

Expanding the Electorate

Trace how constitutional amendments opened political participation to more Americans.

SS.7.CG.3.6 "Analyze how the 13th, 14th, 15th, 19th, 24th, and 26th Amendments broadened participation in the political process."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline each amendment named in the passage. Circle the words that show which barrier it removed or which group gained greater access to the political process.

Six Changes, More Voices

- ① After the Civil War, three amendments changed who could claim political rights. The 13th Amendment, ratified in 1865, ended slavery, except as punishment for a crime. The 14th Amendment, ratified in 1868, made people born or naturalized in the United States citizens and required equal protection of the laws. In 1870, the 15th Amendment said voting rights could not be denied because of race, color, or previous condition of servitude. Together, these changes gave formerly enslaved people a stronger legal basis for citizenship and political participation.
- ② Fifty years later, the 19th Amendment prohibited denying a citizen the right to vote because of sex. It opened voting to women nationwide. The 24th Amendment, ratified in 1964, banned poll taxes in federal elections. A poll tax was a fee required before voting, so it could keep citizens with little money from the polls. In 1971, the 26th Amendment lowered the voting age from 21 to 18, adding younger adults as voters across the nation.
- ③ These amendments broadened the political process by removing legal limits based on slavery, race, sex, wealth, and age. Yet a constitutional change did not automatically produce equal participation. For many years, Black citizens faced violence, intimidation, and unfair literacy tests that blocked voting despite the 15th Amendment. Later laws and court decisions helped enforce voting rights. The amendments matter because they expanded the number of people who could take part in elections and influence government decisions.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 How did the 13th and 14th Amendments together create a stronger basis for formerly enslaved people to participate in politics?

2 Compare the 15th and 19th Amendments. What reason for denying voting rights did each amendment prohibit?

3 Why did banning poll taxes broaden participation in federal elections?

4 Why did the amendments not immediately guarantee equal participation for all citizens?

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Write four sentences explaining how any three of the amendments broadened participation. Name each amendment, explain the barrier it removed or the group it included, and end by explaining how the three changes increased political participation overall.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline each amendment named in the passage. Circle the words that show which barrier it removed or which group gained greater access to the political process. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did the 13th and 14th Amendments together create a stronger basis for formerly enslaved people to participate in politics?	The 13th Amendment ended slavery, and the 14th Amendment established citizenship for people born or naturalized in the United States and required equal protection.
2	Compare the 15th and 19th Amendments. What reason for denying voting rights did each amendment prohibit?	The 15th prohibited denying voting rights because of race, color, or previous condition of servitude. The 19th prohibited denying voting rights because of sex.
3	Why did banning poll taxes broaden participation in federal elections?	Poll taxes were fees required before voting. Banning them removed a financial barrier for citizens with little money.
4	Why did the amendments not immediately guarantee equal participation for all citizens?	Black citizens still faced violence, intimidation, and unfair literacy tests that blocked voting. Later laws and court decisions were needed to help enforce voting rights.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The 15th Amendment barred racial discrimination in voting, so formerly enslaved men could seek a voice in elections. The 19th Amendment removed sex as a reason to deny voting rights, expanding the electorate to women. The 24th Amendment ended a required fee in federal elections, helping citizens with little money. Together, these changes made voting available to more groups.

Accept accurate explanations of how each selected amendment removed a legal barrier or included a group in voting or political participation. For the open response, students may choose any three of the six amendments and should include a valid overall conclusion.