

Disclaimer: This packet is intended ONLY for the use of students enrolled in Leon County Schools.

Complete the assignments below.

Government

Week 2:

- ☐ **Voter Rights (SS 912.C.3.1; 3.2;3.6;3.7;3.10;3.12)**
- ☐ **Content Area Reading: Voting Rights Act (RI.1.1; SS 912.3.6)**
- ☐ **Skill Activity: Content area vocabulary and textual support (RI.1.2; RI.4.10)**

Voting Rights Act

This article is provided courtesy of History.com

The Voting Rights Act, signed into law by President Lyndon Johnson (1908-73) on August 6, 1965, aimed to overcome legal barriers at the state and local levels that prevented African Americans from exercising their right to vote under the 15th Amendment (1870) to the Constitution of the United States. The act significantly widened the franchise and is considered among the most far-reaching pieces of civil rights legislation in U.S. history.

SELMA SPURS JOHNSON TO CALL FOR VOTING RIGHTS ACT

Lyndon Johnson assumed the presidency in November 1963 upon the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. In the presidential race of 1964, Johnson was officially elected in a landslide victory and used this mandate to push for legislation he believed would improve the American way of life, such as stronger voting-rights laws.

DID YOU KNOW?

In 1965, at the time of the passage of the Voting Rights Act, there were six African-American members of the U.S. House of Representatives and no blacks in the U.S. Senate. By 1971, there were 13 members of the House and one black member of the Senate.

After the U.S. Civil War (1861-65), the 15th Amendment, ratified in 1870, prohibited states from denying a male citizen the right to vote based on "race, color or previous condition of servitude." Nevertheless, in the ensuing decades, various discriminatory practices were used to prevent African Americans, particularly those in the South, from exercising their right to vote.

During the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s, voting rights activists in the South were subjected to various forms of mistreatment and violence. One event that outraged many Americans occurred on March 7, 1965, when peaceful participants in a voting rights march from Selma, Alabama, to the state capital in Montgomery were met by Alabama state troopers who attacked them with nightsticks, tear gas and whips after they refused to turn back. Some protesters were severely beaten, and others ran for their lives. The incident was captured on national television.

In the wake of the brutal incident, Johnson called for comprehensive voting rights legislation. In a speech to a joint session of Congress on March 15, 1965, the president outlined the devious ways in which election officials denied African-American citizens the vote. Blacks attempting to vote often were told by election officials that they had gotten the date, time or polling place wrong, that they possessed insufficient literacy skills or that they had filled out an application incorrectly. Blacks, whose population suffered a high rate of illiteracy due to centuries of oppression and poverty, often would be forced to take literacy tests, which they inevitably failed. Johnson also told Congress that voting officials, primarily in Southern states, had been known to force black voters to "recite the entire Constitution or explain the most complex provisions of state laws," a task most white voters would have been hard-pressed to accomplish. In some cases, even blacks with college degrees were turned away from the polls.

VOTING RIGHTS ACT: SIGNED INTO LAW ON AUGUST 6, 1965

The voting rights bill was passed in the U.S. Senate by a 77-19 vote on May 26, 1965. After debating the bill for more than a month, the U.S. House of Representatives passed the bill by a vote of 333-85 on July 9. Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act into law on August 6, with Martin Luther King Jr. and other civil rights leaders present at the ceremony.

The act banned the use of literacy tests, provided for federal oversight of voter registration in areas where less than 50 percent of the nonwhite population had not registered to vote, and authorized the U.S. attorney general to investigate the use of poll taxes in state and local elections (in 1964, the 24th Amendment made poll taxes illegal in federal elections; poll taxes in state elections were banned in 1966 by the U.S. Supreme Court).

VOTING RIGHTS ACT: VOTER TURNOUT RISES IN THE SOUTH

Although the Voting Rights Act passed, state and local enforcement of the law was weak and it often was ignored outright, mainly in the South and in areas where the proportion of blacks in the population was high and their vote threatened the political status quo. Still, the Voting Rights Act gave African-American voters the legal means to challenge voting restrictions and vastly improved voter turnout. In Mississippi alone, voter turnout among blacks increased from 6 percent in 1964 to 59 percent in 1969.

Since its passage, the Voting Rights Act has been amended to include such features as the protection of voting rights for non-English-speaking American citizens.

mandate man · date

Advanced Definition

noun

1. a commission given to a country to administer territory on behalf of an international body such as, formerly, the League of Nations.

Britain was given a mandate over Palestine after World War I.

2. the territory subject to such an order.

Palestine was a British mandate from 1920 until 1948.

3. a directive given or implied by the vote of an electorate.

The government must now act on its mandate to deal with the problem of unemployment.

4. an authoritative order or directive, as from a sovereign or from a higher court to a lower one.

Many of the nobles refused to obey the king's mandate.

transitive verb

1. to consign (territories or colonies) to the care and authority of a specified nation by mandate.

The League of Nations mandated Palestine to Britain.

2. to authorize or require, as by law or popular vote.

The new law mandates the recycling of glass and paper by all local businesses.

The Surgeon General mandated that cigarette packaging display health warnings.

Spanish cognate

mandato: The Spanish word *mandato* means mandate.

These are some examples of how the word or forms of the word are used:

1. International standards **mandate** that it be able to withstand high acceleration and deceleration, high and low temperature fires, deep sea pressure, submersion in seawater or other liquids, and high impact and being crushed.
2. After that, Australia became the first country in the world to **mandate** that the device be used on all commercial aircraft. The black box is now used on all commercial aircraft and corporate jets.
3. In the presidential race of 1964, Johnson was officially elected in a landslide victory and used this **mandate** to push for legislation he believed would improve the American way of life, such as stronger voting-rights laws.

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. What did the 15th Amendment do?

- A. It aimed to overcome legal barriers within states that prevented African Americans from exercising their right to vote.
- B. It prohibited states from denying a male citizen the right to vote based on race, color, or previous condition of servitude.
- C. It aimed to create legal barriers within states that would prevent African Americans from exercising their right to vote.
- D. It allowed states to deny a male citizen the right to vote based on race, color, or previous condition of servitude.

2. As described in the text, the Voting Rights Act was a solution created to address what problem?

- A. African Americans did not yet have the right to vote.
- B. Women did not yet have the right to vote.
- C. African Americans were being prevented from exercising their right to vote.
- D. Women were being prevented from exercising their right to vote.

3. Read these sentences from the text:

"After the U.S. Civil War (1861-1865), the 15th Amendment, ratified in 1870, prohibited states from denying a male citizen the right to vote based on 'race, color or previous condition of servitude.' Nevertheless, in the ensuing decades, various discriminatory practices were used to prevent African Americans, particularly those in the South, from exercising their right to vote.

[...]

"Although the Voting Rights Act passed, state and local enforcement of the law was weak and it often was ignored outright, mainly in the South and in areas where the proportion of blacks in the population was high and their vote threatened the political status quo."

Based on the evidence in the text, what inference can you make about the reaction many southern states have had to civil rights laws?

- A. Many states in the South did not agree with civil rights laws, but followed them.
- B. Many states in the South encouraged and supported civil rights laws.
- C. Many states in the South did not respect nor comply with civil rights laws.
- D. Many states in the South did not care about or object to civil rights laws.

4. Why might the number of African American members in the House and Senate have increased between 1965 and 1971?

- A. The 15th Amendment required a higher number of African Americans in the House and the Senate.
- B. The Voting Rights Act encouraged more white voters in the South to vote for African American representation in the House and Senate.
- C. The Voting Rights Act required a higher number of African Americans in the House and the Senate.
- D. More African Americans were able to vote for the people that represented them in the House and Senate, including more African Americans, due to the passage of the Voting Rights Act in 1965.

5. What is the main idea of this passage?

- A. After the Civil War, the 15th Amendment prohibited states from denying a male citizen the right to vote based on race.
- B. Many states used various discriminatory practices to prevent African Americans from exercising their right to vote.
- C. The Voting Rights Act gave African American voters the legal means to challenge voting restrictions, and the act vastly improved voter turnout.
- D. The Voting Rights Act has been amended to include such features as the protection of voting rights for non-English-speaking Americans.

6. Read these sentences from the text:

"During the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s, voting rights activists in the South were subjected to various forms of mistreatment and violence. One event that outraged many Americans occurred on March 7, 1965, when peaceful participants in a voting rights march from Selma, Alabama, to the state capital in Montgomery were met by Alabama state troopers who attacked them with nightsticks, tear gas and whips after they refused to turn back. Some protesters were severely beaten, and others ran for their lives."

Based on this evidence, what is the meaning of the phrase "subjected to" in this excerpt?

- A. protected from
- B. exposed to
- C. taught about
- D. encouraged by

7. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence.

_____ African American men were given the right to vote by the 15th Amendment, various discriminatory practices still prevented them from exercising this right.

- A. Although
- B. However
- C. Primarily
- D. Including

8. What did the Voting Rights Act aim to do?

9. Describe at least two ways blacks were prevented from exercising their right to vote before the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Support your answer with evidence from the text.

10. Why might the Voting Rights Act be considered to be among the most farreaching pieces of civil rights legislation in U.S. history? Support your answer with evidence from the text.
