

A Seat in Congress

How John Mercer Langston reached the U.S. House.

VS.8.d "discussing the election of African American leader John Mercer Langston to Congress in 1890;"

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two details that show how Langston gained his seat, and circle the sentence that explains why his service mattered.

John Mercer Langston's Election

- ① After the Civil War, the United States changed in important ways. New laws and amendments gave African American men more rights, including the right to vote. In Virginia, African American citizens voted, organized, and sought public office. Still, unfair rules, threats, and violence often tried to keep Black citizens from using their political rights.
- ② John Mercer Langston was a teacher, lawyer, and leader from Virginia. He worked to protect civil rights and encourage African Americans to take part in government. In the election for Virginia's Fourth Congressional District, Langston ran for the U.S. House of Representatives. His opponent was first declared the winner, but Langston challenged the official results.
- ③ In 1890, the U.S. House reviewed the contested election and decided that Langston should have the seat. He served in Congress for the rest of the term. His election mattered because he became the first African American from Virginia to serve in Congress. His service showed that African American leaders could win a voice in the national government.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE Use the passage

1 What job did John Mercer Langston seek in the election?

2 What happened after Langston's opponent was first declared the winner?

3 What did the U.S. House decide in 1890?

4 Why was Langston's service in Congress important?

3 YOUR TURN Your own words

Write a three-sentence news brief about Langston's path to Congress. Include the disputed result, the House decision, and why his service mattered.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline two details that show how Langston gained his seat, and circle the sentence that explains why his service mattered. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What job did John Mercer Langston seek in the election?	He ran for the U.S. House of Representatives.
2	What happened after Langston's opponent was first declared the winner?	Langston challenged the official election results.
3	What did the U.S. House decide in 1890?	The House decided that Langston should have the congressional seat.
4	Why was Langston's service in Congress important?	He became the first African American from Virginia to serve in Congress.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Virginia News: John Mercer Langston challenged the official result after his opponent was declared the winner in a U.S. House race. In 1890, the House decided Langston should receive the seat. This mattered because he was the first African American from Virginia to serve in Congress.

Accept equivalent responses that identify the contested election, the U.S. House decision in 1890, and Langston's status as the first African American from Virginia to serve in Congress. For the news brief, check that all three required ideas are included in three sentences.