

JIM CROW AND VOTING RIGHTS

NEW YORK STATE SOCIAL STUDIES CORE CURRICULUM, GRADE 11: UNITED STATES AND NEW YORK STATE HISTORY

UNIT FIVE: *At Home and Abroad: Prosperity and Depression 1917–1940*
<http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/ciai/socst/pub/sscore2.pdf> (p. 141).

UNIT SIX: *The United States in an Age of Global Crisis: Responsibility and Cooperation*
<http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/ciai/socst/pub/sscore2.pdf> (p. 145).

UNIT SEVEN: *The World in Uncertain Times: 1950–Present*
<http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/ciai/socst/pub/sscore2.pdf> (p. 147).

These questions and documents can be used in conjunction with the New York State Education Department standard curriculum for grade 11 Social Studies: United States History and Government, in particular, Unit Five, Chapter 1: War and Prosperity: 1917–1929, and Chapter 2: The Great Depression; Unit 6: The United States in an Age of Global Crisis: Responsibility and Cooperation, Chapter 1: Peace in Peril: 1933–1950; and Unit 7: The World in Uncertain Times 1950–Present, Chapter 2: Containment and Consensus 1945–1960, and Chapter 3: Decade of Change: 1960's. Students will be able to see the connection between the results of the Civil War and how that led to Constitutional Amendments 14 and 15 and eventually the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Students should also understand that there were several moral issues that grew out of WWII.

“How were African Americans’ voting rights restricted after the failure of Reconstruction?”

Document pages 71-75

This lesson is appropriate for units on African Americans and voting rights, Jim Crow and Reconstruction.

STUDENTS WILL BE ABLE TO

- describe what actions were taken to keep African Americans from voting
- understand that these restrictions were pervasive and longstanding
- explain how African American participation in World War II sparked the change which would eventually lead to the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Voting Rights Act of 1965.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

After the Compromise of 1877, African American men retained voting rights, but held little political power in their states. Beginning in the 1890's, a full-scale attack on African American civil rights began in the South that led to the legal segregation of all aspects of everyday life, including public transportation, education and the workplace. African American voting rights also came under attack through legislation and organized violence, including the horrible act of lynching, which was used to enforce white supremacy.

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Part of the reason for this violence was the political threat posed by the African American vote. While the struggle for control of southern politics was occurring, Democrats, Populists and Republicans appealed to African American voters in the South. After the Populists' attempts to create a third party failed, state Democratic parties systematically disenfranchised African American voters through legislation that clearly violated the Fifteenth Amendment's spirit, but was upheld as constitutional by the U.S. Supreme Court. For African Americans who tried to vote, the results were potentially dangerous.

The laws to prevent African Americans from voting were complex because they could not directly violate the Fifteenth Amendment. Among these restrictions was the poll tax, which required voters to pay an additional tax to vote. It was designed primarily to exclude African Americans, who were usually too poor to pay the tax, but also excluded many poor whites.

ACTIVITIES

- I. Students answer two sets of questions from an Alabama literacy test on handout, pages 74–75.

ANSWERS TO ALABAMA LITERACY TEST, PAGES 72–73

(40) B

1. Yes
2. person chosen to act for others
3. Federal Bureau of Investigation
4. True

(40) C

1. search warrant
2. Legislature
3. Confederation
4. courts

(41) B

1. Yes
2. agreement between nations
3. Hoover
4. Vice President

(41) C

1. No
2. The appointment of officers
3. promoting progress
4. U.S. currency

- II. As a class, evaluate the ease or difficulty of correctly answering these questions; are they realistic, discriminatory, unfair, prejudiced, biased or unreasonable?

III. Group Work

- A. Divide class into groups of three.
- B. Students review their assigned document and answer the questions for it and prepare to present answers to the class.
- C. Each group presents its findings to the class.

- IV. Class discussion: Based on the documents, how were African Americans denied the right to vote?

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V. Summary

What led to an end to these practices? . . . When the United States entered World War II, government war propaganda portrayed the fight as a war against the enemies of democracy: Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy and Imperial Japan. In response to this The Pittsburgh Courier, an African American newspaper, used this theme to advance African American political goals at home. Read the following newspaper article and then answer the questions.

1. What does the term “Double V” mean?
2. Why did the justifications for World War II aid the campaign for racial equality?
3. What do you think of the Double V? Answer the question posed in the newspaper article.

VI. Assessment Activity:

- A. Write a letter to President Roosevelt or Truman from the point of view of an African American during World War II (a soldier, a woman in the women’s auxiliary forces or a defense industry, or a family member of someone in the armed forces) voicing your opinion on the position of African Americans in society, their voting rights and the Double V campaign.
- B. Create a found poem about the denial of voting rights to African Americans following Reconstruction using terms and phrases from the materials provided in this lesson and others used in class.
- C. Design a poster urging support for African American voting rights. Be sure to identify the intended audience — is it geared toward African Americans or a white audience?

DISCOVERING HISTORY IN TODAY'S NEW YORK TIMES

Historical events described in textbooks often began with reports in a newspaper. These questions help you compare the past with the present.

1. In other countries, some groups are not permitted to vote. Every day, check The New York Times for examples. Start a large poster for the classroom. Use these columns to record what you find in The Times: name of country, group not permitted to vote, reason given for denying suffrage to the group. Illustrate your poster with Times headlines about voting rights abuses.
2. Find an article about a voting problem anywhere in the world as reported in The New York Times. What was the problem and who was affected? Compare this situation to the Alabama State Literacy Test. What is similar and what is different?
3. Voting conflicts often end up in the courts. Follow Times coverage of a voting rights case in any American court. How is the case judged? Who wins and why? Write an essay in the style of the Op-Ed page of The Times. Study essays on the page as models for your writing.

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QUESTIONS FOR GROUP WORK ACTIVITY

DOCUMENT PAGE 72

1. What are the police doing in the cartoon and what is the purpose of their actions?
2. Does the author of this cartoon favor or oppose African Americans' right to vote?
3. Why might the Democrats benefit from African Americans not voting?
4. Why do you think that laws were insufficient to stop African Americans from voting and violence was necessary?

DOCUMENT PAGE 73

Dr. Seuss is better known for his children's books, but during World War II he turned his pen to politics in a New York City newspaper called PM. Like the Double V campaign, he used the democratic values of wartime propaganda as part of a call to expand democracy at home.

1. What does Dr. Seuss mean when he entitled the cartoon "Democracy's turnstile"?
2. Do you think that the cartoon would have had greater resonance during World War II? Why or why not?
3. What does the phrase "10 Million Americans Who Haven't Got the Price" mean?
4. The people in the cartoon appear to be entirely white. Why do you think Dr. Seuss chose not to have people of other races in the cartoon?
5. Why do you think that white supremacists in the South used the poll tax to exclude African American voters? Why do you think that they weren't concerned about poor white voters?

DOCUMENT PAGES 74-75

The literacy test was also a common tactic used to prevent African Americans from voting. During the early 1960's, African Americans in the South formed groups like the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee and the Congress of Racial Equality to demand equality and register African Americans to vote. The people who participated in this project routinely risked their jobs and were often thrown off their land if they attempted to vote. Moreover, they risked their lives against the violence of groups of white supremacist groups like the Ku Klux Klan, which often worked hand in hand with local police, politicians and the White Citizens' Councils.

The questions below were used in the literacy tests in Alabama. The documents shown came from workbooks used by Citizenship Schools, which taught African American applicants how to pass the exams. Each applicant had to answer four questions to successfully register to vote, but this was only one part of the application process. An applicant had to give, under oath, information about his or her address, employment, family members and a host of information that would be given to the applicant's employer, the Ku Klux Klan and other organizations. For

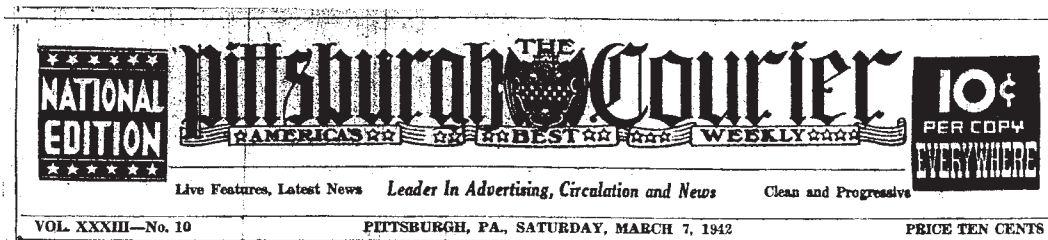
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the audacity of attempting to register to vote, applicants could lose their jobs, be thrown off their land and have violence used against them. White voters received much simpler exams and were encouraged to vote. Voter registration for whites often exceeded 100% because dead people were not removed from the lists. Answer the questions from the literacy test and see how many you answered correctly.

1. Do you think that being able to answer these questions would make a person more qualified to vote? Why or why not?
2. Explain why these types of questions were chosen by the Alabama government.
3. What qualifications, if any, do you think there should be for a person to vote?
4. a. Why do you think that African American civil rights activists were willing to risk their jobs, their homes and their lives to register to vote?

b. Do you believe that the right to vote was valuable enough to justify the struggles to win it? Why or why not?

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RACE UNITES FOR DRIVE TO SECURE REAL DEMOCRACY

In continuing the policy of The Courier to fight for the rights of the Negro race, the paper recently started the "Double V" drive for victory at home against prejudice and discrimination as well as victory abroad against the enemies of democracy. Since this "Double V" emblem has been

WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THE "DOUBLE V?"

The Courier is interested in knowing what you think of the "Double V" drive for democracy at home and abroad. We will publish any letter of 50 words or less explaining your ideas on this nationwide campaign to secure a "practical democracy" for the Negro tenth of America's population.

THE EDITOR.

made public, and the details of the drive explained, the response has been overwhelming. Hundreds of letters are being received weekly praising this campaign to secure the blessings of democracy for Negro Americans as well as for white Americans. Some of the letters are as follows:

PRaises STAFF FOR "DOUBLE V!"

Dear Editor:

I received a most pleasant surprise when I saw the "Double V" signs in The Courier and wish to compliment you and your staff on this fine piece of work. Let us hope that this catches on enough so that every home and every car will feature one of these banners. Let us pray that it will lead to the eventual overthrow of discrimination and prejudice.

JAMES G. THOMPSON.
Wichita, Kansas.

Dear Editor:

The Courier's "Double V" idea is a corker! I have been besieged with comments and inquiries, requests for emblems of some sort for personal use. I would suggest that these be of use for storekeepers, auto owners, bulletin boards, offices, homes, etc., so that it can be pounded into Negro America that a victory abroad is important, but a victory at home is just as important for the race. "Double V" should become a household byword and slogan!

RANDY DIXON.
Philadelphia, Pa.

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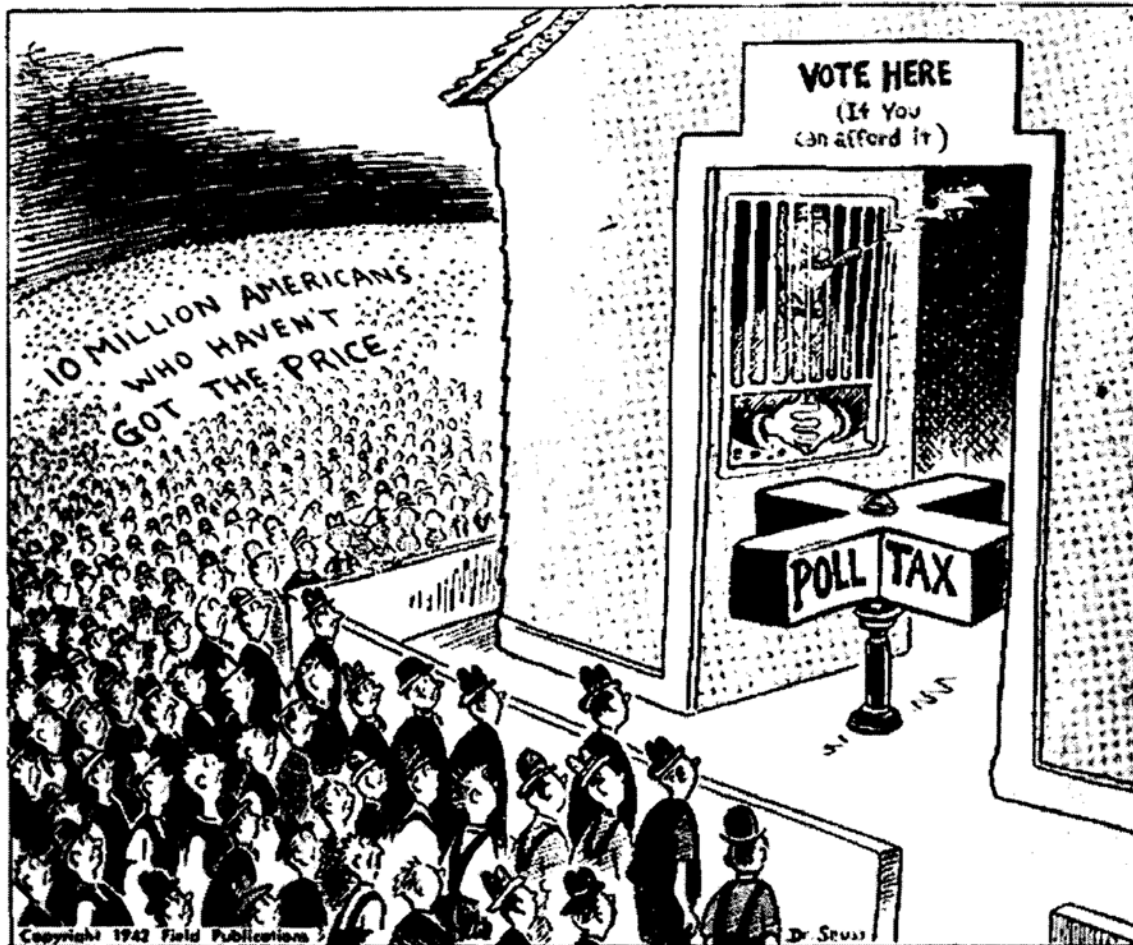


HOW THE COLORED VOTER IS ALLOWED TO CAST HIS BALLOT IN
A STATE WHERE DEMOCRATS CONTROL THE ELECTION.

*From "The Colored American Republican text book: a book of facts and figures,
showing what the Republican Party has done for the Afro-American," c. 1899*

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<http://orpheus.ucsd.edu/speccoll/dspolitic/Frame.htm>



From the newspaper PM by Dr. Seuss, 1942.

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QUESTIONS FROM THE ALABAMA STATE LITERACY TEST

SAMPLE

SAMPLE

(40)

"B"

1. Can the president of the United States be impeached? _____
2. Check the applicable definition for "representative":
 _____ agreement between states
 _____ person chosen to act for others
 _____ good character
3. FBI stands for the _____
4. Each county in Alabama may decide by vote whether or not it will have legalized sale of alcoholic beverages. _____

"C"

1. If a person seeks to search your home, what kind of paper must he have before you are compelled to allow him to do it? _____
2. If the United States wishes to purchase land for an arsenal and have exclusive legislative authority over it, consent is required from _____
3. Prior to the adoption of the United States Constitution, the organization of states was known as the _____.
4. Tribunals are _____.

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SAMPLE

SAMPLE

(41)
"B"

1. Can the president of the United States be removed from office for conviction of bribery? _____
2. Check the applicable definition for "treaty":
 _____ agreement between nations
 _____ a tax
 _____ a written oration
3. Name the man who is nationally known for heading the Federal Bureau of Investigation for many years. _____
4. What officer is designated by the Constitution to be president of the Senate of the United States? _____

"C"

1. Can the state coin money with the consent of Congress? _____
2. Name one area of authority over state militia reserved exclusively to the states. _____
3. The power of granting patents, that is, of securing to inventors the exclusive right to their discoveries, is given to the Congress for the purpose of _____.
4. The only legal tender which may be authorized by states for payment of debts is _____.