LOC TPS Gov/AP Gov  Fulfilling the promise of the 15th Amendment  
9-12 Grades

This activity is sponsored in part by the Library of Congress Teaching with Primary Sources  
Eastern Region Program, coordinated by Waynesburg University.

Civil Rights  
3 class sessions of 45 – 60 minutes. Part 1 can be completed in one day. Part 1 could be  
included in a unit on the Constitution or later in the study of civil rights. Part 2 will likely take  
two class periods to complete and fits into the study of civil rights.

Description of activity: Students should examine each source carefully by taking the link and  
noting the information provided by the Library of Congress.

Focus Question: Part 1 If the 15th Amendment provided African-Americans with the right to  
vote in 1870, why were African-Americans not able to vote in every part of the United States  
until 1965?  
Part 2 How did change come about? How was the promise of the 15th Amendment finally  
realized?  
Context: This investigation belongs in a unit on civil rights.

Objectives: Students will describe the content and context of the 15th Amendment. They will  
evaluate its effectiveness and explain why it took nearly a century to be fully realized.

Virginia SOLs  
STANDARD GOVT.1 a, c, e, g  
The student will demonstrate mastery of the social studies skills responsible citizenship requires,  
including the ability to  
a) analyze primary and secondary source documents;  
c) analyze political cartoons, political advertisements, pictures, and other graphic media;  
e) evaluate information for accuracy, separating fact from opinion;  
g) select and defend positions in writing, discussion, and debate.

STANDARD GOVT.10e  
The student will demonstrate knowledge of the operation of the federal judiciary by  
e) evaluating how the judiciary influences public policy by delineating the power of  
government and safeguarding the rights of the individual.

STANDARD GOVT.11e  
The student will demonstrate knowledge of civil liberties and civil rights by  
e) explaining every citizen’s right to be treated equally under the law.

Common Core  
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.1
Improving Historical Thinking Skills through Source-Based Instruction
Paige K Solomon, Norfolk Collegiate

Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.2

Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.4

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including analyzing how an author uses and refines the meaning of a key term over the course of a text (e.g., how Madison defines faction in Federalist No. 10).
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.7

Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.8

Evaluate an author's premises, claims, and evidence by corroborating or challenging them with other information.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.9

Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources.

Assessment: Class discussion, written analysis

Activity Details, Primary Sources: provided below
Procedure: Students should work individually or in pairs with each answering the questions/completing the tasks for themselves. Part 1 should be completed and the formative assessment completed on day 1 (or for homework). At the start of class, review the documents and questions with the class before students begin Part 2. In Part 2, discuss the reading and then watch the videos together as a class. Students should write their personal responses and then join in class discussion before moving on. You may want to have each student respond digitally using todaysoftmeet, Socrative, or another response system. Review all sources in Part 2 before students complete the summative assessment.

What you will need before implementing: Ideally all students will have internet access, if that is not possible, there should be sufficient copies of all documents.

Part 1 The paradox of the 15th Amendment
When and why was the 15th Amendment proposed?
Take careful note of the wording.

_The 15th Amendment._
_Celebrated May 19th 1870._
Thomas Kelly
New York: 1870
[https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/treasures/trr060.html](https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/treasures/trr060.html)

What was the message? Discuss in detail. Include specifics.
Who was the audience?
What was the occasion/historical context?
The fifteenth amendment
Published by C. Rogan
c1871
http://www.loc.gov/pictures/resource/pga.03453/

What is the message of this image?
Note what is highlighted.
What rationale or reasoning provided in this artwork explains the passage of the 15th Amendment?

Can you compare/contrast the intended audience of this image with the previous one? Be sure to include evidence?

Read pages 9-14 of CIVIL RIGHTS IN AMERICA: RACIAL VOTING RIGHTS
A National Historic Landmarks Theme Study

Explain the methods used to disenfranchise black voters.
The political uncle tommers
Udo Kepler
_Puck_, November 7, 1906
http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2011645954/

What is message of this illustration?
What details support your interpretation?
Note other significant details that provide clues as to the timing/historical context.
To the colored men of voting age in the southern states.
Press of E.A. Wright, Philadelphia
[190-?]
http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/rbaapcbib:@field(NUMBER+@od1(rbaapc+33200))

What was the message of this publication?
What was the intended purpose of the author?
Who was the intended audience?
Which states were mentioned? Why?
Klan warns Negro voters
May 1939
https://www.loc.gov/item/2005676212/

Note the timing of this photo. Describe your reaction to this image. What impact do you think threats like this had on African-Americans who considered trying to vote?

Formative Assessment task:
In a strong, thorough paragraph, respond to the following. What was the reality regarding voting rights for African Americans by the early 1900s? Why was the promise of the 15th Amendment not realized? Provide specific details on the structural processes and the informal processes that allowed for the disenfranchisement of African-Americans.
Part 2  How did change come about? How was the promise of the 15th Amendment finally realized?

Read pages 20-22 of CIVIL RIGHTS IN AMERICA: RACIAL VOTING RIGHTS A National Historic Landmarks Theme Study

How did WWII change the political landscape in the US?
In what ways was it a benchmark event in the Civil Rights Movement?
What was the importance of the Landmark Supreme Court Case Smith v. Allwright?

Watch these two short videos and read the information

Birmingham, Alabama, Protests
Excerpt from CBS Eyewitness: Breakthrough in Birmingham
May 10, 1963
https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/civil-rights-act/civil-rights-era.html#video2_4R1
Television and Birmingham
The American Revolution of ’63
broadcast September 2, 1963
https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/civil-rights-act/civil-rights-era.html#video2_4R1

What events occurred in the spring and summer of 1963?
How did media coverage of these events help the civil rights movement?

Watch this 2 minute video.
President Kennedy’s Civil Rights Address
Motion Picture, Broadcasting and Recorded Sound Division. Courtesy of CBS News
June 11, 1963
What was the main message of the president’s remarks?  
What reasons did he give?  
For what actions did President Kennedy call?

Watch this 5 minute video.  
Divergent Views of President Kennedy’s Civil Rights Address  
Motion Picture, Broadcasting and Recorded Sound Division  
June 16, 1963  
https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/civil-rights-act/multimedia/views-of-kennedys-address.html

How was JFK’s speech characterized by Malcolm X?  
How was JFK’s speech characterized by Allan Morrison?  

Why did these leaders have a problem with JFK’s speech?  

What did they think was the president’s motivation?
Leaders of the March on Washington lock arms and put hands together as they move along Constitution Avenue here.

August 28, 1963

http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2013646617/

Crowds at the Memorial for Demonstration

New York World-Telegram and the Sun Newspaper Photograph Collection
August 28, 1963

http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/march-on-washington/day-of-the-march.html
View the slideshow
http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/march-on-washington/special-presentation/

Record your observations and impressions of the images.
What particular groups did you see involved in the march?
Do you think the photographer Roosevelt Carter was trying to send a particular image? Include your evidence.

“Signing the Voting Rights Act"
_U.S. News and World Report_  
August 16, 1965
http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/aaohtml/exhibit/aopart9b.html#0904
http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/odyssey/archive/09/0912001r.jpg

Does the headline present a particular message?
President Lyndon B. Johnson gives Dr. Martin Luther King one of the pens used in the signing of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, in the background is Rep Claude Pepper (center) and Rev. Ralph Abernathy, August 6, 1965.

*New York World-Telegram and the Sun Collection*

https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/civil-rights-act/immediate-impact.html
http://www.loc.gov/pictures/resource/ppmsca.08105/

What is the significance of the president giving Martin Luther King one the signing pens?
Voting Rights Act of 1965
http://ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=true&doc=100

How did this legislation go further than the Civil Rights of 1964 on voting rights?

What protections did it provide?

Why was it needed?  Cite at least two reasons.
Go to https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/civil-rights-act/legal-events-timeline.html

Look under the heading Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Beyond.

Why were poll taxes not included in the Voting Rights Act of 1965? (It has to do with the 24th Amendment.)

What was the impact of Harper v. Virginia Board of Elections?

Summative Assessment Task:
How were African-Americans kept from their right to vote as promised in the 15th Amendment? When and how did meaningful change finally occur? What helped to shape greater support for African-American suffrage?