



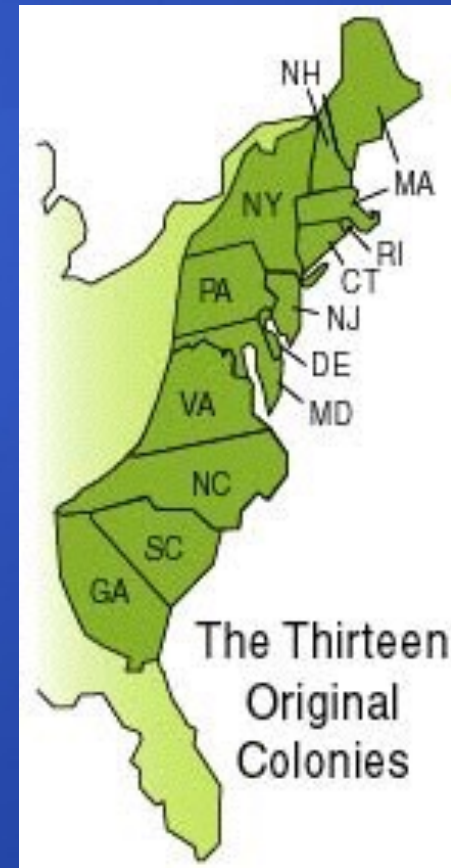
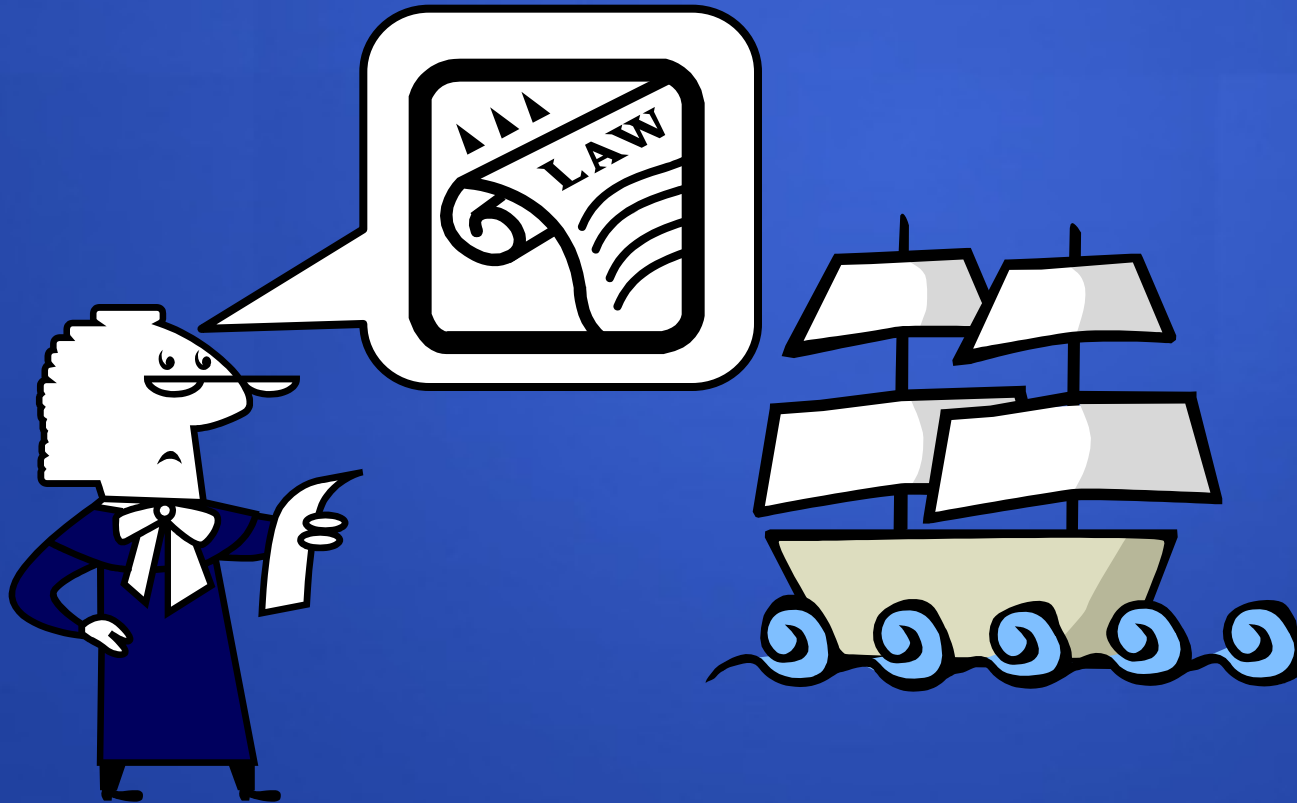
So you think  
you can

**VOTE?**

A Brief History of America's  
Voting Rights

# The Early Years

When the colonists came over from England, they brought many of the English political laws and customs with them.



# The Early Years

In most of the thirteen colonies, only adult white males that owned land (usually at least 50 acres) could vote.



# The Early Years

Many people believed that land owners were the only ones responsible enough to make political decisions!



# The Early Years

This left poor white men...



women...



American Indians...



and Africans  
(free and slave)



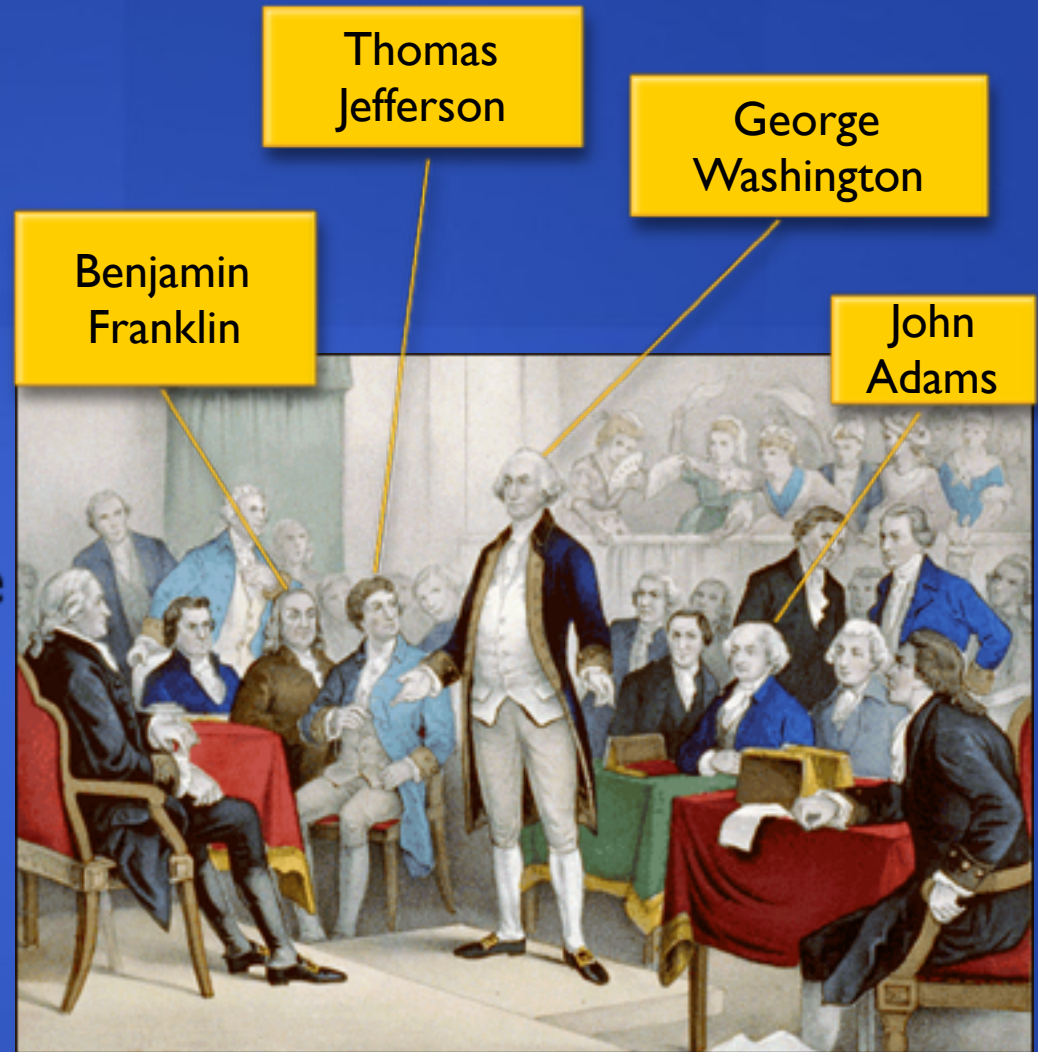
# OUT

of the voting process!

# Independence and the Vote

The Framers of the Constitution couldn't agree on who should have the right to vote.

They gave each state the power to decide what its own voting rights would be.

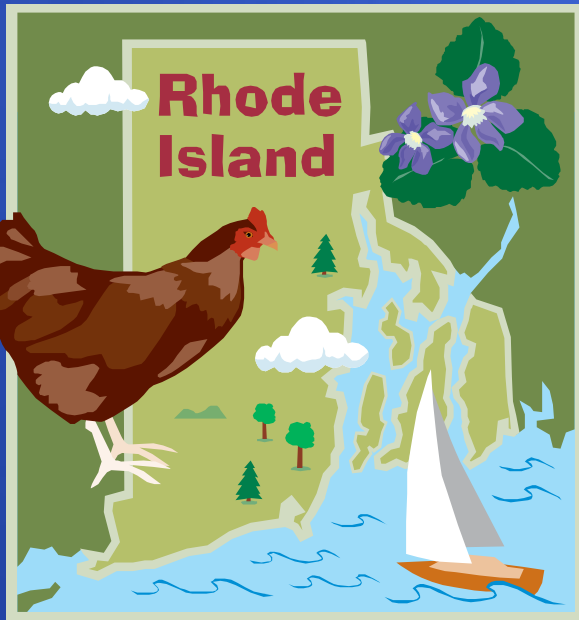


Do you recognize anyone in the image?



Over time , states dropped the requirement that voters must own property.

Some states acted faster than others. New York got rid of the property requirement in 1821.

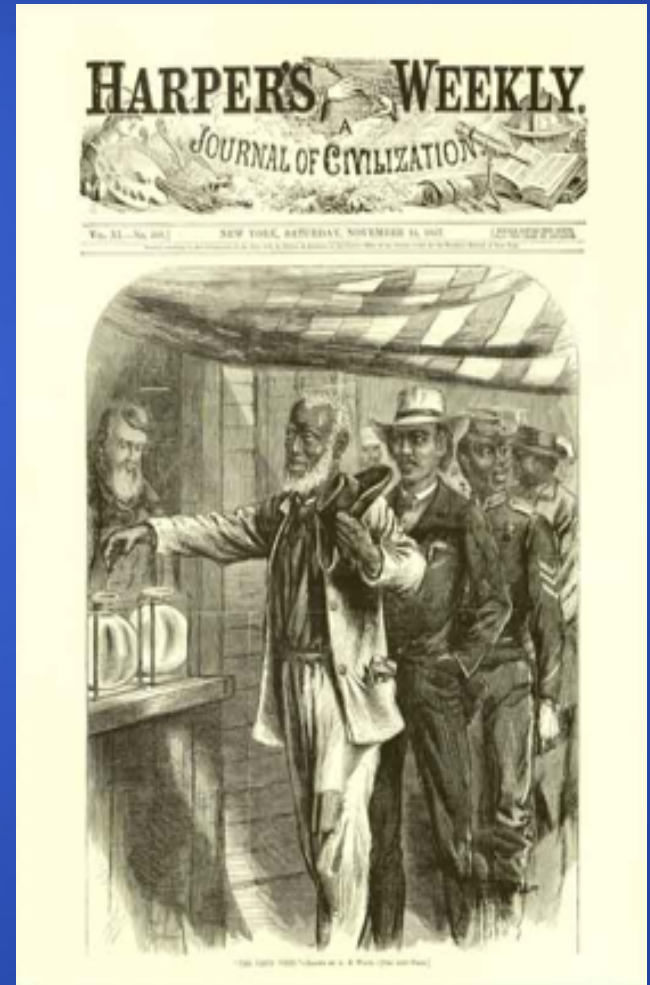


Rhode Island did not change until 1880!

# The African American Vote

The 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment was passed in 1870, five years after the end of the Civil War.

The Amendment states, “The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied ... on account of race, color or previous condition of servitude.”





# The African American Vote



The 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment said that former slaves could not be turned away from the polls due to the color of their skin or the fact that they had been slaves.

We will see that this rule wasn't always followed...

# So you think you can VOTE?

Can I vote?



The year is 1915.  
I am a single  
African American  
man living in  
Chicago, Illinois.



**YES YOU CAN!**

# The Women's Vote



Women gained voting rights after a long hard fight. Wyoming gave women the vote in 1869, but it took the work of Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and many others to get the job done!

# The Women's Vote

Women won the right to vote in August of 1920!

The 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment said, “The right of citizens of the United States to vote *shall not be denied ... on account of sex.*”



WOMEN VOTERS RECORDING THEIR VOTES FOR THE FIRST TIME AT THE GENERAL ELECTION OF 1920

# So you think you can VOTE?

Can I vote?

I am a woman living in New York City in the year 1924. I am 25, married and have two children.



**YES YOU CAN!**



# The American Indian Vote

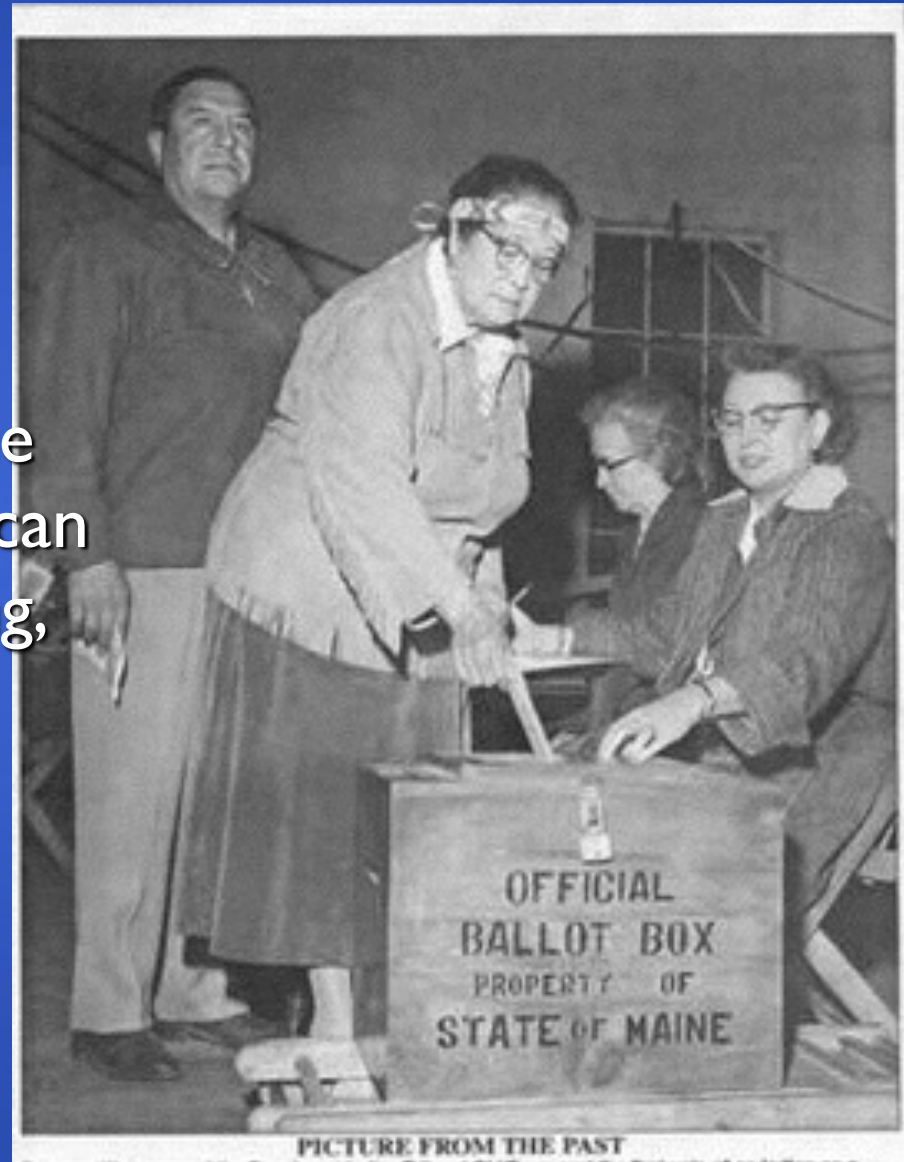


American Indians were not considered citizens of the United States until 1924. Before that, they were considered members of their own tribal governments.

# The American Indian Vote

In 1924, President Calvin Coolidge signed the Indian Citizenship Act.

This gave American Indians the rights and privileges of American citizenship. This includes voting, of course!



PICTURE FROM THE PAST

# So you think you can VOTE?

I am an American Indian living in Montana in the year 1910. I'm 65 years old, married and have three kids and seven grandkids.



**X** You can 't vote yet.



# DC Voting Rights



Residents of the District of Columbia did not get the right to vote in presidential elections until the 23<sup>rd</sup> Amendment was ratified in 1961.

# So you think you can VOTE?

Can my husband and I  
vote for my neighbor, the  
President?

I live in Washington, D.C. just  
down the street from the White  
House. The year is 1955. I am a 35  
year old woman with two  
children.

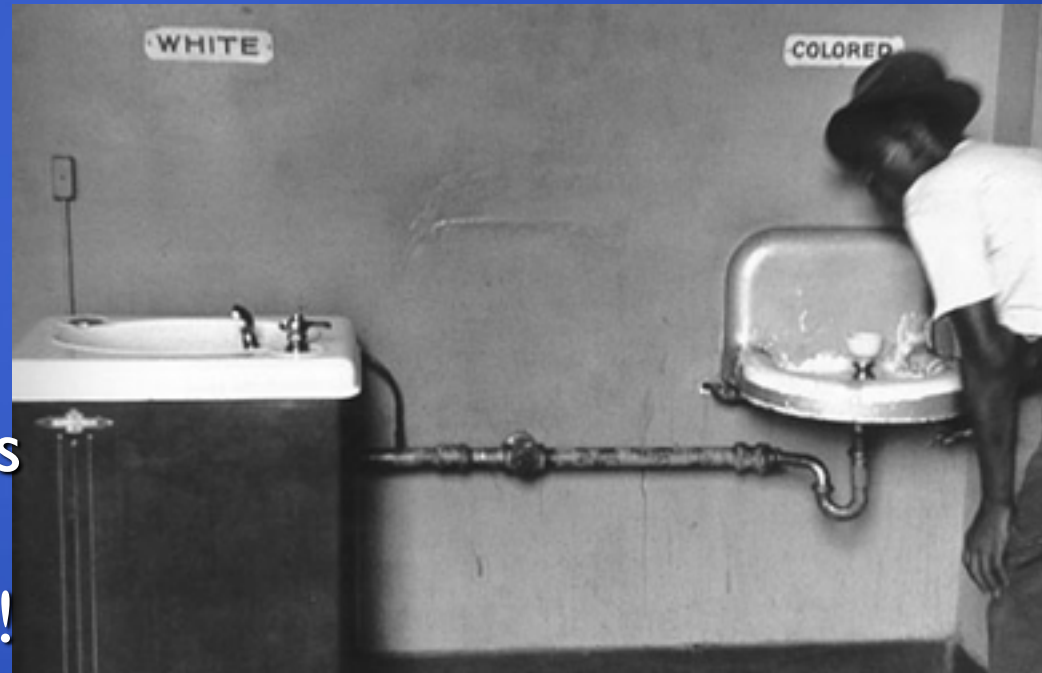
**X** You can 't vote yet.



# Voting is a Civil Right!

Even after the Civil War, many people in the South did not want African Americans to have the same rights as white Americans. This included the right to vote or hold office.

Some states and counties passed laws that made voting almost impossible!



# Barriers to the African American Vote



States and individual counties used many different methods to prevent African Americans from voting.

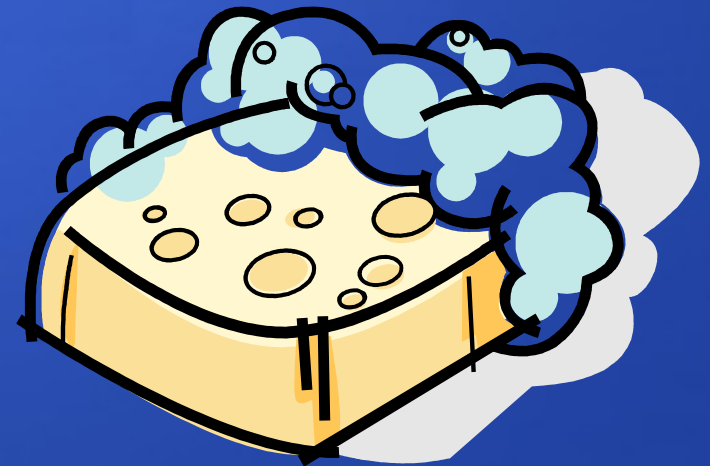
- Limited opportunities to register to vote
- Arrest and beatings by police
- Threats of violence toward voter's family and home
- Personal information shared with groups like the KKK and employers
- Unfair tests at the polls



This poll test asks voters to correctly guess the number of cotton balls in a jar before they are allowed to vote.

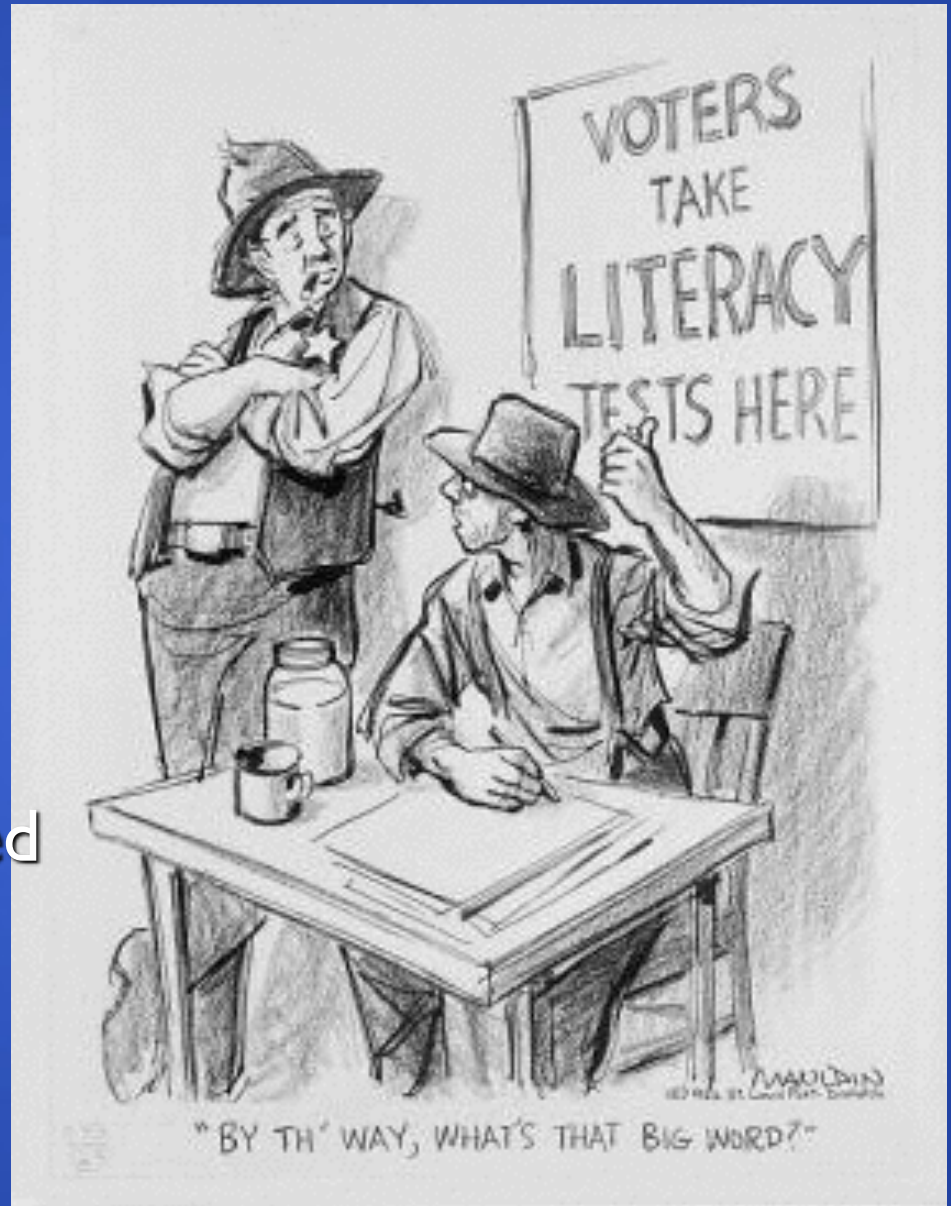


Other tests asked voters to guess the number of bubbles in a bar of soap!



The *literacy test* was one type of poll test that was given in some locations. Voters were tested on their reading skills.

Like with the other tests, white voters always passed while African American voters usually failed.



# Voting Requirements in the South

Alabama	Louisiana
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1) Read a section of the Constitution out loud.</li><li>2) Tell what the section says in your own words.</li><li>3) Write out another section of the Constitution.</li><li>4) Answer eight questions on the Constitution.</li></ol>	<p>Voters who could not prove a 5<sup>th</sup> grade education had to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1) Complete a 30 question test</li><li>2) Finish the test in 10 minutes!</li></ol>

Many African Americans in these states lacked a quality education, and the tests were meant to exclude blacks from the voting process.

1. In what year did the Congress gain the right to prohibit the migration of persons to the states? 1808
2. Who is the commander-in-chief of the army and navy of the United States? The President
3. Which of the Parts above, of the United States Constitution, deals with the federal government's authority to call the state militia into federal service? Part 1
4. The president is forbidden to exercise his authority of pardon in cases of impeachment.

## Examples of Literacy Tests

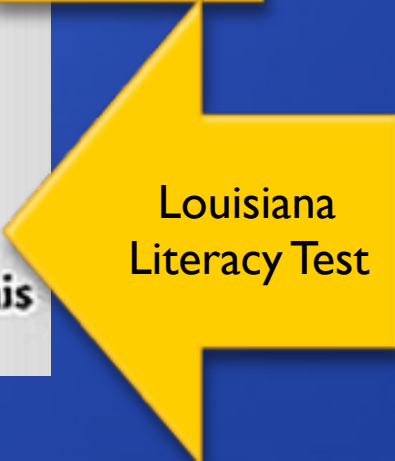
20. Spell backwards, forwards.

21. Print the word vote upside down, but in the correct order.

22. Place a cross over the tenth letter in this line, a line under the first space in this sentence, and circle around the last the in the second line of this sentence.



Alabama  
Literacy Test



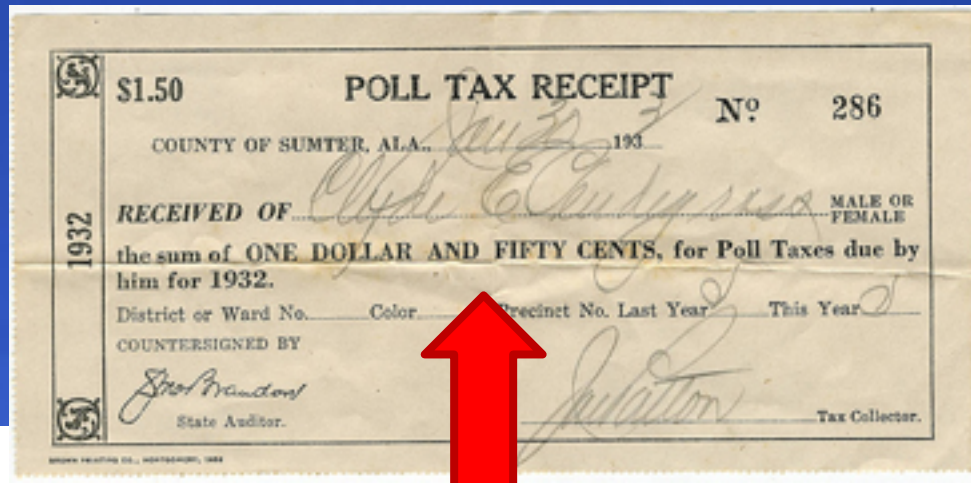
Louisiana  
Literacy Test



The *Grandfather Clause* stated that you only had the right to vote if your grandfather also had the right to vote.



The **Poll Tax** required voters to pay for the ability to vote.



Democracy's Turnstile



Most Southern African Americans were poor sharecroppers that were heavily in debt to landowners.

\$1.50 = \$23.00  
1932 = Today

# So you think you can VOTE?

Can I  
vote?

I am a 22 year old African American man living in the deep South in 1948. I work in the cotton fields and cannot read or write.

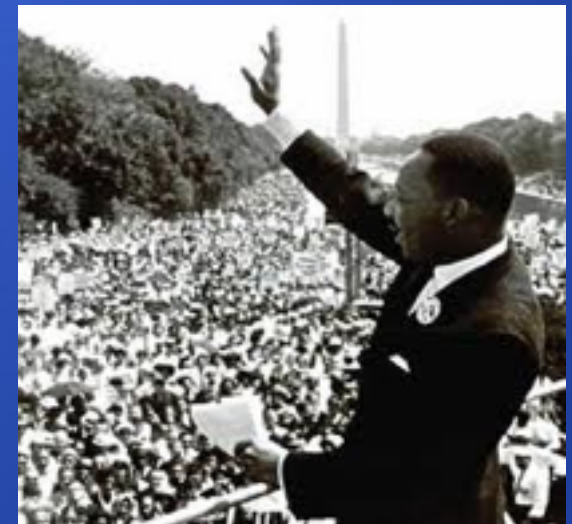


It's not likely that you'd get to vote.

# The Civil Rights Movement

Over time, more and more people demanded civil rights for all Americans.

The marches, speeches, sit-ins, freedom rides and activities all added up to what we know as the Civil Rights Movement.



# Voting Laws Change

The 24<sup>th</sup> Amendment was added to the Constitution in 1964.

It banned the use of poll taxes in elections.



President Lyndon B. Johnson

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

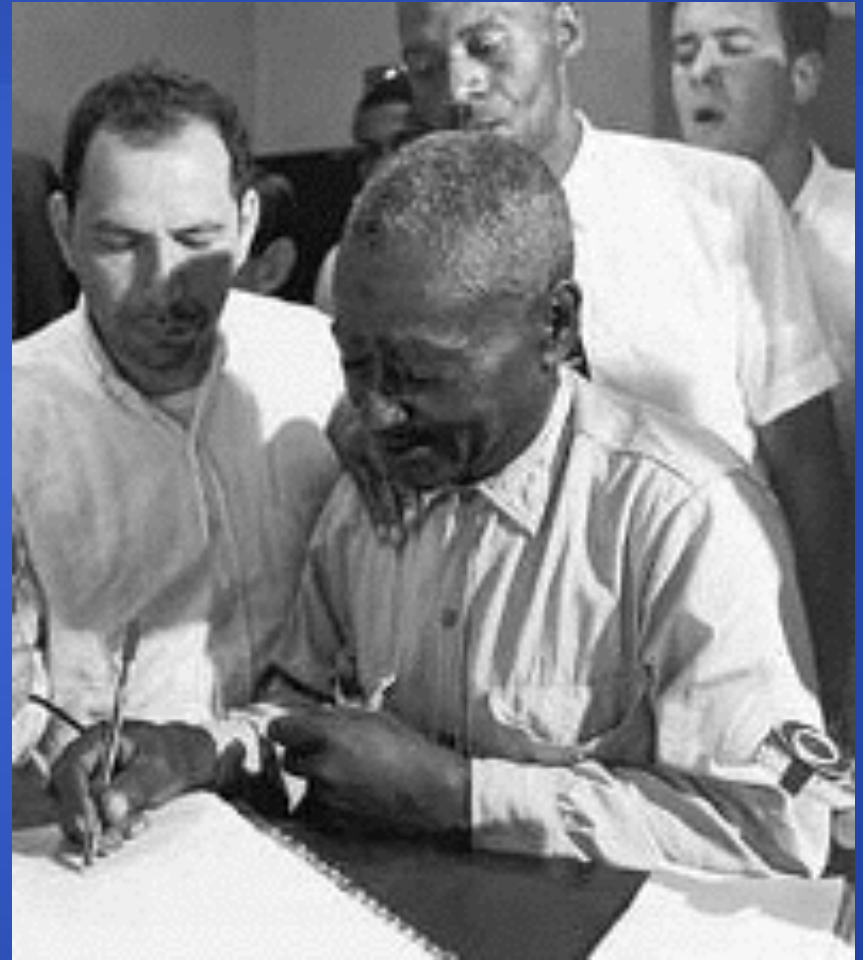
Can you name two people in this image?

# Voting Laws Change

The *Voting Rights Act* was signed by President Johnson in 1965.

This law:

- protected the right to vote for all citizens
- forced the states to obey the Constitution
- reinforced the 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment.



# Changing the Voting Age

In the 1960s and 1970s thousands of young men were drafted to fight in the Vietnam War. Many were too young to vote.



# Changing the Voting Age

The 26<sup>th</sup> Amendment was passed in 1971.

It says, “The right of citizens of the United States, who are 18 years of age or older, to vote *shall not be denied... on account of age.*”

On November 4

**Vote YES 18**


On Public Question  
No. 2

<b>X</b>	YES	Shall Article II, paragraph 3 of the Constitution be amended so as to change the age qualifications of a voter from 21 years to 18 years?
	NO	

Printed for the Citizens Committee for Vote 18

**YES on Nov. 4**

For **Vote 18**



**“I go for all sharing the privileges of the government who assist in bearing its burdens.”**

Abraham Lincoln

Supporters of this amendment chanted, “Old enough to fight, old enough to vote!”



# So you think you can VOTE?



Can I  
vote?

I just graduated from high school in Maryland, Class of 1972! I am 18 years old and just got drafted to fight in the war in Vietnam.



**YES YOU CAN!**

**Vote Here!**

**Review Time!**



Do you have to own land to vote in the  
United States?



OR



All land ownership  
requirements  
ended by 1880!

Rhode Island was the first state to give women the vote.

~~TRUE~~

OR

FALSE ✓

Wyoming gave women the right to vote in 1869.

Forcing people to pay for the right to vote was called a \_\_\_\_\_?

LITERACY  
TEST



OR

POLL TAX



Poll taxes were used to keep poor African Americans from voting.

# Are Native Americans US citizens?

YES



OR



The Indian  
Citizenship Act  
was passed in  
1924.

# The Voting Rights Act reinforced the 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment.

TRUE



OR

FALSE

After the 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment, many states and counties still prevented African Americans from voting. The Voting Rights Act was written to remove these barriers.

Which war led to the passage of the 26<sup>th</sup> Amendment?

WORLD WAR  
II



OR

THE VIETNAM  
WAR



Many of the soldiers fighting in the Vietnam War were too young to vote. The 26<sup>th</sup> Amendment moved the voting age from 21 to 18.



Are residents of Washington, D.C. banned from voting for the President?

~~YES~~

OR

NO ✓

The 23<sup>rd</sup> Amendment was passed in 1961. Now people can vote in D.C!

Susan B. Anthony worked to give Native Americans the right to vote.

~~TRUE~~

OR

FALSE ✓

Susan B. Anthony fought for the right of women to vote!

Our earliest ideas about voting came from  
which country?

~~FRANCE~~

OR

ENGLAND



When the colonists came to America from England, they brought all of the ideas and customs along.