

# TEACHING AMERICAN HISTORY PROJECT

## *Lesson Title – Voting Rights*

Grade-8

Length of class period- 80-90 min.

Inquiry-(What essential question are students answering. What problem are they solving, or what decision are they making?)

The 13<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, and 15<sup>th</sup> amendments were meant to grant rights to all citizens; how did this translate to real life in 1965 Alabama?

Objectives (What content and skills do you expect students to learn from this lesson?)

- Students will examine the amendments to determine what rights are guaranteed.
- Students will examine the Alabama Literacy Test (1965) to see if those rights are in place in 1965 in Alabama.

### Materials

From: <http://college.hmco.com/history/us/resources/students/primary/voting.htm>

### **1. Alabama Literacy Test (1965)**

#### **EXCERPTS FROM THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES**

**Part 1.** In case of the removal of the president from office, or of his death, resignation or inability to discharge the powers and duties of the said office, the same shall devolve on the Vice-President, and the Congress may by law provide for the case of removal, death, resignation or inability, both of the President and Vice-President, declaring what officer shall then act as President, and such officer shall act accordingly, until the disability be removed, or a President shall be elected.

**Part 2.** In all cases affecting ambassadors, other public ministers and consuls, and those in which a state shall be a party, the Supreme Court shall have original jurisdiction

**Part 3.** In all the other cases before mentioned, the Supreme Court shall have appellate jurisdiction both as to law and fact, with such exceptions, and under such regulations as the Congress shall make.

**Part 4.** Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction

## INSTRUCTION "C"

(After applicant has read, not aloud, the foregoing excerpts from the Constitution, he will answer the following questions in writing and without assistance:)

1. In case the president is unable to perform the duties of his office, who assumes them?\_\_\_\_\_
2. "Involuntary servitude" is permitted in the United States upon conviction of a crime. (True or False)\_\_\_\_\_
3. If a state is a party to a case, the Constitution provides that original jurisdiction shall be in\_\_\_\_\_
4. Congress passes laws regulating cases which are included in those over which the United States Supreme Court has\_\_\_\_\_ jurisdiction.

I hereby certify that I have received no assistance in the completion of this citizenship and literacy test, that I was allowed the time I desired to complete it, and that I waive any right existing to demand a copy of same. (If for any reason the applicant does not wish to sign this, he must discuss the matter with the board of registrars.)

Signed:\_\_\_\_\_

(Applicant)

Source: Proceedings of the Committee on the Judiciary of the United States Senate, Eighty-Ninth Congress, First Session on S. 1564, March 23-April 5, 1965 (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1965) p. 762

## 2. Excerpts from U.S. Constitution

### **Amendment XIII (1865)**

Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.

### **Amendment XIV (1868)**

All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside. No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor to deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.

### **Amendment XV (1870)**

The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.

Activities (What will you and your students do during the lesson to promote learning?)

1. Distribute copies of the amendments.
  - a. Have students identify which rights are guaranteed through each amendment.
2. Distribute the 1965 Alabama Literacy test
  - a. Have students complete the test.
  - b. Have students assess the difficulty of this test. Do they think they would have been able to pass the test?
  - c. WHY do students think the test was given?
3. Compare the two documents
  - a. Does the literacy test given in Alabama almost 100 years after these amendments abide by the constitution? Does it guarantee or infringe on the rights provided in the amendments passed during Reconstruction?

How will you assess what students learned during this lesson?

- Informal: discussion
- Exit ticket: Do you feel there *should* be any prerequisites for voting? Why (not)? Include at least two facts to support your opinion.

#### Connecticut Framework Performance Standards-

Historical Thinking:

- recognize change over time
- researching historical sources

Historical Themes

- ideals (of Reconstruction) vs. reality

U.S. Constitution

- Demonstration knowledge of rights guaranteed