Barriers and Breakthroughs

Three civil rights achievements and their effects

USH.C.7.1.F "Identify legislative achievements arising from the Civil Rights Movement and their impact on African American political power and economic status, including the adoption of the 24th Amendment..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Number the three achievements 1 to 3, circle a barrier each addressed, and underline one effect of each on African American political power or economic status.

Changing the Rules

(1) In 1963, a Black voter in Mississippi might have needed cash just to cast a ballot in a federal election. Some states charged a poll tax, which could keep low-income citizens from voting. Civil rights organizers challenged this barrier through protests and public pressure. Ratified in 1964, the 24th Amendment banned poll taxes in federal elections, including races for president and Congress. It did not itself ban poll taxes in state elections. Removing the federal fee gave more African Americans a chance to vote for national leaders, but officials could still block registration through other discriminatory rules.

(2) At a downtown lunch counter, a customer could be turned away because of race. A qualified worker might also be denied a job or promotion for the same reason. Boycotts, sit-ins, marches, and lobbying helped push Congress to pass the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The law barred racial discrimination in many public places, such as restaurants and hotels, and prohibited employment discrimination based on race and other protected traits. It also created the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission to help enforce workplace rules. These protections opened paths to wages and advancement, though a law alone could not erase income gaps.

(3) Yet a voter who no longer faced a poll tax could still confront a literacy test or an unfair registration office. Activists, including marchers in Selma, Alabama, exposed these tactics and demanded federal action. The Voting Rights Act of 1965 outlawed discriminatory voting practices, suspended literacy tests in covered places, and authorized federal oversight of registration where discrimination had been severe. Black voter registration rose sharply in parts of the South, increasing African Americans' influence over elections and public policy. As more voters gained a voice, they could press elected officials about schools, jobs, and public services, linking political power to economic opportunity.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Which achievement removed a cost from federal voting, and how could that change African Americans' political power?

2. Which achievement addressed discrimination in employment, and how could it affect African Americans' economic status?

3. Which achievement confronted literacy tests, and what change in political power does the passage connect to it?

4. How did the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 create different paths toward economic opportunity?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a short message to a fictional neighbor in 1966 who says, "The poll tax ban solved everything." Explain why the claim is incomplete, using all three achievements and connecting at least one to political power and one to economic status.

ANSWER KEY

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HIGH SCHOOL · USH.C.7.1.F

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Number the three achievements 1 to 3, circle a barrier each addressed, and underline one effect of each on African American political power or economic status. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Which achievement removed a cost from federal voting, and how could that change African Americans' political power?	**The 24th Amendment banned poll taxes in federal elections, giving more African Americans a chance to vote for national leaders.**
2	Which achievement addressed discrimination in employment, and how could it affect African Americans' economic status?	**The Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibited racial discrimination in employment, opening paths to wages and advancement.**
3	Which achievement confronted literacy tests, and what change in political power does the passage connect to it?	**The Voting Rights Act of 1965 suspended literacy tests in covered places. Increased Black voter registration strengthened African Americans' influence over elections and public policy.**
4	How did the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 create different paths toward economic opportunity?	**The Civil Rights Act addressed workplace discrimination directly. The Voting Rights Act increased political influence, allowing voters to press officials about jobs and public services.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The poll tax ban was important, but it did not solve everything. The 24th Amendment removed poll taxes only in federal elections, so it did not end every voting barrier. The Voting Rights Act of 1965 confronted literacy tests and allowed federal oversight where discrimination was severe. With more people able to register, Black communities could gain a stronger voice in choosing leaders. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 attacked discrimination in public places and employment, giving workers a fairer chance to earn wages and advance. Together, these measures changed both access to political power and paths toward economic opportunity, even though inequality persisted.

Accept responses that accurately distinguish the achievements and connect voting access to political influence or employment protections to economic opportunity. Students should not claim that any one measure ended discrimination.