

# Are You Smarter than a Citizen?

By Lea Blanton  
Alamance Community College

## Teaching Objective

Students will apply the USCIS Civics content in a game format.



Graphic from  
<http://office.microsoft.com/en-au/clipart/default.aspx>

## Level

This game was designed for ESL citizenship classes, but teachers may also find the materials useful in any intermediate/advanced or advanced ESL classes. Before using, review the questions to be sure your students have covered the content. Delete or adapt questions and/or categories accordingly.

## Overview

This game approximates the TV game show **Are You Smarter than a Fifth Grader?** Instructors may choose to use the USCIS test items from <http://www.uscis.gov/portal/site/uscis> or the questions given on the following pages, which--by design--cover much of the same content in different words. The re-wording was done to help students understand this basic content in whatever way it might be asked.

## **Set Up**

To play **Are You Smarter than a Citizen**, divide your class into teams with an equal number of players on each team. The game works well with 2 to 5 teams of 3 to 5 people each. Name your teams. For example, you might name them Team Red, Team White, and Team Blue.

Ask the contestants on each team to number off, beginning with 1, so you will have Red Team contestant #1, Blue Team contestant #1, and so on.

Contestant #1 from Team Red may come forward and sit at a table facing the class (or any other physical arrangement that works for your classroom). After Team Red Contestant #1 finishes playing, Team White Contestant #1 plays, followed by Team Blue Contestant #1. Cycle through the teams until everyone has played.

Possible variation: You may choose to have contestant #1 from **each** team answer a first round question before the initial contestant is asked a second round question. This has the advantage of keeping all teams in play at the same time and the disadvantage of making the game more difficult for you to manage.

The teacher acts as the moderator. S/he chooses and reads the questions and informs the contestant whether his/her answer is correct or incorrect. Either the teacher or a student may be the scorekeeper.

## **Directions for Play**

The game consists of 7 questions for each contestant. Questions are divided into seven categories:

- 1) The Principles of American Democracy
- 2) The American System of Government
- 3) Rights and Responsibilities
- 4) American History – Colonial Period and Independence
- 5) American History – 1800s

- 6) American History since 1900
- 7) Geography, Symbols, and Holidays

The contestant chooses a category for his or her first question. S/he then selects a new category for each subsequent question through question six. S/he may never return to a category that s/he has used.

For the seventh question, the moderator picks the category. The moderator may use the one category that the contestant has not chosen or s/he may take the final question from any of the categories the contestant previously selected. This heightens the stakes because the contestant cannot avoid any category in the last question.

While a contestant is thinking about his/her response to each question, his/her teammates should write their own answers on paper so they can help the team if the contestant asks one of them to help, as explained below in the section on scoring.

### **Scoring**

Correctly answered questions carry an ever-increasing number of points, although higher points do not necessarily imply a question of greater difficulty:

- Question 1 is worth 20 points
- Question 2 is worth 40 points
- Question 3 is worth 80 points
- Question 4 is worth 160 points
- Question 5 is worth 320 points
- Question 6 is worth 640 points
- Question 7 is worth 1,000 points

Some of the re-worded questions at the end of these directions give a bonus opportunity. Unless otherwise indicated with the question, each correctly-answered bonus question is worth 10 points. A bonus question is a free opportunity to add points, i.e., there is no penalty for a miss.

When a contestant misses a question (other than a bonus question), s/he is immediately out of the game. However, s/he may use any of 3 “cheats” before answering: These cheats are called a peak, a copy,

and a save. The contestant who needs help can “cheat” by choosing one teammate and

- S/he can **PEAK** at the teammate’s written answer before giving his/her own answer.
- S/he can **COPY** the teammate’s written answer. S/he then must use the teammate’s answer. If the teammate is wrong, the contestant is out.
- S/he can have the teammate **SAVE** him/her if s/he incorrectly answers a question. If the teammate is correct, the contestant is saved, remains in the game, and gets the points for the question. If the teammate is incorrect, the contestant is out.

Remember, a student may miss a bonus question and remain in the game: s/he simply does not get bonus points added to his/her score. Each “cheat” can only be used once by the same contestant.

Although just one person at a time is the scoring contestant, the scores for all members of a team may be added to determine a winning team. If your class is small, you may not use teams: rather, you may just let each person play and the individual with the highest score wins. To break a tie, ask additional questions until one student misses.

### **Visual Guide**

The next page is a visual summary of the categories, the scoring, and the cheats. You may give a printed copy to each student, or display a single copy via overhead projector, or write this material on the board so the information will be accessible to everyone as the game is played.

### **Observations**

This game may be used over days or weeks. It should be played for time periods compatible with students’ attention spans and is a good exercise to use repeatedly for a specified period of time at the start or finish of class. Teachers may also decide to include a short time after each question is answered for class questions/comments/discussion to clarify any confusion the class may have about a question and its answer.

# Guidelines

## Categories

1. The Principles of American Democracy
2. The American System of Government
3. Rights and Responsibilities
4. American History – Colonial Period and Independence
5. American History – 1800s
6. American History since 1900
7. Geography, Symbols, and Holidays

## Scoring

Question 1 is worth 20 points  
Question 2 is worth 40 points  
Question 3 is worth 80 points  
Question 4 is worth 160 points  
Question 5 is worth 320 points  
Question 6 is worth 640 points  
Question 7 is worth 1,000 points

## Cheats

Peak  
Copy  
Save

# Questions for Are You Smarter than a Citizen?

## Category 1. Principles of American Democracy

- Q. Which came first, the Constitution or the Declaration of Independence?**  
A. the Declaration of Independence
- Q. What document sets up the U.S. government?**  
A. the Constitution
- Q. What is the Bill of Rights?**  
A. The first 10 amendments to the Constitution
- Q. The First Amendment to the Constitution guarantees five freedoms. Name three.**  
A. Freedom of Speech  
Freedom of the Press  
Freedom of Religion  
Freedom of Assembly  
Freedom to Petition the Government for Redress of Grievances
- Q. What does the Bill of Rights do?**  
A. The Bill of Rights establishes basic American civil liberties that the government cannot violate.
- Q..True or False? The Constitution has 27 amendments.**  
A. True
- Q. Early colonists declared their independence from what country?**  
A. Great Britain
- Q. “We the People” are the first three words of what document?**  
A. the Constitution

**Q..True or False? The First Amendment prevents the United States government from establishing a state supported church.**

A. True

**Q. Explain the “rule of law.”**

A. Everyone—including the government and elected officials—must obey the law.

**Q..True or False? The United States declared Independence from Great Britain in the Constitution.**

A. False ( The U.S. declared independence in the Declaration of Independence)

**Q..True or False? The economic system of the United States is Socialism.**

A. False

**Bonus points: What is the economic system of the United States?**

A. Capitalism

**Q. The Declaration of Independence proclaims that all men have certain unalienable rights. Among these are life, \_\_\_ and \_\_\_.**

A. liberty, and the pursuit of happiness

**Q. Spell “declaration.”**

A. D-E-C-L-A-R-A-T-I-O-N

**Q: How many “Ts” are there in Constitution?**

A. 3

## **Category 2. The American System of Government**

**Q. Who makes federal laws?**

A. Valid answers: (1)Congress or (2)Senate & House or (3)U.S. legislature

**Q. Name the three branches of government.**

A. Legislative (Congress)  
Executive (President)  
Judicial (the courts)

**Q. Why does the House of Representatives have 435 members?**

A. Representatives are allotted by population.  
(Each state has at least 1, and California has over 50.)

**Q. What is another description of checks and balances?**

A. Separation of Powers

**Q. Congress is made up of two parts. Name them.**

A Senate  
House of Representatives

**Q. The President heads what branch of government?**

A. Executive

**Q. Name a United States Senator who represents North Carolina.**

A Kay Hagan  
Richard Burr

**Q. What is the purpose of Checks and Balances?**

A. To stop one branch of government from becoming too powerful

**Q. How often is a U.S. President elected ?**

A. every 4 years

**Q. Who is the Vice-President of the United States now?**

A. Joe Biden



**Q. U.S. Senators serve for how many years?**

A. 6

**Q. True or False? The Speaker of the House is chosen by the majority party in the House of Representatives.**

A. True

**Q. True or False? U. S. elections are held the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November.**

A. True

**Q. How many U.S. Senators are there?**

A. 100

**Q. True or False? The Vice-President of the United States serves as Commander in Chief of the military.**

A. False

**Bonus Points: Who is Commander in Chief of the military?**

A. The President

**Q. True or False? If the President dies, the U.S. must hold a new election.**

A. False

**Bonus Points: Who becomes President?**

A. The Vice-President

**Q. If the President and Vice-President cannot serve, who serves as President?**

A. the Speaker of the House

**Q. A U.S. Representative is elected for how many years?**

A. 2

**Q. Name the President of the United States**

A. Barack Obama

**Q. Name a U.S. Representative from North Carolina**

- |                          |                          |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| A. G.K. Butterfield, 1st | Larry Kissell, 8th       |
| Bob Etheridge, 2nd       | Sue Myrick, 9th          |
| Walter B. Jones, 3rd     | Patrick T. McHenry, 10th |
| David Price, 4th         | Heath Shuler, 11th       |
| Virginia Foxx, 5th       | Mel Watt, 12th           |
| Howard Coble, 6th        | Brad Miller, 13th        |
| Mike McIntyre, 7th       |                          |

**Q. Spell “legislative.”**

- A L-E-G-I-S-L-A-T-I-V-E

**Q. How many times is the letter “E” in the word “executive.”**

- A. 3

**Q. Spell “judicial.”**

- A J-U-D-I-C-I-A-L

**Q. True or False? The states can make treaties.**

- A..False

**Q. Name the highest court in the land.**

- A. the Supreme Court

**Q. Spell “supreme.”**

- A. S-U-P-R-E-M-E

**Q. Who is the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court?**

- A John G. Roberts, Jr.

**Q. Name one thing that only the federal government can do.**

- A. Print money  
Declare war  
Create an army  
Make treaties

**Q. True or False? The Supreme Court vetoes bills.**

A. False

**Bonus Points: Who does veto bills?**

A. the President

**Q. Which of the following is not a power of the federal gov't:**

1. to print money
2. to explain laws
3. to declare war
4. to create an army

A. #2 to explain law

**Bonus Points: Who explains laws?**

A. the judicial branch

**Q. True or False? The states cannot draft people into the armed services.**

A. True

**Q. What does the President's Cabinet do?**

A. Advise the President

**Q. True or False? The President's Cabinet consists of the Vice-President, the Heads of executive government departments, and other government officials.**

A. True

**Q. Who is the only Cabinet member who is not given the title of Secretary?**

A. the Attorney General

**Q. How many justices are on the Supreme Court?**

A. 9

**Q. Who signs bills to become laws?**

A. the President

**Q. True or False? The executive branch of government decides whether a law goes against the Constitution.**

A. False

**Bonus Points: Who makes this decision?**

A. the judicial branch

**Q. Name the two main political parties in the United States.**

A. Democratic and Republican

**Q. Which of the following controls zoning and land use:**

- 1. the federal government**
- 2. the state government**

A. state government

**Q. What is the capital of North Carolina?**

A. Raleigh

**Q. Who is the governor of North Carolina?**

A. Beverly Purdue

**Q. A driver's license is a legal privilege controlled by which of these?**

- 1. the federal government**
- 2. the state government**

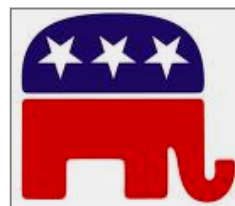
A. state government

**Q. Who is the Speaker of the House?**

A. Nancy Pelosi

**Q. Which party has an elephant as its symbol?**

A. Republican



**Q. Which party has a donkey as its symbol?**

A. Democratic

### Category 3. Rights and Responsibilities

**Q. True or False? Only U.S. Citizens can vote.**

A. True

**Q. How old must citizens be to vote?**

A. 18 and older

**Bonus Points: Can a citizen be too old to vote?**

A. No

**Q. True or False? Women have always been able to vote in the U.S.**

A. False

**Q. True or False? Serving on a jury is a responsibility of all U.S. citizens.**

A. True

**Q. True or False? After the slaves were emancipated, the Constitution was amended to allow males of any race to vote.**

A. True

**Q. Some rights are only for U.S. Citizens and some rights are for everyone living in the United States. Is the following a right for U.S. citizens or for all people living in America? (Ask the contestant about only one of the items below.)**

- the right to apply for a federal job (CITIZEN)
- the right to freedom of expression (ALL)
- the right to carry a U.S. passport (CITIZEN)
- the right to freedom of worship (ALL)
- the right to bear arms (ALL)
- the right to freedom of assembly (ALL)
- the right to run for office (CITIZEN)

**Q. True or False? A person can be put in jail for criticizing the U.S. government.**

A. False

**Q. What does it mean to “petition the government?”**

A. The right to petition is the freedom of individuals and/or groups to appeal to their government for a correction of some form of injustice without fear of punishment for doing so.

**Q. What is the last day to send in federal income tax forms?**

A. April 15

**Q. True or False? Undocumented male aliens between the ages of 18 and 26 and residing in the United States are required to register for the Selective Service.**

A. True (See [http://www.pueblo.gsa.gov/cic\\_text/fed\\_prog/time2register/sssyu00.htm#who](http://www.pueblo.gsa.gov/cic_text/fed_prog/time2register/sssyu00.htm#who) or search for *Time to Register – Selective Service and You*)

**Q. Fill in the following blanks: I pledge allegiance to**

\_\_\_\_\_ and to \_\_\_\_\_.

A. the Flag of the United States of America and to the Republic for which it stands

**Q. Which of the following is not a promise you make when you become a United States citizen?**

1. to give up loyalty to other countries
2. to obey the laws of the United States
3. to vote in U.S. elections

A. to vote in U.S. elections

**Q. Yes or No? When you become a citizen, do you promise to serve in the U.S. military, if needed?**

A. Yes

**Q. Yes or No? When you become a citizen, do you promise to join a political party?**

A. No

**Q. Yes or No? When you become a citizen, do you promise to defend the Constitution of the United States?**

A. Yes

**Q. Yes or No? When you become a citizen, do you promise to publicly support an issue or policy?**

A. No

**Q. Which three of the following are ways that Americans participate in their democracy?**

1. Open a savings account
2. Vote
3. Attend school
4. Join a civic group
5. Give an elected official your opinion on an issue

A. 2 (vote), 4 (join a civic group), 5 (give an elected official your opinion)

**Q. The words “one Nation, under God, indivisible, with Liberty and Justice for all” are in**

1. the Declaration of Independence
2. the Pledge of Allegiance
3. the Constitution

A. the Pledge of Allegiance

**Q. Fill in the blank: April 15 is \_\_\_\_\_.**

1. the last day to file federal income tax forms
2. Easter
3. Memorial Day

A. the last day to file federal income tax forms

## **Category 4. American History Colonial Period and Independence**

- Q. Spell colonist.**  
A. C-O-L-O-N-I-S-T
- Q. True or False? During the Colonial period of American history, people from Africa were brought to America and sold as slaves.**  
A. True
- Q. Which one of the following is not a reason that early colonists came to America?**  
1. Religious freedom  
2. Political liberty  
3. Free land  
A. Free land
- Q. How many states existed when the Declaration of Independence was adopted?**  
A. 13
- Q. Which three of the following states were among the original United States of America?**  
1. Maine  
2. Connecticut  
3. New Hampshire  
4. Florida  
5. North Carolina  
A. Connecticut, New Hampshire, North Carolina
- Q. Which one of the following people colonized colonial America?**  
1. Asians  
2. Europeans  
3. South Americans  
A. Europeans
- Q. Who wrote the Declaration of Independence?**  
A. Thomas Jefferson



- Q. The term “Founding Fathers” refers to which one of the following?**
- 1. American political leaders who signed the Declaration of Independence, led the American Revolution, and drafted the Constitution**
  - 2. The first religious leaders who came to America**
  - 3. Native Americans who lived in America before the Europeans arrived**
- A. American Political leaders etc.. . . (#1 above)
- Q. The Constitutional Convention was held in Philadelphia in 1787. What happened there?**
- A. The United States Constitution was written by the Founding Fathers.
- Q. The colonists declared their independence from what country?**
- A. Great Britain
- Q. Which two of the following were reasons the colonists fought for independence?**
- 1. Taxation without representation**
  - 2. Lack of religious freedom**
  - 3. They wanted to escape persecution**
  - 4. The British were requiring the colonists to quarter British soldiers in their homes**
- A. taxation without representation (#1) & quartering British soldiers (#4)
- Q. Give the month, day, and year that Declaration of Independence was adopted.**
- A. July 4, 1776
- Q. The Federalist Papers are a series of articles that support which one of the following:**
- 1. The Declaration of Independence**
  - 2. The Pledge of Allegiance**
  - 3. The Constitution**
- A. The Constitution
- Q. True or False? Publius was a “pen name” on the Federalist Papers.**
- A. True

**Q. Who was the oldest member of the Constitutional Convention?**

**George Washington**

**Thomas Jefferson**

**Benjamin Franklin**

**James Madison**

A. Benjamin Franklin

**Q. One of the writers of the Federalist Papers was**

**James Madison**

**William Penn**

**Paul Revere**

A. James Madison

**Q. James Madison, Alexander Hamilton, and John Jay, wrote**

**The Bill of Rights**

**The Federalist Papers**

**The Magna Carta**

A. The Federalist Papers

**Q. True or False? Benjamin Franklin started the first free libraries.**

A. True

**Q. The first President of the United States was**

**George Washington**

**Alexander Hamilton**

**James Madison**

A. George Washington

**Q. Who became known as the “Father of Our Country”?**

A. George Washington

**Q. Who wrote Poor Richard’s Almanac?**

A. Benjamin Franklin

**Q. True or False? Benjamin Franklin was the first Postmaster General of the United States.**

A. True

## Category 5. American History – 1800s

**Q. True or False? In 1803 the United States bought the Northwest Territory from France.**

A. False

**Bonus Points: What territory did the United States buy from France?**

A. Louisiana Territory

**Q. True or False? Between the years 1800-1900, the United States was involved in just one war.**

A. False

**Bonus Points: (5 points each) Name four wars that the United States fought between 1800-1900.**

A. War of 1812  
Mexican-American War  
Civil War  
Spanish-American War

**Q. Susan B. Anthony did which one of the following?**

1. Emancipated the slaves
2. Fought for women's rights
3. Was the first woman to govern a state
4. Opposed alcohol

A. Fought for women's rights

**Q. Who was the President during the Civil War?**

A. Abraham Lincoln

**Q. True or False? One of the reasons that the United States declared war on Britain in 1812 was the conscription of American sailors into the British navy to fight against France.**

A. True

**Q. True or False? The Mexican-American War *began* after The United States annexed Texas and *ended* with the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo, which set the border between Texas and Mexico at the Rio Grande River.**

A. True

**Q. Choose the correct ending. The Emancipation Proclamation\_\_\_\_\_.**

**Ended World War I**

**Freed the slaves**

**Declared America's entry into the Spanish-American War**

A. Freed the slaves

**Q. True or False? Americans lost more lives in the Civil War than in any other war.**

A. True

**Q. Which President preserved the Union?**

**Abraham Lincoln**

**George Washington**

**Theodore (Teddy) Roosevelt**

A. Abraham Lincoln

**Q. During the Civil War, did North Carolina**

**1. stay in the Union**

**2. join the Confederate States of America**

A. North Carolina joined the Confederate States of America.

**Q. Name one problem that led to the Civil War.**

A. slavery

economic reasons

states' rights

## Category 6. Recent American History (from 1900)

**Q. The President during World War I was \_\_\_\_\_.**

A. Woodrow Wilson

**Q. During the Great Depression, which four of the following things took place?**

1. Banks failed
2. The stock market crashed
3. Americans planted Victory Gardens
4. Unemployment was low
5. People were homeless
6. World trade slowed dramatically

A. Banks failed

The stock market crashed

People were homeless

World trade slowed dramatically

**Q. Americans fought in which three of the following wars?**

1. World War II
2. Boer War
3. Korean War
4. First Sino-Japanese War
5. Chaco War
6. Vietnam War

A. World War II, Korean War, Vietnam War

**Q. Who was President during the Great Depression?**

A. Franklin Roosevelt

**Q. Who was President during World War II?**

A. Franklin Roosevelt

**Q. True or False? The U. S. fought against England in World War II**

A. False

**Q. True or False? The Cold War was against the spread of Communism.**

A. True

**Q. True or False? In the Vietnam War, the U.S. fought with South Vietnam against North Vietnam and its Communist allies.**

A. True

**Q. Which of the following did Martin Luther King, Jr. do?**

- 1. Rose to national importance during the 9-11 attack on America**
- 2. Led troops in the (Persian) Gulf War**
- 3. Fought for civil rights**

A. Fought for civil rights

**Q. What major event happened in the United States on Sept. 11, 2001?**

A. Terrorists attacked the United States

**Q. True or False? American Indians were in North America before the first colonists came, but now they are extinct.**

A. False

**Q. The Qualla Boundary is federal government land in North Carolina where Native Americans live. This tribe was the first (1821) to have their own written language. Who are they?**

A. Cherokee

**Bonus Points: (5 points each) Name as many other American Indian tribes in the United States as you can.**

Apache	Inuit
Arawak	Iroquois
Blackfeet	Lakota
Cheyenne	Mohegan
Chippewa	Navajo
Choctaw	Oneida
Creek	Pueblo
Crow	Seminole
Hopi	Shawnee
Huron	Sioux
	Teton

## Category 7. Geography, Symbols, and Holidays

**Q. Which two of the following are the longest rivers in the United States?**

1. Rio Grande
2. Colorado
3. Mississippi
4. Ohio
5. Columbia
6. Missouri

A. Mississippi and Missouri

**Q. How many times does the letter “s” appear in the word “Mississippi”?**

A. 4

**Q. Spell the ocean that is on the West Coast of the United States.**

A. P-A-C-I-F-I-C

**Q. True or False? The Pacific Ocean is on the coast of North Carolina.**

A. False

**Q. Name three American states that touch the Atlantic Ocean.**

A. Any three from the following list are correct

- Maine
- New Hampshire
- Massachusetts
- Rhode Island
- Connecticut
- New York
- New Jersey
- Delaware
- Maryland
- Virginia
- North Carolina
- South Carolina
- Georgia
- Florida

**Q. True or False? Puerto Rico is a U.S. territory.**

A. True

**Q. Which four of the following states border Canada?**

**Alaska                      Washington**  
**South Dakota              Kansas**  
**Minnesota                  New York**

A. Alaska, Washington, Minnesota, and New York

**Q. Which of the following states do not border Mexico?**

**Texas                              New Mexico**  
**California                        Hawaii**  
**Nevada                             Arizona**

A. Hawaii and Nevada

**Q. True or False? American Samoa is a U.S. territory in the South Pacific**

A. True

**Q. True or False? All of the following are U.S. territories**

**Guam, American Samoa, Northern Mariana Islands, Hawaii**

A. False

**Bonus Points: Which of the above are U.S. territories?**

A. Guam, American Samoa, Northern Mariana Islands

**Q. True or False? The capital of the United States is New York City.**

A. False

**Bonus Points: Name the capital of the United States**

A. Washington, D.C.

**Q. What does D. C. stand for in Washington, D.C.?**

A. District of Columbia

**Q. True or False? The Statue of Liberty is on Liberty Island in New York Harbor.**

A. True

**Q. True or False? The Statue of Liberty was given to the United States from the people of France to mark the first hundred years of the Declaration of Independence.**

A. True



**Q. When do Americans celebrate Independence Day?**

A. July 4

**Q. True or False? God Bless America is the national anthem.**

A. False

**Bonus Points: Name the national anthem**

A. The Star-Spangled Banner

**100 Extra Bonus Points: Sing the first verse.**

**Q. Does any other country have July 4<sup>th</sup>?**

A. Yes, but they do not celebrate it as a national holiday.

**Q. What are the colors of the United States flag?**

A. red, white, and blue

**Q. How many stars are on the United States flag?**

A. 50

**Bonus: What do the stars mean?**

A. Each star stands for a state

**Q. How many stripes are on the United States flag?**

A. 13

**Bonus: What do the stripes represent?**

A. the 13 original colonies

**Q. What color are the stars on the United States flag?**

A. White

**Q. The stars on the United States flag are set in a field of what color?**

A. Blue

**Q. Who wrote the Star-Spangled Banner?**

A. Francis Scott Key

**Q. Which of the following are national U.S. holidays?**

**New Year's Day**

**Mother's Day**

**Easter**

**Veterans Day**

**Martin Luther King, Jr. Day**

**All Saints Day**

A. New Year's Day, Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, Veterans Day

**Q. Memorial Day comes in what month?**

A. May

**Bonus: What does Memorial Day honor?**

A. It is a day to remember and honor those who died in our nation's service.