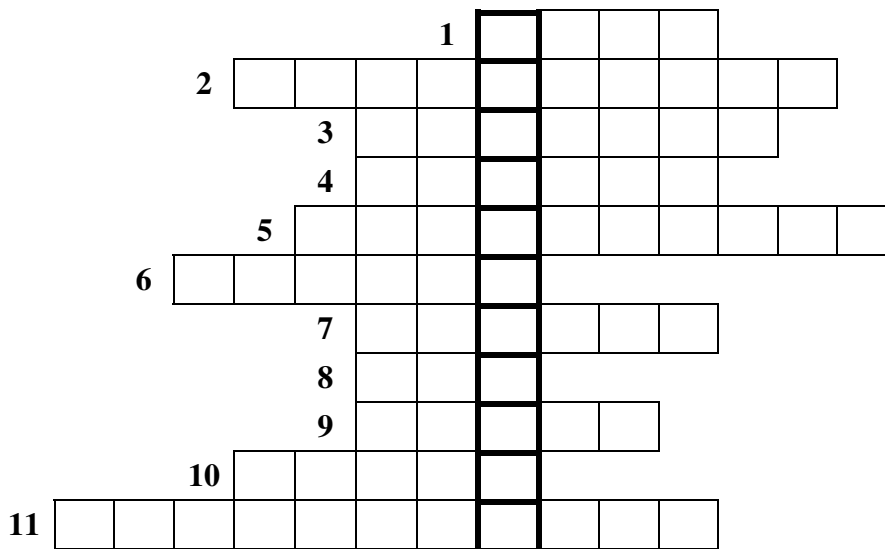
Match the words (1-14) from the text on Worksheet A with the definitions (A-N).

1 fluent in	A be accepted by a group of people because you are similar to them
2 grant	B as much as is needed
3 vague	C a small number of people or things that are part of a larger group (and often different in some way from most of the group)
4 consist of	D a discussion in which people or groups have different opinions about a subject
5 debate	E for a very long time or for all the time in the future
6 tradition	F able to speak a foreign language very well
7 sufficient	G allow someone to have or do what they want
8 prime minister	H a set of basic laws or principles for a country that describe the rights and duties of its citizens and the way the country is governed
9 society	I be made of (particular parts or things)
10 permanently	J not clear or fully explained
11 constitution	K done for no pay
12 voluntary	L head of the government (in some political systems)
13 fit in	M a way of doing things or a belief that has existed for a very long time
14 minority	N People in general living together in a country

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Exercise 2

Complete the crossword below. If all the words are correct, a word that appears frequently in the debate about what it means to be a British citizen will read from top to bottom.



1. People can buy a _____ with questions to practise for the ‘Life in the UK’ test.
2. Gordon Brown is the head of the British _____.
3. The ‘Life in the UK’ test has _____ questions.
4. The idea of what makes an _____ citizen is not clear.
5. The ‘Life in the UK’ test is taken by some _____ in Britain.
6. Some people, including the prime minister, believe that all or most British citizens do have the same _____.
7. Some British citizens belong to _____ minorities.
8. The ‘Life in the UK’ test might include a question about how many British people _____ the places where they live.
9. Gordon Brown agrees that immigrants who want to stay in Britain should be able to _____ English.
10. The text questions whether knowing a lot of _____ about a country is an important part of becoming a full citizen.
11. Some people who go to live in other countries are granted full _____ and some are not.