

*WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A CITIZEN? / FALL 2008 / POEM*

# "The Unknown Citizen" by W. H. Auden

(To JS/07/M/378 This Marble Monument Is Erected by the  
State)

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He was found by the Bureau of Statistics to be

One against whom there was no official complaint, And all the reports on his conduct agree

That, in the modern sense of an old-fashioned word, he was a saint, For in everything he did he served  
the Greater Community.

Except for the War till the day he retired

He worked in a factory and never got fired, But satisfied his employers, Fudge Motors Inc. Yet he wasn't  
a scab or odd in his views,

For his Union reports that he paid his dues, (Our report on his Union shows it was sound) And our  
Social Psychology workers found

That he was popular with his mates and liked a drink.

The Press are convinced that he bought a paper every day

And that his reactions to advertisements were normal in every way. Policies taken out in his name prove that he was fully insured,

And his Health-card shows he was once in hospital but left it cured. Both Producers Research and High-Grade Living declare

He was fully sensible to the advantages of the Installment Plan

And had everything necessary to the Modern Man, A phonograph, a radio, a car and a frigidaire.

Our researchers into Public Opinion are content

That he held the proper opinions for the time of year;

When there was peace, he was for peace; when there was war, he went.

He was married and added five children to the population,

Which our Eugenist says was the right number for a parent of his generation, And our teachers report that he never interfered with their education. Was he free? Was he happy? The question is absurd:

Had anything been wrong, we should certainly have heard.