

TEACHING AMERICAN HISTORY PROJECT
Lesson Title - Voting Rights, The Fifteenth Amendment, and Literacy
Tests: Would You Pass?
By Spiro Mandes

Grade – 9-12

Length of class period – Approximately one block period (70-80 min)

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

How were African Americans and minorities systematically denied the right to vote during Reconstruction and up through the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960?

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

- Students will examine the Reconstruction era amendments to determine what rights are guaranteed.
- Students will examine the Alabama Voter Registration form to determine if it is designed to prevent African Americans from voting
- Students will examine the 1965 Alabama Literacy test to determine if any of the Reconstruction Amendments were violated.

Materials (What primary sources or local resources are the basis for this lesson?) –

- 1). Excerpts from U.S. Constitution (13th, 14th, and 15 Amendment) included at end of this document
- 2). Copy of the Alabama Voter Registration Form
- 3). Copy of Alabama Literacy Test (1965)
- 4). Optional- Copy of the Louisiana Literacy Test
- 5). Writing utensil

*Registration and Literacy Tests are from the following source..

"Veterans of the Civil Rights Movement -- Literacy Tests." *Civil Rights Movement Veterans - CORE, NAACP, SCLC, SNCC*. Web. 18 May 2011.
<<http://www.crmvet.org/info/lithome.htm>>.

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

Step 1- Begin the class with a quick review of the Reconstruction era amendments. If the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments have not been covered yet, take the time to do so now.

Step 2- Pass out a copy of the Alabama Voter Registration Form. Ask the class to examine the document to determine if there is information that the form *does not ask* for which might be required to complete the "Registration" process. Depending on the level

of the class and prior civics and government knowledge, students will see (or teacher will guide conversation) to the intentional omission of the section requiring political party affiliation for participation in primary elections. *Background information to Teacher:* When an African American registered to vote, their name and address was published in the local newspaper for ten to 14 days. Ask class why they think this was done.

Step 3- Next, pass out a copy of the 1965 Alabama Literacy test (sections "B" and "C") and instruct the class to complete the test independently. Allow about 10-15 minutes for students to complete the 32 questions. Then grade the tests as a class (each question is worth 3 points) and have students calculate their grade. Most If not ALL of the class will fail the test. * *Note to teacher:* White-out the answers on the test before making copies. Also, simply substitute your state's name for "Alabama" for questions that are specific to Alabama. *Additional Background information to teacher:* Many of the literacy tests had 100 questions. If a test taker answered 7 or more incorrectly, they failed and could not vote (Zero for the Louisiana test).

Step 4- Hold a whole-class discussion. Questions to help guide discussion;

- A. Raise your hand if you passed the test?
- B. How is it possible that a groups of students like yourselves who have studies U.S. history, civics, etc., couldn't pass this test?
- C. Is the test designed for failure?
- D. Is it reasonable to expect that African American could pass a literacy test like this one after the Civil War? Why?
- E. Do you think the test's intent was to keep minorities from voting? Why or How?
- F. Does this literacy test violate any of the 3 Reconstruction Amendments? How?
- G. Other?

How will you assess what student learned during this lesson?

Informal assessment based on class discussion described in Step 4; monitoring of student activities by teacher.

Connecticut Framework Performance Standards –

- Use primary source documents to analyze multiple perspectives.
- formulate historical questions and hypotheses from multiple perspectives, using multiple sources;

APPLICATION FOR REGISTRATION, QUESTIONNAIRE AND OATHS

PART I

(This is to be filled in by a member of the Board of Registrars or a duly authorized clerk of the board. If applicant is a married woman, she must state given name by which she is known, maiden surname, and married surname, which shall be recorded as her full name.)

Full Name: Last First Middle

Date of Birth: Sex Race

Residence Address:

Mailing Address:

Voting Place: Precinct Ward District

Length of Residence: In State County

Precinct, ward or district

Are you a member of the Armed Forces?

Are you the wife of a member of the Armed Forces?

Are you a college student? If so, where

Have you ever been registered to vote in any other state or in any other county in Alabama? If so, when and in what state and county and, if in Alabama, at what place did you vote in such county?

Highest grade, 1 to 12, completed Where

Years college completed Where

PART II

(To be filled in by the applicant in the presence of the Board of Registrars without assistance.)

MONTGOMERY

I, do hereby apply to the Board of Registrars of County, State of Alabama, to register as an elector under the Constitution and laws of the State of Alabama and do herewith submit my answers to the interrogatories propounded to me by the board.

(Signature of Applicant)

1. Are you a citizen of the United States?

2. Where were you born?

3. If you are a naturalized citizen, give number appearing on your naturalization papers and date of issuance

4. Have you ever been married? If so, give the name, residence and place of birth of your husband or wife

Are you divorced?

5. List the places you have lived the past five years, giving town or county and state.....

6. Have you ever been known by any name other than the one appearing on this application?.....If so, state what name

7. Are you employed?..... If so, state by whom. (If you are self-employed, state this.).....

8. Give the address of your present place of employment.....
9. If, in the past five years, you have been employed by an employer other than your present employer, give name of all employers and cities and states in which you worked.....

10. Has your name ever been stricken for any reason from any list of persons registered to vote?.....If so, where, when, and why?.....

11. Have you previously applied for and been denied registration as a voter?..... If so, when and where?.....

12. Have you ever served in the Armed Forces?..... If so, give dates, branch of service, and serial number

13. Have you ever been dishonorably discharged from military service?.....
14. Have you ever been declared legally insane?.....If so, give details.....

15. Give names and addresses of two persons who know you and can verify the statements made above by you relative to your residence in this state, county and precinct, ward or district.....

16. Have you ever seen a copy of this registration application form before receiving this copy today?.....If so, when and where?.....

17. Have you ever been convicted of any offense or paid any fine for violation of the law?..... (Yes or No) If so, give the following information concerning each fine or conviction; charge, in what court tried, fine imposed, sentence, and, if paroled, state when, and if pardoned, state when. (If fine is for traffic violation only, you need write below only the words "traffic violation only.").....

(Remainder of this form is to be filled out only as directed by an individual member of the Board of Registrars.)

PART III

Part III of this questionnaire shall consist of one of the forms which are Insert Part III as herein below set out. The insert shall be fastened to the questionnaire. The questions set out on the insert shall be answered according to the instructions therein set out. Each applicant shall demonstrate ability to read and write as required by the Constitution of Alabama, as amended, and no person shall be considered to have completed this application, nor shall the name of any applicant be entered upon the list of registered voters of any county until after such Inserted Part III of the questionnaire has been satisfactorily completed and signed by the applicant.

PLEASE INSERT PART III HERE

PART IV
OATHS

STATE OF ALABAMA

..... COUNTY

Before me,.....
a registrar in and for said county and state, personally appeared.....
an applicant for registration as an elector, who being first duly sworn deposes and says:

"I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that the foregoing answers to the interrogatories are true and correct to the best of my knowledge, information and belief. I do further personally swear (or affirm) that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of the State of Alabama; that I do not believe in nor am I affiliated with any group or party which advocated or advocates the overthrow of the United States or the State of Alabama by unlawful means. I do further solemnly swear (or affirm) that in the matter of this application for registration I have spoken the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help me God."

.....
(Signature of Applicant)

Sworn to and subscribed before me this the..... day of....., 19.....

.....
(Signature of Board Member)

EXPLANATION AND REMARKS

(Board members interviewing applicants may place here any special explanations, such as of residence status, or other remarks for purposes of clarification. If person is blind or is otherwise physically handicapped to such an extent that he cannot fill out this application form, the circumstances are to be recorded here, along with an explanation of the method used to determine if the person is, in fact, literate and can spell words and recognize those spelled to him, or can read large block letters and words in the case of persons with sight handicaps.....
.....
.....

PART V
ACTION OF THE BOARD

STATE OF ALABAMA

_____ COUNTY

The applicant, _____, appeared before the board of registrars for said county in a regular session and executed the foregoing application in the manner prescribed by law. The Board, having examined said applicant under oath, touching his qualifications under Section 131, Constitution of Alabama, as amended, and having fully considered the foregoing application for registration, questionnaire and oaths, adjudges said applicant (

_____ be registered and he was duly registered this the _____ day of _____, 19____.

Signed: _____
Chairman

Member

Member

(NOTE: The act of actually determining an applicant entitled to be registered is judicial. A majority of the Board must be present. The power cannot be delegated. Each member must vote on each application. Not until this certificate is issued the applicant.)

The Applicant, _____, due to failure to meet the requirements of state law for registration as an elector, is hereby rejected on this the _____ day of _____, 19____.

Signed: _____
Chairman

Member

Member

PART VI
EXAMINATION OF SUPPORTING WITNESS

(The witness shall be placed under oath to tell the truth, the person administering the oath being a Board member or authorized to administer oaths and acting under the direction of the Board.)

Name of Witness _____

Address _____

Place of Voting _____

"I have known the applicant _____ for _____ years and _____
and I have personal knowledge that his place of residence is _____

_____ and that he has resided in the State of Alabama at least one year and in _____ County for at least _____

Signature of Witness

Sworn to and subscribed before me this the _____ day of _____, 19____.

(Person Administering Oath)

Date _____

SAMPLE

SAMPLE

(38)

"B"

1. What body can try impeachments of the president of the United States? Senate
 2. Check the applicable definition for responsibility:
X a duty
_____ a speech
_____ failure
 3. Name the attorney general of the United States. Nicholas (acting)
Katzenbach
 4. Women may now serve on juries in Alabama State courts. True
-

"C"

1. If a person charged with treason denies his guilt, how many persons must testify against him before he can be convicted? Two
2. At what time of day on January 20 each four years does the term of the president of the United States end? 12 noon
3. If the president does not wish to sign a bill, how many days is he allowed in which to return it to Congress for reconsideration? Ten
4. If a bill is passed by Congress and the President refuses to sign it and does not send it back to Congress in session within the specified period of time, is the bill defeated or does it become law? It becomes law unless Congress adjourns before the expiration of 10 days

SAMPLE

SAMPLE

(40)

"B"

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

"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? Search warrant
2. If the United States wishes to purchase land for an arsenal and have exclusive legislative authority over it, consent is required from Legislature
3. Prior to the adoption of the United States Constitution, the organization of states was known as the Confederation.
4. Tribunals are courts.

SAMPLE

SAMPLE

(41)
"B"

1. Can the president of the United States be removed from office for conviction of bribery? Yes
 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. Hoover
 4. What officer is designated by the Constitution to be president of the Senate of the United States? Vice President
-

"C"

1. Can the state coin money with the consent of Congress? No
2. Name one area of authority over state militia reserved exclusively to the states. The appointment of officers
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 promoting progress.
4. The only legal tender which may be authorized by states for payment of debts is U. S. Currency.

SAMPLE

SAMPLE

(46)

"B"

1. Can you be imprisoned, under Alabama law, for a debt? No
 2. In addition to becoming a U. S. citizen by birth, a person may become a citizen by:
 immigration
 X naturalization
 voting
 3. Name one person by name or title who is part of the judicial branch of government in Alabama. Chief Justice Livingston.
 4. The first sentence of the United States Constitution is called the Preamble. True
-

"C"

- 1. In what year did the Congress gain the right to prohibit the migration of persons to the states? 1808
2. Who is the commander-in-chief of the army and navy of the United States? The President
- 3. Which of the Parts above, of the United States Constitution, deals with the federal government's authority to call the state militia into federal service? Part 1
4. The president is forbidden to exercise his authority of pardon in cases of impeachment.

The State of Louisiana

Literacy Test (This test is to be given to anyone who cannot prove a fifth grade education.)

Do what you are told to do in each statement, nothing more, nothing less. Be careful as one wrong answer denotes failure of the test. You have 10 minutes to complete the test.

1. Draw a line around the number or letter of this sentence.
2. Draw a line under the last word in this line.
3. Cross out the longest word in this line.
4. Draw a line around the shortest word in this line.
5. Circle the first, first letter of the alphabet in this line.
6. In the space below draw three circles, one inside (engulfed by) the other.

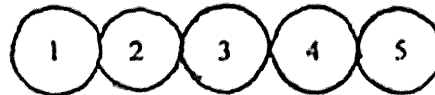
7. Above the letter X make a small cross.
8. Draw a line through the letter below that comes earliest in the alphabet.

Z V S B D M K I T P H C

9. Draw a line through the two letters below that come last in the alphabet.

Z V B D M K T P H S Y C

10. In the first circle below write the last letter of the first word beginning with "L".



11. Cross out the number necessary, when making the number below one million.

1000000000

12. Draw a line from circle 2 to circle 5 that will pass below circle 2 and above circle 4.



13. In the line below cross out each number that is more than 20 but less than 30.

31 16 48 29 53 47 22 37 98 26 20 25

14. Draw a line under the first letter after "h" and draw a line through the second letter after "j".

a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q

15. In the space below, write the word "noise" backwards and place a dot over what would be its second letter should it have been written forward.

16. Draw a triangle with a blackened circle that overlaps only its left corner.

17. Look at the line of numbers below, and place on the blank, the number that should come next.

2 4 8 16 ____

18. Look at the line of numbers below, and place on the blank, the number that should come next.

3 6 9 ____ 15

19. Draw in the space below, a square with a triangle in it, and within that same triangle draw a circle with a black dot in it.

20. Spell backwards, forwards.

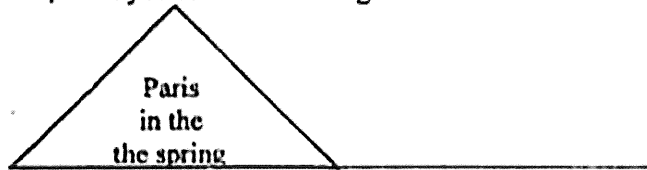
21. Print the word vote upside down, but in the correct order.

22. Place a cross over the tenth letter in this line, a line under the first space in this sentence, and circle around the last the in the second line of this sentence.

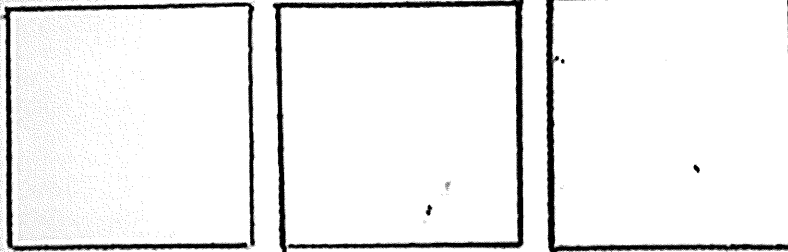
23. Draw a figure that is square in shape. Divide it in half by drawing a straight line from its northeast corner to its southwest corner, and then divide it once more by drawing a broken line from the middle of its western side to the middle of its eastern side.

24. Print a word that looks the same whether it is printed frontwards or backwards.

25. Write down on the line provided, what you read in the triangle below:



26. In the third square below, write the second letter of the fourth word.



27. Write right from the left to the right as you see it spelled here.

28. Divide a vertical line in two equal parts by bisecting it with a curved horizontal line that is only straight at its spot bisection of the vertical.

29. Write every other word in this first line and print every third word in same line, (original type smaller and first line ended at comma) but capitalize the fifth word that you write.

30. Draw five circles that one common inter-locking part.