

Changing Civic Voices

Trace how Americans took part in public life from colonies through Reconstruction.

SS.8.CG.2.4 "Explain how forms of civic and political participation changed from the Colonial period through Reconstruction."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline each way people took civic or political action, circle the group that could or could not take part, and write 1, 2, or 3 beside examples from the Colonial period, Revolution and early republic, or Reconstruction. Your marks will show what changed and what limits remained.

From Local Meetings to New Rights

- ① In the Colonial period, civic participation was limited and local. In New England towns, some property-owning white men voted at town meetings and helped make local decisions. Other colonists could attend meetings, sign petitions, join church or community groups, or protest taxes, but they usually could not vote. Enslaved people, women, many poor men, Native peoples, and free Black people had few or no political rights under colonial governments. Participation depended heavily on race, sex, property, and place.
- ② During the Revolution, participation expanded beyond casting a ballot. Patriots formed committees of correspondence, shared news, signed nonimportation agreements, boycotted British goods, and sometimes joined militias. These actions allowed people without the vote to influence public affairs, although participation still carried risks and exclusions. After independence, states gradually removed many property requirements for voting. By the 1830s, most white men could vote, whether or not they owned property. Women and most Black Americans remained shut out of voting in most places.
- ③ Before the Civil War, reformers used petitions, newspapers, lectures, conventions, and voluntary organizations to press for change. Abolitionists demanded an end to slavery, and women at the Seneca Falls Convention called for greater rights. During Reconstruction, the 13th Amendment ended slavery, the 14th defined national citizenship and promised equal protection, and the 15th barred denying the vote because of race. Black men voted, attended political meetings, organized for rights, and won public office. Yet women still could not vote nationwide, and violence and unfair laws blocked many Black citizens from using their rights.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 How did voting rights for white men change from the Colonial period to the 1830s?

2 Name two ways Patriots participated during the Revolution besides voting. How could these actions influence public affairs?

3 What methods did reformers use before the Civil War to press for change? Give two methods from the passage.

4 Explain one way Reconstruction expanded political participation and one way participation was still limited.

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Write three sentences explaining how civic and political participation changed from the Colonial period to Reconstruction. Include one group that gained opportunities to participate and one limit that remained.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline each way people took civic or political action, circle the group that could or could not take part, and write 1, 2, or 3 beside examples from the Colonial period, Revolution and early republic, or Reconstruction. Your marks will show what changed and what limits remained. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did voting rights for white men change from the Colonial period to the 1830s?	In the Colonial period, voting was generally limited to some property-owning white men. By the 1830s, most white men could vote even if they did not own property.
2	Name two ways Patriots participated during the Revolution besides voting. How could these actions influence public affairs?	Patriots formed committees of correspondence, signed nonimportation agreements, boycotted British goods, or joined militias. These actions let people without the vote influence public affairs.
3	What methods did reformers use before the Civil War to press for change? Give two methods from the passage.	Reformers used petitions, newspapers, lectures, conventions, and voluntary organizations. Any two methods are correct.
4	Explain one way Reconstruction expanded political participation and one way participation was still limited.	Reconstruction expanded participation because Black men voted and won public office after the 15th Amendment barred denying the vote because of race. Participation remained limited because women could not vote nationwide, and violence and unfair laws blocked many Black citizens from using their rights.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

During the Colonial period, voting was mainly limited to some property-owning white men. By Reconstruction, Black men voted, attended political meetings, organized for rights, and won public office. However, women still could not vote nationwide, and violence and unfair laws blocked many Black citizens from using their rights.

Accept accurate comparisons that describe a change in participation, identify a group whose opportunities changed, and explain a continuing limit. Students may use different valid examples from the passage.