Rights on Paper

What happened when constitutional rights were not enforced

8.C.13.4.A "Describe the result of a lack of enforcement of the 14th and 15th Amendments."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two results of weak Fourteenth Amendment enforcement, circle two barriers to voting rights protected by the Fifteenth Amendment, and draw an arrow showing how a voting barrier could help unequal treatment continue.

When Rights Were Not Protected

1. In 1868, the Fourteenth Amendment recognized most people born or naturalized in the United States as citizens and required states to give people equal protection of the laws. In 1870, the Fifteenth Amendment barred governments from denying a citizen's vote because of race, color, or previous enslavement. These promises needed officials willing to defend them. During Reconstruction, federal authorities sometimes protected Black voters and challenged discrimination. After Reconstruction ended in 1877, federal protection weakened. Many Southern officials then allowed restrictions and threats to replace the rights written in the Constitution.

2. In many Southern states, officials failed to uphold equal protection. State and local laws separated Black and white residents in schools, train cars, and other public spaces. Black students often attended schools with fewer resources. In 1896, the Supreme Court upheld racial separation under a "separate but equal" rule in Plessy v. Ferguson. In practice, the facilities were rarely equal. Without strong enforcement of the Fourteenth Amendment, governments could maintain unequal public services, and Black families had fewer ways to make state officials treat them fairly.

3. Voting faced another set of barriers. Southern states used poll taxes and literacy tests that kept many Black citizens from voting, while threats and violence drove others away from the polls. Officials often ignored attacks and did not stop voting rules designed to exclude Black voters. Because the Fifteenth Amendment was not enforced, many Black men lost access to the ballot even though the Constitution protected their vote against racial discrimination. With fewer Black voters able to choose lawmakers, it became harder to replace officials who allowed unequal schools and other discrimination.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What happened to public schools when officials did not enforce the Fourteenth Amendment's promise of equal protection?

2. How did poll taxes and literacy tests affect voting rights protected by the Fifteenth Amendment?

3. What was one result when officials ignored threats and violence near the polls?

4. How could blocking Black men from voting help unequal public services continue?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

In a Southern town around 1900, officials bar Black families from a public park, and threats keep many Black men away from the polls. Write four sentences explaining how failure to enforce each amendment affects the town and how the voting barrier could allow the park rule to continue.

ANSWER KEY

Rights on Paper

GRADE 8 · 8.C.13.4.A

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two results of weak Fourteenth Amendment enforcement, circle two barriers to voting rights protected by the Fifteenth Amendment, and draw an arrow showing how a voting barrier could help unequal treatment continue. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What happened to public schools when officials did not enforce the Fourteenth Amendment's promise of equal protection?	**Black students often attended separate schools with fewer resources.**
2	How did poll taxes and literacy tests affect voting rights protected by the Fifteenth Amendment?	**They kept many Black citizens from voting despite the amendment's protection against racial discrimination in voting.**
3	What was one result when officials ignored threats and violence near the polls?	**Threats and violence drove Black citizens away from the polls, limiting their ability to vote.**
4	How could blocking Black men from voting help unequal public services continue?	**With fewer Black voters choosing lawmakers, it was harder to replace officials who allowed unequal schools and other discrimination.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The park rule denies Black families equal treatment by town officials. Failure to enforce the Fourteenth Amendment lets officials keep that unfair rule. When officials fail to stop threats at the polls, many Black men cannot exercise the voting right protected by the Fifteenth Amendment. With fewer Black voters choosing town leaders, officials who support the park rule may remain in power.

Accept answers that connect weak enforcement of the Fourteenth Amendment to unequal treatment by government and weak enforcement of the Fifteenth Amendment to barriers to voting. For Part 3, look for a clear link between reduced voting power and the park rule's ability to continue.