

## **The Evolution of the African American Voter**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

My original desire was to educate students on the seemingly simple role the American President was to play in the framing of the new nation. This concept would start with President Washington and conclude with our 43<sup>rd</sup> president, President Bush. This unit originally was to span the *Evolution of the American Presidency*. However, as the seminar on the “Perspectives on the Presidency” progressed, my goal changed to something more fitting for the students of E.W. Cullen Middle School. This unit will teach the predominantly African American classes of low socioeconomic backgrounds about their voting heritage. This concept is designed to take the students on an educational journey that teaches them how the role of the African American voter has radically changed over the years. It is still my goal to have the students formulate their own opinions on how the country should be led from the viewpoint of an informed voter.

With the cultural disadvantages and the socioeconomic background that these children face daily, it is easy to see how the influence of the rich and famous would motivate their ideas about voting. It is easy to overlook the past when the present stares you in the face. It is also clear that the struggle to obtain the citizen’s right to vote has been forgotten since too many young African Americans fail to exercise this right today. Now, it is my responsibility as an instructor to guide and motivate these reading students through their journey of re-discovery.

Merriam-Webster defines apathy as a lack of emotion or interest. Unfortunately, there is too much apathy within the African American community since many failed to exercise their right to vote, a constitutional right their ancestors struggled to achieve. The unit will inform students about the efforts to expand voting rights, the most important right of citizenship, to former slaves. This unit will teach the students to appreciate their past and to make the connections between the past and the present. Our students will address such topics as African American Voter destination. The idea of voter destination addresses the future of African American voters, particularly the students taking part in this curriculum unit. What will these students do with this newly acquired information? Will they use it to their cultures’ benefit or will they allow this information to waste away? At the conclusion of this unit, the students will be equipped with knowledge about their race’s past which will help them determine where they will go from this moment forward. Considering the sacrifice their ancestors made to obtain the right to vote, is the present generation of African Americans meeting its civic obligations?

It is important that my students understand that how they live today has been affected by their ancestors’ success in obtaining the right to vote. For example, the water fountains that they use daily without a second thought were not available to their great-grandparents in the South. If it were not for the first voters voting in favor of integration, then there quite possibly could be a sign still hanging over their fountains that reads “WHITE ONLY.” While my students are too young to vote today, my aim is to instill in them an appreciation of how vital it is for them and their communities to exercise the right to vote when they reach the age of eighteen. After this lesson on the abuse and degradation endured by their ancestors, I feel that their interest will be encouraged enough to get them started on the road to appreciating the power of the ballot. I want

this unit to become something lasting with the students, something that will influence them for the rest of their lives.

Essentially, this unit will be a guide for the students, a guide that will aide them in determining their place as citizens. The students will be able to determine if the struggles of the past are being honored in the present or if they are being neglected? If early African Americans were indeed human, why were they not recognized as such and given the same liberties as their White counterparts? Why did the Whites go to extreme lengths to prevent African Americans from being voting citizens? What is the current status of African American voters in the United States? These questions and more like them will be the framework for creating a new breed of evolved voters.

## **STUDENT CONECTIONS**

### **Personal Connections**

This unit is designed to enable students to make historic connections between themselves and the number of African Americans before them that fought for the right to vote. Exposure to their ancestors' ideals and principles should redirect their ideas on voting and what it means to vote. At the end of this lesson students will understand that the right to vote is their legacy, and it is the voice that their ancestors have died for throughout American history. Students will learn that responsibility extends far beyond what they can do for themselves, but what they can do for others.

In addition to fighting for their own civil rights, Blacks were joined in their struggle by a number of White activists who were opposed to racial injustice. Some of these White activists helped the cause by marching in demonstrations for the achievement of civil rights; some White lawyers helped Thurgood Marshall prepare the NAACP's case before the Supreme Court; and during this struggle for civil rights, some Whites gave their lives. A prime example of this selflessness can be found in the movie *Mississippi Burning* in which Gene Hackman and a host of actors re-enacted the events leading to, during, and after the trial of the *U.S. vs. Cecil Price*:

It was an old-fashioned lynching, carried out with the help of the county officials that came to symbolize hardcore resistance to integration. Dead were three civil rights workers, Michael Schwerner, Andrew Goodman, and James Chaney, all shot in the dark of night on a lonely road in Neshoba County, Mississippi... The FBI's all-out search for the conspirators who killed the three young men, two White and one Black, as depicted in the movie *Mississippi Burning... (Mississippi Burning Trial)*

Personally, students will be able to determine the difference between what rights are and what privileges are.

What are the benefits of being an active voter? When taking on a new career, an employee always wants to know what benefits accompany that particular job. Why should voting be any different? It is my job to help the students understand that participating in the voting process will benefit them and their community in the long run. One particularly important benefit to voting is that you are taking a stand on what is happening in your life and not just being passive. However, not voting could adversely affect your interests because that allows decisions to be made by others that might negatively affect you in the future. If the students are not taught to use the voice that they are given, then eventually that voice will not be heard. If one does not take part in the decision making process, then they should not be upset when decisions are made for them. Even if their desired outcome does not occur after voting, they could at least say that they made their opinions known. Students should learn that in a democracy, you will win some votes and lose others. It is important for citizens to learn how to win responsibly and to lose responsibly.

African Americans' voting rights not only affected the Black communities, but all communities. After the Civil War, with the addition of the Black vote, the demographics of citizenship changed, which caused some southern states to create new laws that would prevent the new voters from voting. Since Amendments to the Constitution were designed to make Blacks citizens of the United States, some states created laws that would counter what the federal government provided for these citizens. One particular law that was created and used in the south was called the "Grandfather Clause," which stated "those who had enjoyed the right to vote prior to 1866 or 1867, or their lineal descendants would be exempt from education, property or tax requirements for voting" (Bender). This in essence meant that if one's grandfather was a slave before 1866, then one did not have the right to vote. If our ancestors had not fought laws such as this one, what would life in this part of Texas be like now for African Americans? What made the students' ancestors so different that their counterparts could not accept them? Students will have to identify laws that went against their ancestor's Constitutional rights? Also were the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments actually created for only Black citizens or all citizens?

In the beginning when this country was formed and the first slaves set foot on this soil, it didn't matter which political party the Blacks most closely identified with, since they were only classified as livestock. As livestock these Africans in America didn't deserve the right to vote. A strong central government and a national bank would give the North control of the new government. The planters favored a loose union so that they could have unrestricted domination over their slave system. However, they realized that a strong government was necessary to enable them to enforce their control over the source of their wealth – 757,000 slaves. The Northerners made concessions in order to assure the support of the Southern planters (YSA 1). In the mid 1790s two political parties were created: the Federalists, led by Alexander Hamilton, and the Democratic-Republicans, led by Thomas Jefferson and James Madison. Jefferson and Madison, who were both elected president four times, were slave-owners. This party won every election from 1800 to 1824. In 1828 the name Republican was dropped, and the Democratic Party was formed.

Between 1865 and 1877, under the guise of representing the common man, the Democratic Party began speaking in the name of the many, while actually representing the interests of the former slaveholders. All through the Southern States the Democratic Party brutally maintained the white oppression with oppressive laws and naked force. It was not logical for the slaves to identify with the Democratic Party since they were seen as their oppressors. During the Reconstruction era the Southern Democrats brutalized, terrorized, and murdered tens of thousands of Blacks and their allies. The Republican Party did little to prevent these atrocities. The Republicans actually took measures to prevent Blacks from defending themselves, disarming Blacks and preventing the formations of armed Black militias. As times progressed and ideas changed, the North fought for the emancipation of the African Americans in the Southern states and the African American population begins to identify with the Republican Party.

### **Republican to Democratic Support**

Presently, the Black vote is split; about 10 percent of those who vote Republican while 90 percent support the Democrats. What caused the African Americans to change their allegiance? It is now understood that the Democratic Party is a party that believes in representing and protecting the interests of working Americans and guaranteeing personal liberties for all (*Blacks and the 2004 Democratic National Convention* 1). Within the African American population there are greater numbers of working class citizens; therefore, most African American leaders have urged their followers to support the Democratic Party. Most African American leaders believe that the Republican Party is designed to meet the needs of a select few, the elite and the privileged.

Partisan Identification. In national surveys conducted by the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies since the last election, about 80 percent of African Americans have consistently identified themselves as Democrats. Compared with the way African Americans vote, this figure actually understates Black support for the Democratic Party. This high level of Black attachment to the Democratic Party is now four decades old. Prior to the New Deal era of Franklin D. Roosevelt, a majority of Blacks were Republicans. Their support shifted to the Democratic Party during the New Deal, but Black Republican identification still remained in the mid-30-percent range into the postwar era. Until 1964, almost one in four Blacks continued to identify with the Republican Party.

It was the 1964 presidential election that showed a major increase in Black support for the Democratic Party. Two factors were associated with that shift: One was the strong support for President Lyndon B. Johnson and the Democratic Party for the landmark civil and voting rights legislation of the mid-1960s and the party's continuing pro-civil rights stand. The other was the Republican Party's sharp turn to a more conservative posture, especially in espousing "states' rights," a position African Americans associated with southern segregationists. (*Blacks and the 2004 Democratic National Convention*)

### **Academic Knowledge**

Academically students will gain knowledge in both history and English Language Arts (ELA). As a history unit, students will be exposed to events that occurred during the pre-Civil War era, Civil War era, post-Civil War era, Civil Rights era, post-Civil Rights era, and once again a study of the Amendments pertaining to minorities' rights. For the ELA portion of the unit, students will spend the majority of their time reading and researching the information that will be provided for them.

#### ***Pre-Civil War Era***

This portion will span the time beginning in 1619 with the first slaves brought to Jamestown, Virginia, and will conclude with the time period before the forming of the Confederate States of America. During this time period slaves were imported into the United States as property from the west coast of Africa. Upon entering the United States, they were sold into servitude without wages and considered livestock. It is at this time that the laws governing slavery are adopted. In 1641 Massachusetts was the first colony to legalize slavery, and then eight years later Connecticut also legalized slavery. According to Milkis and Nelson, the *Framers* believed slavery was a "necessary evil" that must be contained and allowed to die a "natural death" (150). It was beliefs such as this one that kept slavery alive and circulating for so long. It was this very belief that led to the Civil War. How could slavery die a natural death if it was essential to the Southern way of life? There was a need in the South for slaves, and because of this need, slavery would continue to flourish without an end in sight.

In 1860, Abraham Lincoln was elected the 16<sup>th</sup> President of the United States. Although Lincoln consistently proclaimed himself "naturally antislavery," he believed that the national government lacked the authority to abolish slavery in the states where it already existed. At the same time, Lincoln believed that the extension of slavery into the western territories should not be tolerated (Milkis and Nelson 149). However, it is clear that Lincoln felt some form of compassion for these slaves, but he kept his feelings to himself until the enactment of the Kansas-Nebraska Act and the opening of the new territory to slavery.

#### ***Civil War Era***

This section will begin in February 1861, with Jefferson Davis presiding over the newly formed Confederate States of America, and conclude in May of 1865 with the surrender of the

remaining Confederate forces. This war was considered “the greatest war in American history. Three million fought – 600,000 died. It was the only war fought on American soil by Americans, and for that reason we have always been fascinated with The Civil War” (“My Father’s House”). By the time this war was over, the slaves were emancipated, which in my eyes made this a great war. Students will be required to answer questions concerning this era such as was war the only way to bring the Confederate States back to the fold and did it truly help the slaves?

It is because of the events that took place during this time period that Lincoln was considered a dictator. He refused to allow for the expansion of slavery into the new territories and when faced with a problem, he had to make a decision that would re-unite a nation. That decision was war. All measures taken to protect the Union came from Lincoln since Congress was not in session at the beginning of the war. The President did everything he could to help the White Southerners understand that it was not his position to take their peace, property, and personal security. It was his position, however, to put an end to the expansion of slavery, and for this very reason some southern states seceded from the Union. According to Milkis and Nelson, Lincoln’s appeal for a peaceful resolution of the slavery controversy was quickly rejected by secessionist leaders. Southern Whites were unwilling to distinguish his call for compromise from outright abolitionism. As soon as secession became violent and irrevocable, Lincoln believed his oath to uphold the Constitution allowed, even compelled him to take extraordinary measures, including emancipating the slaves in order to restore the Union (153 - 154). Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863 under his authority as Commander-in-Chief.

### ***Post Civil War Era***

This section will pick-up at the end of the Civil War and continue to the Civil Rights Era. In this portion of the unit students will have an opportunity to review facts and voice opinions on what happened (with the voter struggle) during the time immediately following the Civil War as well as, what struggles the new voters had to face immediately following the ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment in February of 1870. It is at this time that African Americans’ lives and rights were threatened when exercising the right to vote. These people would be put in the position of having to pass literacy tests that most scholars could not pass before being allowed to register to vote. Ridiculous stipulations and conditions were placed on the Blacks’ voting privileges, but none were placed on the privileges of Whites:

Many southerners accepted the disenfranchisement of Blacks as a “reform,” intended to prevent the political exploitation of an ignorant electorate. An impressive roll call of devices was used to eliminate Blacks from the electorate. Led by Mississippi, southern states activated stringent (but not unfamiliar) registration qualifications—property and/or literacy restrictions as well as tests of statutory or constitutional interpretation (a form of the literacy standard). They then absolved Whites of meeting the requirements through “grandfather” or “good character” clause or more simply a differential application of the provisions. (Crotty 23)

Eight southern states incorporated these tactics into their state constitutions. While Florida, Tennessee, Arkansas, and Texas utilized the poll tax, later the other eight states adopted the poll tax as well. Later, there would be acts such as the Voting Rights Act created in order to protect Blacks from these forms of injustices. Although Blacks had received the right to vote, women had to remain on the battlefield for this right and would remain on the battlefield until the ratification of the Fourteenth Amendment in the 1920s.

### ***Civil Rights Era***

This portion of the unit will be dedicated to the memory of those suffrage fighters, both Black and White who sacrificed not only their time, but themselves for the betterment of mankind. This

will span the 1950s-1960s when in some southern states Blacks were afraid to even register to vote. This fear was not misplaced for far too often Blacks and Whites alike were killed for their efforts. During this time there were programs set up by northern Whites to help Blacks register to vote. These Whites were seen as traitors to the White race by some southern Whites and were often the target of hate crimes.

However, this is also the time period in which the Voting Rights Acts and Civil Rights Acts were enacted. According to the *United States Department of Justice*, the 1957 Act created the Civil Rights Division within the Department of Justice and the Commission on Civil Rights; the Attorney General was given authority to intervene in and institute lawsuits seeking injunctive relief against violations of the 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment. The 1960 Act permitted federal courts to appoint voting referees to conduct voter registration following a judicial finding of voting discrimination (*U. S. Department of Justice 3*). These laws and court decisions made it more difficult, at least in theory for states to keep their Blacks disenfranchised, however through the use of literacy, poll tax and other practices the southern states were able to keep the Black voter registration well below that of Whites.

Since the south persisted with the disenfranchisement of the Blacks, in 1964 President Johnson put into effect an act that followed the principles of the Fifteenth Amendment very closely. This act applied a nationwide prohibition against the denial or abridgment of the right to vote on the literacy test on a nationwide basis. Soon after passage of the Voting Rights Act, federal examiners were conducting voter registration, and Black voter registration began a sharp increase. According to the U.S. Department of Justice, the Voting Rights Act itself has been called the single most effective piece of civil rights legislation ever passed by Congress.

### ***Post Civil Rights Era***

The post Civil Rights Era is the time period in which African Americans could vote freely without the fear of having to pass a literacy test or the fear of being lynched because their choice to exercise their rights. During this time celebrities even joined in the efforts of voter registration. Now Blacks are turning out in record numbers to utilize their right to vote. It is at this time that Blacks may look back and see their progress as voters. Blacks have used this time to prove that they are not property or second class citizens.

I am so proud to say that last year was my first year teaching, and I was given the opportunity to attend Russell Simmons *Hip Hop Summit* which was began with the intent of teaching students about the importance of voting. They were also taught about the importance of staying abreast of topics not only in their communities but nationally and internationally. I believe my students learned a great deal that day, not only because someone gathered them all together in a large room and forced them to pay attention, but because this information came from celebrities whom they idolize. That day, this information came alive because it wasn't just coming from their teachers and parents, but hearing this information from stars like Beyonce Knowles made it all seem more cool and interesting to them.

It is also my belief that Blacks as voters have come a long way since 1619, and I was able to witness this first hand when a friend and I went to cast our votes in this past election for president. We stood in a growing line for well over an hour and a half. This, at the time, had me feeling a mixture of emotions. In that short time span, I went from being impressed to being annoyed and then a sense of pride came over me. First impressed, by the number of voters who turned out for early voting, then annoyed because I was standing in that line for well over an hour and a half, but as sure as that line was long, I began to feel proud. Proud that here in an area known for its poverty, I was among hundreds of people who looked like me, and we were all doing something (voting) that had cost so many so much. I felt proud because “we the people”

were exercising “our” right to vote. Standing in that line, I saw a number of my students and their parents and that also made me feel proud.

### ***The Amendments***

This section will be used to introduce the two Amendments to the Constitution that will support this unit, those Amendments being the Thirteenth and Fifteenth Amendments. The Thirteenth Amendment abolishes slavery and the Fifteenth Amendment granted African Americans the right to vote. Since the ratification of the Thirteenth and Fifteenth Amendments there have been more Amendments ratified for the protection of voter rights.

### **Academic Skills**

In addition to academic knowledge, this unit will address academic skills. A few skills that the unit will address, but are not limited to are: *a) Methods of Research; b) Reading Strategies; c) Cause/Effect; d) Organization Skill; e) Drawing Conclusions; and f) Making Inferences.*

- a) Methods of Research-* (110/8.13 TEKS). **Reading/inquiry/research.** The student inquires and conducts research using a variety of sources. Students will follow this objective by collecting data and reference materials. They will also organize research questions; write information accurately and in their own words. This section will also give them a chance to learn how to record clear and accurate notes.
- b) Reading Strategies-* Students will make predictions, visualize characters and events, connect personally with what they will read, question what happens as they read, clarify anything that does not make sense to them, and evaluate by forming opinions about what they have read.
- c) Cause/Effect* – when one event brings about another, they are said to have a cause and effect relationship. The event that happens first is the cause and the event that results from the cause is called the effect (McDougal Littell).
- d) Organization Skills* – organization is usually chronological. Events are presented in a timely order. Selections may be organized around the ideas the author wants to discuss. Dates and signal words, such as *before, after, next, and last* may clarify the sequence of events. Steps to figure out how to organize may include these strategies:
  1. Take notes. Students may find it helpful to use index cards, writing each main idea on a new card.
  2. If the piece is written in chronological order, draw a time line to record events and dates.
  3. Make a graphic organizer, such as an outline, to keep track of information.
- e) Drawing Conclusions* – paying attention to details in a literary work and putting these details together to create a larger meaning. Readers draw conclusions by using information from the literature and from their own experiences.
- f) Making Inferences* – an inference is a logical statement based on evidence. Good readers make inferences as they read, trying to figure out more than the words say. The evidence may be facts the writer provides, or it may be experiences from the reader’s own life.

### **TEACHING THE UNIT**

In order to teach this unit effectively a number of strategies must be in play. As a teacher I must not forget that students learn at different paces, levels, and formats; therefore, I will implement a number of strategies to accommodate the various types of learners found in one class. These students will be given every opportunity to express themselves through written submission, oral review, and hands-on projects. Also to enhance their abilities, students will be given extended time for completion of work, peer tutoring, repeated drill and practice, as well as after school tutorials.

Also, as a reading teacher I have a tendency to get carried away with narrative text and only touch lightly on expository text. Given this opportunity, I will be able to teach the *Evolution of the African American Voter* as an expository module. Strategies that I will use will include, but are not limited to:

1. **Think-Pair-Share-** Through this method of teaching students will be grouped in teams of four, where they will be given a specific topic for discussion. The topic will be presented to each team on a small scrap of paper, where only that team knows its' topic. The team members will be given two minutes each to brainstorm their ideas (think), they will then have approximately eight minutes to pair-up in their groups and share their ideas and information about the topic. After the teams have discussed their topic one representative (the team reporter) will come to the forward and present their team topic and response.
2. **Addressing Multiple Intelligences-** Since students learn at different speeds and through different methods, all learners must be provided an equal opportunity at learning. It is understood that everyone is either a visual, verbal, kinesthetic, or auditory learn. Therefore, throughout the unit all students will be allowed to submit different phases of their project through written submission, oral review, group-projects, use of technology, and creating and designing by hand.
3. **Adjusting Seating Assignments-** Different portions of this unit will call for the students to be seated in different layouts. For the majority of this unit however, students will be arranged in a group seating. This will allow students to easily share their ideas with the members of their teams. For testing purposes students will be seated in rows and columns. For presentations, students will be seated in a horseshoe or circular formation; this will allow easy viewing of presentations. Students will also use this time to work at the in-class computer workstations.
4. **Diagrams-** In order to help the students complete their assignments; they will be given diagrams of the more complex components of this unit. For example in this area a large percentage of the student population does not own their own computers therefore they are less familiar with some software that will be used in class. All students regardless of their abilities will be given a diagram to follow for completion of the team PowerPoint Presentations. In addition to this diagram, students will be given a brief lesson on creating PowerPoint Presentations.
5. **TEKS Objectives-** the following section is comprised of a few of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for English Language Arts and Reading Objectives that will be covered during this unit.
  - a. **110.23/ (7.4) Listening/speaking/culture.** The student listens and speaks to gain and share knowledge of his/her own culture, the culture of others, and the common elements of culture.
  - b. **110.23/ (7.7) Reading/fluency.** The student reads with fluency and understanding in texts at appropriate difficulty levels.
  - c. **110.23/ (7.8) Reading/ variety of texts.** The student reads widely for different purposes in varied sources.
  - d. **110.23/ (7.9) Reading/ vocabulary development.** The student acquires an extensive vocabulary through reading and systematic word study.
  - e. **110.23/ (7.10) Reading/comprehension.** The student uses a variety of strategies to comprehend a wide range of texts of increasing levels of difficulty.
  - f. **110.23/ (7.11) Reading/ literature response.** The student expresses and supports responses to various types of texts.
  - g. **110.23/ (7.13) Reading/inquiry/research.** The student inquires and conducts research using a variety of sources.

## Curriculum Assignments

Below are a few activities/assignments that will be utilized in the teaching this unit.

1. The Time Line (student generated project) - students will create a group/team timeline that covers the most significant events leading to the Evolution of the African American voter. All timelines must begin with the first slaves brought to the United States. These slaves will be considered Africans in America.
2. Brochures (student generated project) - each class period will create drafts of brochures on promoting voting. Students will surf the web and locate pictures that support the information found within their brochures. Each class will then design their final brochure which will be completed in class using a desktop publisher. The brochures from all classes will be judged and a first place winner selected. The winning class will set-up a booth in the cafeteria where their brochure will be distributed.
3. Research Papers- this will be a traditional research paper in which students will receive their research packets containing the research topic, note cards, time frame for research projects, possible sources, etc. The research paper will begin at the end of the completion of the unit.
4. PowerPoint Presentations (student generated project) - students will use Microsoft PowerPoint to create slide shows on the Evolution of the African American Voter. Instructional time will be given to teach students basic functions of the PowerPoint software. Students can gain additional assistance after school.
5. The "What if" Game- this game involves the students as well as the instructor. Each member of a team will be given one slip of paper with the words "What if" written on it. Based on something they have learned from the unit, students are to write out a question that could have changed history in some profound way. Example: What if . . . the slaves had never been emancipated? Next the class takes turns making predictions on what would have happened if the slaves had not been emancipated.
6. Create Board Game- students will create original board games or games based on the ideas of popular board games. Students will have to create their own rules, game pieces, and design for their board game. For the in-class presentations groups must explain the rules of their game and play a sample round of the game. Their classmates will rate the games on its difficulty level and entertainment level.
7. *Haves/Haves Nots* Experiment- an in class experiment that will give a small percentage of students' limited privileges ("Have Nots") and the larger percentage (the "Haves") rights that will not be afforded the smaller percentage. The Haves will be allowed to make decisions in the classroom while the "Have Nots" will be completely overlooked. As a closing the students will document their experiences of the day. Also students will answer questions about equality.
8. Evaluations- standard test quiz/exams in both oral and written formats.

All activities used in this unit will follow the guidelines of Houston I. S. D.'s Project CLEAR, meet the objectives of the TEKS, and utilize the learning levels of Blooms Taxonomy. The real test will not take place in the classroom, nor will I be able to evaluate it. For this test takes place at the students voting age, years after the completion of this unit.

## LESSON PLANS

At the beginning of this unit, students will be teamed in groups of four and will continue to work in the same team until the completion of the unit. Throughout the course of this unit, students will collect information for their *Evolution Journals*. Each week, students will add new material, notes, and literature to their journals. These journals will also aide the students in the completion of their final report.

## ***Week One***

### **Lesson One**

The objective of lesson one is to introduce the students to the vocabulary and amendments that will support the unit. At the start of class, students will be shown a set of words and based on prior knowledge, record all ideas that come to mind upon viewing. Students will be allowed to brainstorm for five minutes, after which, I will stop the students and reveal the definitions for the four vocabulary words (emancipation, proclamation, constitution, amendments). We will make comparisons between their conclusions and the actual definition of the words.

Students will then be divided into teams of four where they will be supplied with a topic or scenario relating to the Thirteenth Amendment, Fifteenth Amendment, or different forms of injustice and a table in which they will record their ideas and group answers. The table will be composed of a space for the scenario, a series of questions relating to the scenario, and a section for dissecting the Thirteenth and Fifteenth Amendments. For homework, students will compare and record the rights and responsibilities of early Africans in America to the rights and responsibilities of African Americans.

### **Lesson Two**

Day two will be a research day in which students will be given literature to review on the life of minorities in early American history. As a class, students will read and review the information given. Each team will be assigned a computer and a topic on which they will gather information. As an exit ticket, students will be required to answer the question, “Why do you believe the Africans worked so hard, but were not compensated for their work?” For homework, students will make predictions on what they will learn from the unit entitled *The Evolution of the African American Voter?*

### **Lesson Three**

This lesson will begin with the question, “What are civil rights and how were African Americans’ civil rights compromised?” By the end of lesson three, students will be able to understand what civil rights are, explain how African Americans’ civil rights were compromised, and why it was wrong. Each student will interpret the meaning of the Thirteenth and Fifteenth Amendment in their own words, and then as a team derive one centralized interpretation of the Amendments. After reading information on the Civil Rights Movement, students will find information on the steps taken to destroy civil rights and laws created to protect civil rights.

As closure for this lesson, students will be re-asked the question from the beginning of class. Students will then formulate their own opinions on why it is important to honor one’s rights as a voter?

### **Lesson Four**

This lesson will be used to strengthen students writing skills. Students will be given a list of three notable presidents and asked what each president is known for. The instructor will read a short story about President Lincoln and the Emancipation to the class, and students will record in their journals information about Abraham Lincoln. Students will be given the following questions in order to complete their journal entries:

1. Who was Abraham Lincoln?
2. What type of person do you believe Abraham Lincoln was?
3. What is a legacy?
4. What is the importance of Lincoln’s legacy?
5. What led to Lincoln’s Emancipation of the slaves?
6. In your opinion what made Lincoln a great president?

For homework students will complete additional questions for their journals.

### Lesson Five

This lesson is designed to aid the students in increasing the knowledge of their own cultures as well as the culture of others. The students will begin lesson five with a discussion question about culture, then the instructor will ask students to imagine themselves as slaves in a new world with a master as your provider. The instructor will ask students, “Why would you want to leave your master if he is providing for your needs? What were the reasons the slaves have for wanting to be free and vote?”

For the second portion of the lesson, students will move on to information concerning the celebration of Juneteenth in Texas. The question will be asked, “What is the significance of June 19<sup>th</sup> in Texas?” Students will use this time to gather data found at [www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/view/JJ/lkj1.html](http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/view/JJ/lkj1.html). Students will define the term “civil” and using data, they will provide an explanation on how a war could be considered civil. For homework, students will complete an assignment based on a current event about the President of the United States.

### ***Week Two***

#### Lesson One

This lesson will be completed in the form of a game. Students will be asked, “What if?” and to use their imagination. Students will be given a series of questions that all begin with, “What if?” For example: *What if the Africans were never taken from Africa?* The students will then share answers with the class, compile their answers, and record them on their personal spreadsheets.

#### Lesson Two

The student listens and speaks to gain and share knowledge of his/her own culture, the culture of others, and common elements of culture. At the start of class students will be asked if they feel “African Americans’ and Hispanics’ rights as voters will one day lead to a President from one of these two cultures?” Using the information that the students have collected thus far, they will determine which characteristics define a good president, and if race is a determining factor? Students will also locate the different avenues that can be used to collect information on candidates. Also students will make a list of information they can use in order to select a president.

#### Lesson Three

The student uses a variety of strategies to comprehend a wide range of texts of increasing levels of difficulty. As a warm-up, students will be asked to answer the question, “What tactics were used in some southern states to prevent the ‘new citizens’ from voting?” Lesson three will teach students how to use evidence from the passage as proof. Students and teacher will read a short passage from the overhead and at the end of the passage, answer two questions on what was read. Each question will request that proof be given from the passage. The teacher will demonstrate how to gather evidence from the text that will support an independent answer.

Teacher and students will complete practice exercises in selecting appropriate information from text as evidence. Once students are comfortable with the task, they will be given a copy of the Fifteenth Amendment and a series of questions that will require evidence from the text.

#### Lesson Four

The student uses a variety of strategies to comprehend a wide range of texts of increasing levels of difficulty. At the beginning of class, students will list at least five types of expository text and characteristics of each one. The focus of this lesson will be brochures. Students will view

brochure samples and record characteristics of these samples. From this lesson, students will gather ideas on types of information which will be recorded in their voter registration brochures. For homework students will be given brochures from different departments of the government. By using the characteristics of these brochures as guides, they will begin their voter registration brochures.

### Lesson Five

Students will complete a cumulative exam over the first nine lessons. This exam will use short answer, multiple choice, and at least one essay question. Students should know the methods of constructing a brochure and what information is required to support a brochure.

### ***Week Three***

#### Lesson One

The student produces visual images, messages, and meaning that communicate with others. For this lesson, students will begin a class timeline. At the start of class, students will be asked, “What is a timeline and what kind of information does it provide?” Students will use the information from the first nine lessons to begin the creation of a timeline that will cover the evolution of the African American voter.

As practice in class, students will begin a timeline of significant events in the student’s lives as practice. Once students have completed personal mini-timelines, they will sort through dated material in their notes to create a class timeline that will be completed at the end of the entire unit. For extra credit, students will be allowed to bring in information on the “Mississippi Burning” trial.

#### Lesson Two

The student produces visual images, messages, and meaning that communicate with others. The students will learn the basics of PowerPoint in order to create their own PowerPoint presentations for the completion of the class timeline. Using the In-Focus projector and PCs, students will be taught as teams how to create a PowerPoint project. Students will be asked to create simple tasks in PowerPoint. They will then be given a storyboard in order to map out their final presentations.

#### Lesson Three

The student produces visual images, messages, and meaning that communicate with others. Students will combine their knowledge of both PowerPoint and timelines to begin the final unit project. Each team will have their timeline rough drafts reviewed before proceeding to the final draft. Once the drafts have been accepted, students may begin inserting information into PowerPoint format. Later students will be given a template for oral portion of presentation.

#### Lesson Four

The student listens and speaks to gain and share knowledge of his/her own culture, the culture of others, and common elements of culture. Students will view statistics of voting trends of African Americans in the past and the present. Students will discuss different methods that could be used to increase voter registration among minorities. Students will also explore conflicts that arose from registering African Americans in the south. To aid in their understanding of the conflicts that arose in the south due to the registration of African American voters, students will read background information on the “Mississippi Burning” trial.

#### Lesson Five

The student inquires and conducts research using a variety of sources. Using charts and graphs showing African American voter trends of the past, students will make predictions on the future

of minority voting. Through this unit students will have created projects and essays geared toward informing new voters and promoting voting among minorities.

## CONCLUSION

This unit will be a tool for students in hopes that it will encourage them to be responsible citizens in the near future. Students should also learn to embrace the rights and responsibilities that were afforded them through someone else's blood, sweat, and tears. This unit will be the kindling that allows students to formulate their own opinions on how the restrictions placed on Blacks have affected their rights as voters in the American political system. This unit will encourage the students as well as the instructor to embrace non-fictional literature and address the multiple intelligences, by not only reading, but also creating class and group timelines, maps, graphs, charts, pamphlets/brochures, and PowerPoint presentations on becoming an **evolved voter**. With proper planning, the topic can be used as the basis for second semester research papers and as a content bridge for the English Language Arts and Social Studies departments.

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This details the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Amendments to the U.S. Constitution as far as the Proposal and its ratification.
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Site which includes information about the origins of the Ku Klux Klan also fliers and pamphlet distributed by the Klan. This site also gives insight into the Mississippi Burning Trial.
- "My Fathers House." *The Civil War*. 1996. Kingdom Builders Ministries. 19 Mar. 2005. <[www.civilwar.com](http://www.civilwar.com)>.  
A unit covering the time line of the Civil War.
- United States Department of Justice Civil Rights Division*. 2000. United States Department of Justice. 22 Apr. 2005. <[http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/voting/intro/intro\\_a.htm](http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/voting/intro/intro_a.htm)>.  
Gives detailed information on the Civil Rights Act and Voting Rights Act of the 50s and 60s. The implementation of these acts and the beginning of the Civil Rights Division of the United States Department of Justice.
- Youth for Socialist Action. 2000. Cuba Links. 22 Apr. 2005 <<http://www.geocities.com/youth4sa/cuba.html>>.  
Site geared toward the education of people on the socialist movement.

### Supplemental Resources

#### Amendments

- Interpretive Staff. *13<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the U.S. Constitution*. 1997. National Parks and Services. 13 Feb. 2005. <<http://www.nps.gov/malu/documents/amend13.htm>>.  
This details the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the U.S. Constitution as far as the Proposal and its ratification.

### ***Grandfather Clause***

Encyclopedia Britannica Online. *The Grandfather Clause*. 2004. Encyclopedia Britannica. 13 Feb 2005.  
<<http://search.eb.com/blackhistory/micro/243/47.htm>>  
An explanation of how the grandfather clause worked and who was it designed to work against.

### ***Jim Crow Laws***

New York Life. *The History of Jim Crow*. 2003. New York Life. 13 Feb 2005.  
<[www.jimcrowhistory.org/geography/geography.htm](http://www.jimcrowhistory.org/geography/geography.htm)>  
An extended look into the history of Jim Crow, which also includes resources, maps, and charts. Teacher resources and lesson plans are available.

*Rise and Fall of Jim Crow*. 2002. Public Broadcasting System. 10 May 2005.  
<<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/jimcrow/segregation.html>>  
Extensive information on all things related to Jim Crow Laws. Excellent source for information on the Ku Klux Klan, Congress, the Fourteenth Amendment, and the Republican Party.

### ***Civil War***

"Mystic Seaport". The Museum of America and the Sea. 1997. Exploring Amistad. 19 Mar 2005.  
<<http://amistad.mysticseaport.org/timeline/united.states.html>>  
Time line of events at sea and slave importation.

### ***Other Resources***

*The Democratic Party: Moving America Forward*. 2004. Democratic National Committee. 10 May 2005.  
<<http://www.democrats.org/platform/>>  
History on the Democratic Party and the 2004 National Democratic convention.

*The Early History of Democrats & Republicans*. 2000. Youth for Socialist Action. 10 May 2005.  
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Gives the history and origins of political parties in the United States.

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Timeline of historical highlights.