

**CITIZENSHIP DRAMATIZED;
A BIT OF BRIGHTENING FOR
THE STUDY OF CIVIL
GOVERNMENT**

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Citizenship dramatized; a bit of brightening for the study of civil government by George A. McPheters & Grace J. A. Cleaveland & Stella W. Jones

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**GEORGE A. MCPHETERS & GRACE J.
A. CLEVELAND & STELLA W. JONES**

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UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

CITIZENSHIP DRAMATIZED

A BIT OF BRIGHTENING FOR THE STUDY
OF CIVIL GOVERNMENT

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PREFACE

He who learns from practice as well as precept, has ever been the most firmly grounded in knowledge; and it is equally true that he to whom study is play, has ever been the most apt pupil.

Recognizing the fact that the study of government is becoming of major importance to a vast number of American women, and that increasing emphasis is being put on it in American schools, the authors of this little book have endeavored to present the essential facts of citizenship through a series of demonstrations or plays that will instruct and at the same time entertain. They are far from claiming to have given here an exhaustive compilation of facts on citizenship. Rather they have attempted to excite the curiosity of the individual pupil and thus lead him to investigate the subject himself.

With this in mind it is urged that those who take part in the following demonstrations visit the legislative sessions and political gatherings in or near their own communities whenever possible. This will enable them to make the performance realistic, and furthermore, as methods of government procedure differ in different localities, it will help to make each demonstration locally accurate.

For the past three years this method of instruction has actually been carried out with marked success in the High School of Melrose, Massachusetts; and during

the winter of 1919-20, it was enthusiastically adopted by the Melrose Equal Suffrage League in its citizenship work. There can be no doubt of the educational value of this method, nor of the entertainment it will afford, but any tendency to use it as a burlesque would be unpatriotic and destroy its further usefulness.

When the demonstrations are not given in a class room and supervised by a teacher, an efficient leader, who is familiar with the subject matter and can assign the parts and prepare the material, is absolutely essential. The leader also acts as a cicerone or showman explaining or emphasizing each episode in a performance.

In the class room all rehearsals may be dispensed with. Remarkable results will be obtained by allowing the pupil to imagine himself the person of his part and giving him great latitude in dialogue. It is more difficult for the adult to do this successfully, but the peculiar charm that characterizes this method of teaching will be forfeited by repeated rehearsals.

The story that appears in connection with each of the chapters is for the benefit of the leader, who for any reason cannot acquire this data for himself from the many available resources. It may be read or told as an introduction to the performance, if so desired.

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CHAPTER I

THE STORY OF TOWN GOVERNMENT

One of the oldest and perhaps the most democratic of all forms of government is that of the town. Brought here from England, where it had existed for centuries, it still flourishes, particularly in New England, as a favorite and satisfactory form of self-government.

The two essential elements of the town government are the town meeting and the board of selectmen. The former might be called the town legislature. Instead of acting through delegates, however, the people act directly, and by open discussion and direct voting they determine the policies which affect them as individuals and as parts of the community.

The town meeting is held once a year—usually in the spring. The larger towns find it necessary also to hold one or two adjourned sessions, and at times, special meetings, to consider matters which require immediate attention. The warrant, posted in conspicuous places in the town, to inform the voters of the time and place of meeting and of the business to be transacted, is a tradition as old as the town meeting itself.

The most important functions of this assembly are the election of public officials and the passage of laws which deal with local affairs, such as public finance, schools, health, roads and the care of the poor. Reports

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are made by the officials of the work accomplished and estimates of the money necessary for further use are submitted. Perhaps the most characteristic feature of this democratic institution, so dear to the real American, is the general discussion, interspersed with heated debates, which almost invariably occurs as each article of the warrant comes up for consideration.

The town clerk is an important official. Among other things, he keeps the records and registers, issues licenses of various sorts and calls the town meetings to order, but the moderator, whose choice is the initial business of the meeting, is second to none in importance during the session.

Of course, the finances of the town are handled by the town treasurer, with the necessary assistance of the assessors and collectors of taxes, and an auditor.

The selectmen, from three to nine in number, according to the size of the town, constitute the executive authority for all matters not otherwise assigned. They are usually elected for a term of three years and in case of the smaller board, the term of one member expires each year. This board assumes the general management of the town's affairs, listens to all complaints and represents the town in all suits at law. The New England town is a legal corporation and, as such, can hold property, sue and be sued.

It must not be forgotten that the foregoing description applies particularly to the town governments in New England, where the original methods and customs are still followed closely. In other parts of the country are found town governments more or less divergent from this cherished institution.