

Rights on Paper

Tracing the gap between constitutional promises and lived reality

11.4a "Between 1865 and 1900, constitutional rights were extended to African Americans. However, their ability to exercise these rights was undermined by individuals, groups, and government institutions."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline rights and efforts to use them. Circle barriers. Connect one constitutional protection to a barrier.

Promises and Barriers

- ① The Thirteenth Amendment (1865) abolished slavery, except as punishment following criminal conviction. The Fourteenth (1868) established birthright citizenship subject to U.S. jurisdiction and required states to provide equal protection. The Fifteenth (1870) prohibited federal and state voting discrimination based on race, color, or previous servitude, but not sex. Radical Republicans supported federal protection of these changes, which opened political opportunities for Black men.
- ② Freedpeople built schools and churches, reunited families, negotiated labor contracts, and participated in politics. Their communities and the Freedmen's Bureau supported education and independence. Black men voted and held office. Opponents resisted: southern Black Codes restricted movement and labor choices, while the Ku Klux Klan terrorized voters and officeholders. Legal protections required enforcement to become secure everyday freedoms.
- ③ After the disputed 1876 election, President Hayes withdrew troops protecting the remaining Republican state governments in 1877, marking Reconstruction's end. Federal protection weakened. White authorities expanded segregation and imposed discriminatory poll taxes and literacy tests. In the Civil Rights Cases (1883), the Supreme Court invalidated federal protections against racial discrimination by private businesses in public accommodations. *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) upheld state-imposed segregation under "separate but equal." Constitutional rights survived, but violence, official discrimination, and weak enforcement undermined them.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE Use the passage

1 What voting discrimination did the Fifteenth Amendment prohibit, and which levels of government did it restrict?

2 Identify two ways freedpeople worked to build independent lives after the Civil War.

3 How did Black Codes and Ku Klux Klan violence undermine African Americans' ability to exercise their rights?

4 How did the Civil Rights Cases and Plessy v. Ferguson narrow protection for African Americans?

3 YOUR TURN Your own words

In four sentences, explain how one amendment's promise was undermined. Include an effort by Black Americans to use the right and two distinct barriers.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline rights and efforts to use them. Circle barriers. Connect one constitutional protection to a barrier. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What voting discrimination did the Fifteenth Amendment prohibit, and which levels of government did it restrict?	It prohibited federal and state governments from denying voting rights because of race, color, or previous servitude.
2	Identify two ways freedpeople worked to build independent lives after the Civil War.	Answers may include founding schools, reuniting families, negotiating labor contracts, building churches or colleges, voting, and serving in office.
3	How did Black Codes and Ku Klux Klan violence undermine African Americans' ability to exercise their rights?	Black Codes restricted movement, labor choices, and other freedoms. The Ku Klux Klan used threats and violence to terrorize voters and officeholders, making rights dangerous or difficult to use.
4	How did the Civil Rights Cases and Plessy v. Ferguson narrow protection for African Americans?	The Civil Rights Cases invalidated federal public-accommodation protections against private racial discrimination. Plessy upheld state-imposed racial segregation under "separate but equal."

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The Fifteenth Amendment prohibited racial discrimination in voting. Black men exercised that right by voting and holding office. Klan violence terrorized voters, while discriminatory voting rules created additional barriers. Without effective enforcement, the amendment did not guarantee practical access to the ballot.

Accept equivalent evidence-based explanations that distinguish rights written into the Constitution from barriers to exercising them. For the open response, require an accurate amendment, an action by African Americans, two distinct barriers, and a clear causal explanation.