One Ballot, Two Rules

Trace how two sources support a historical claim

USG.P.4.1.A "Compose informative essays and written products, developing a thesis, citing and incorporating evidence from multiple sources and maintaining an organized, formal structure."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the passage's thesis, circle the names of its two sources, and number the evidence from each source 1 and 2. Use your marks to see how the evidence supports the thesis.

When Voting Rules Split

(1) Early in 1971, an eighteen-year-old could face a strange problem: the right to vote for president but not for governor. The Twenty-Sixth Amendment resolved that conflict by protecting the voting rights of citizens eighteen and older in federal and state elections. This change mattered not simply because it added younger voters, but because it replaced different age rules with one constitutional guarantee. To see why that guarantee was needed, consider two sources: a Supreme Court decision about election laws and the amendment's own text. Together, they show the problem and the legal solution.

(2) In *Oregon v. Mitchell* (1970), the Supreme Court considered a federal law lowering the voting age to eighteen. The Court allowed Congress to set that age for federal elections but did not allow it to impose the same rule on state and local elections. A state with a voting age of twenty-one therefore had to let eighteen-year-olds vote for president while excluding them from a vote for governor. This example explains the practical problem behind the thesis: separate age rules could make the same voter eligible for one race and ineligible for another on the same ballot.

(3) The National Archives publishes the text of the Twenty-Sixth Amendment, ratified in 1971. It says that the right to vote of citizens eighteen or older cannot be denied or abridged by the United States or any state "on account of age." Unlike the federal law at issue in *Oregon v. Mitchell*, this constitutional language reaches both levels of government. The decision identifies the gap; the amendment closes it. The amendment does not require every eligible person to vote, and it does not remove other voting rules. Its precise contribution is to bar age-based exclusion of citizens once they reach eighteen.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. State the passage's thesis in your own words. How does the evidence from *Oregon v. Mitchell* support it?

2. Use one detail from each named source to explain how the amendment addressed the problem shown by the Court's decision.

3. Why does the passage present the Court's decision before the amendment's text? Explain how this order develops the thesis.

4. How does the final paragraph keep the passage's claim precise? Refer to one detail from the amendment's text.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

A headline claims, "The Supreme Court gave every eighteen-year-old the right to vote in every election in 1970." Write one formal paragraph of 80 to 100 words that corrects the headline with a clear thesis, evidence attributed to both named sources, and a final sentence that limits your claim.

ANSWER KEY

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PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the passage's thesis, circle the names of its two sources, and number the evidence from each source 1 and 2. Use your marks to see how the evidence supports the thesis. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	State the passage's thesis in your own words. How does the evidence from *Oregon v. Mitchell* support it?	**The amendment replaced conflicting voting-age rules with a constitutional guarantee for citizens eighteen and older. The decision shows why this was needed: Congress could set the age at eighteen for federal elections but not for state and local elections.**
2	Use one detail from each named source to explain how the amendment addressed the problem shown by the Court's decision.	**In *Oregon v. Mitchell*, the Court did not allow Congress to impose its eighteen-year-old voting rule on state and local elections. The Twenty-Sixth Amendment's text bars both the United States and states from denying citizens eighteen or older the vote because of age.**
3	Why does the passage present the Court's decision before the amendment's text? Explain how this order develops the thesis.	**The decision establishes the gap between federal and state age rules. The amendment's text then shows the constitutional solution to that gap.**
4	How does the final paragraph keep the passage's claim precise? Refer to one detail from the amendment's text.	**It limits the claim to age-based exclusion of citizens eighteen and older, matching the text's phrase "on account of age." It does not claim the amendment removed other voting rules or required people to vote.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

That headline overstates what happened in 1970: the Supreme Court did not guarantee eighteen-year-olds a vote in every election. In *Oregon v. Mitchell* (1970), the Court upheld an eighteen-year-old voting age for federal elections but did not extend the federal rule to state and local elections. The National Archives' text of the Twenty-Sixth Amendment shows what changed in 1971: governments could no longer deny citizens eighteen or older the vote because of age. The amendment thus supplied the nationwide protection missing from the earlier ruling, though it did not require eligible citizens to vote.

Accept equivalent wording that accurately distinguishes the 1970 decision from the 1971 amendment. For the paragraph, look for a corrective thesis, accurate evidence attributed to both sources, formal organization, and a final sentence that avoids overstating the amendment's effect.