

LESSON PLAN: Voting Rights

Lesson Title: Voting Rights for Black Americans	Time Required: 90-minute block
Unit Title: African American Freedom Rights Movement	
Content Standard(s):	II.10 Students analyze the development of federal civil rights and voting rights. 6. Analyze the passage and effects of civil rights and voting rights legislation (e.g., 1964 Civil Rights Act, Voting Rights Act of 1965) and the Twenty-Fourth Amendment, with an emphasis on equality of access to education and to the political process.

Course Big-Picture Question:	* How have historically marginalized groups agitated, advocated, and demanded the United States embody its founding ideals of liberty and equality? * Evaluate the extent to which various groups were successful in attaining their rights to liberty and equality.
Unit-Level Focus Questions:	* To what extent have people of African descent had access to liberty and equality in the United States? * How have people of African descent agitated, advocated, and demanded the United States embody these founding ideals?
Lesson Focus Question:	Evaluate the extent that Black Americans attained greater access to voting rights, weighing limitations and gains between the Reconstruction Era and today.
Learning Objective:	Students will be able to address the learning focus question using both historical content and the historical thinking skill of continuity and change over time.

Historical Content	Instructional Strategy and Sources
* The Fifteenth Amendment * Jim Crow barriers to voting (poll taxes, grandfather clauses, literacy tests, violence, etc.) * Selma marches to Montgomery * Voting Rights Act of 1965 * <i>Shelby County v. Holder</i> and recent voting legislation	* Tapping into prior knowledge * Primary source analysis (video "Selma 50 Years Later: Remembering Bloody Sunday"; text excerpts from the 1965 Voting Rights Act) * Simulation of literacy test (Louisiana Literacy Test) * Examination of present-day voting legislation (Brennan Center article)
Historical Thinking	Inclusion and Engagement
Continuity and change over time Primary source analysis (text and video)	Current event connection with examination of present-day voting laws; agency of the Black community

Assessment: How do you know that students have achieved the learning objective?	Students will complete an exit ticket at the end of the lesson responding to the lesson focus question. Strong responses will cite specific historical evidence and weigh both limitations and gains from Reconstruction to the present day.
Modifications/Accommodations: How can you provide the necessary modifications or accommodations for special education/English language learner students to achieve the learning objective?	All of the following will be provided as needed: * Primary sources can be further excerpted * Vocabulary * Extended time * Sentence starters * Option for verbal response as opposed to written * Access to notes

FIGURE 5.2 Sample Lesson Plan for Teachers: Broad Time Period

VOTING RIGHTS FOR BLACK AMERICANS (PAST TO PRESENT)

CONNECTING WITH THE PAST

- * Skim through the Brennan Center for Justice article “Voting Laws Roundup: October 2021” on their website. Take note of some of the new restrictive laws and some of the new expanded laws passed by various states.

New Restrictive Laws	New Expansive Laws

Lesson Focus Question: *Evaluate the extent that Black Americans attained greater access to voting rights, weighing limitations and gains between the Reconstruction Era and today.*

RECONSTRUCTION AND JIM CROW

1. Reflecting back on our unit thus far, what do you know about Black American voting rights (and obstacles to voting) in U.S. history?

SIMULATION: LITERACY TEST

2. As an individual, take ten minutes to attempt to complete the entire Louisiana literacy test (thirty tasks).¹ What do you notice? What are your thoughts on the test? After ten minutes, we will discuss your findings as a class.

SELMA

3. In 1965, Civil Rights activists marched from Selma, Alabama, to the capital city of Montgomery, demonstrating their desire to exercise their constitutional right to vote. Among the activists were John Lewis, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Amelia Boynton Robinson, and Diane Nash. Watch the documentary “Selma 50 Years Later: Remembering Bloody Sunday” on YouTube™. Take notes in the space below and prepare to share your findings with the class.

¹ The Louisiana Literacy Test can be found online as a pdf (Ferris State University). It consists of thirty questions.

FIGURE 5.3 Sample Lesson Plan for Students: Broad Time Period (*continues*)

VOTING RIGHTS ACT OF 1965

4. After the marches in Selma, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act of 1965 into law. Read and prepare to share your findings on the excerpt of the act below. What does the Voting Rights Act of 1965 do? What previous policies did this law attempt to address? How do you know?

Source: The Voting Rights Act of 1965

“SEC. 2. No voting qualification or prerequisite to voting, or standard, practice, or procedure shall be imposed or applied by any State or political subdivision to deny or abridge the right of any citizen of the United States to vote on account of race or color. . . .

“SEC. 3(b) If in a proceeding instituted by the Attorney General under any statute to enforce the guarantees of the fifteenth amendment in any State or political subdivision the court finds that a test or device has been used for the purpose or with the effect of denying or abridging the right of any citizen of the United States to vote on account of race or color, it shall suspend the use of tests and devices in such State or political subdivisions as the court shall determine is appropriate and for such period as it deems necessary.”

5. In 2013, the Supreme Court modified the Voting Rights Act of 1965 in the *Shelby County v. Holder* case. This made it easier for states to pass new voting laws. Some argue that these new laws create challenges for historically marginalized groups to exercise their rights to vote, but others say they are intended to protect voter legitimacy.

Working with a partner and using the Brennan Center article, use an example of a restrictive or expansive voting bill or law that has been proposed or passed. Complete the chart below:

With your partner:

What does the bill or law state?

Which state proposed or passed the legislation?

How might this bill or law impact Black Americans or other historically marginalized groups?

Whole-class share-out:

Take notes on the various bills your classmates found.

EXIT TICKET

Formative Assessment: Evaluate the extent that Black Americans attained greater access to voting rights, weighing limitations and gains between the Reconstruction Era and today.

FIGURE 5.3 (continued) Sample Lesson Plan for Students: Broad Time Period