THE CONSTITUTION WITH CARL

Volume 15 - The Fourteenth Amendment - Citizenship and Equal Protection

Citizenship and Equal Protection

Central question: Who is a citizen, and what must a state not do to any person?





Book 14 told how the Thirteenth Amendment ended slavery in law. Freedom raised the next questions at once. Were the freed people citizens of the United States? Could a state still treat them as less than citizens under its own laws? The Fourteenth Amendment is the country's answer, and it is a large one.

This amendment does two great things. First, it writes a definition of citizenship into the Constitution itself: who is a citizen, answered in one sentence. Second, it binds every state with three limits, the shields this book will teach you to name. No other amendment in this series so far reaches so far into daily life.

It is also the most argued over amendment in the series. It has five sections and 423 words, and courts have been testing its first section in case after case for more than 150 years. So the labels matter more in this book than in any before it. The words are the words. What courts have said is interpretation. What readers still argue about is still debated. Carl keeps the three apart, and so will you.

Carl is Citizen Carl in this volume. In one wing he holds a plain certificate, the paper that says a person belongs to this country. In the other he holds a scale, the old picture of evenhanded justice: the same law, weighed the same way, for every person.

For ages 7 to 11. Level Up boxes reach to age 13.

START HERE

Meet Carl and the Four Strands

Carl the Cardinal is Citizen Carl in this volume. His certificate is blank on purpose. The amendment itself fills it in: if you were born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to its jurisdiction, the first sentence of Section 1 writes your name there. His scale is balanced on purpose too. Section 1 tells every state to weigh its laws evenly, protecting every person within its borders.

The four strands, kept separate

Strand	What it is
THE WORDS	The amendment itself, in ORIGINAL WORDS, plus a PLAIN LANGUAGE EXPLANATION set apart from it.
THE HISTORY	Evidence from before and around 1868 about why the words were added.
COURTS HAVE SAID	Named cases with years. This is interpretation by judges, labeled as interpretation.
STILL DEBATED	Real disputes that remain. Stated fairly, never as settled fact.

How to use this book

- Read the words aloud first. Then read the explanation.
- Write, draw, point, or dictate your answers. All of those count.
- Every town and school rule in the activities is fictional. The real cases are on the Courts Have Said pages, with their real names and years.
- You met this amendment on the timeline in Civics No. 8, How the Constitution Changed with Carl. No. 8 placed it in the story. This book opens the whole text, all five sections, and teaches each one. It does not rebuild the timeline.
- Family Talk is where the family viewpoint lives. It is never presented as a court holding.

THE GUARDRAIL FOR THIS BOOK

Section 1 opens with the citizenship sentence. The three limits that follow it begin with the words **"No State shall,"** and those limits bind state governments: state legislatures, state courts, state officers. By their own words they do not bind a private person or a private business acting on its own. Watch for that line on the Courts Have Said pages. Whole cases turn on it, and Carl will point each time.

MEET CARL BOX

A certificate says who you are. A scale says how you will be treated. Carl carries both because this amendment carries both: a sentence that settles who is a citizen, and a sentence that tells every state how citizens, and indeed every person, must be treated under its laws. Belonging first, then evenhandedness. That is the order of Section 1, and it is the order of this book.