

Optional Supplemental  
Readings and Activities

*Voting and Elections  
in the United States*

for

High School  
Social Studies

# The Election of the President and Vice President: General Election

by Ben's Guide to the U.S. Government



The primary election process ends with the national conventions of the political parties. Once the national conventions have been held, and the candidates from the political parties have been nominated and chosen, the presidential election begins in earnest as a contest between the candidates from the political parties.

Some people choose to run for president without being affiliated with a political party. Such independent candidates do not need the nomination of a political party, but they must meet other requirements. For example, independent candidates are required to collect a large number of signatures to support their nominations and typically submit a qualifying petition.

The candidates campaign right up until Election Day, when the Nation finally votes for its president. The candidates travel throughout the country, making public appearances and giving speeches. The parties and the candidates use advertising, direct mailings, telephone campaigns, social media, and

other means to persuade the voters to choose one candidate over the other(s). Often, these measures also serve to point out the weaknesses of the candidates from the other parties involved in the general election.

In this national presidential election, every citizen of legal age (who has taken the steps necessary in his/her state to meet the voting requirements, such as registering to vote) has an opportunity to vote. However, the president is not chosen by direct popular vote. The Constitution requires that a process known as the Electoral College ultimately decides who will win the general election.

# affiliate af · fil · i · ate

## Advanced Definition

### transitive verb

1. to associate or connect (oneself) as a subordinate member or branch (usu. fol. by with).

*The local women's club affiliated itself with the national organization some years ago.*

2. to accept or adopt as a close associate, esp. as a subordinate member or branch.

*The large, national bank affiliated many of the smaller, local banks.*

### intransitive verb

1. to become closely connected.

*The two organizations decided it would be best to affiliate rather than compete with each other.*

### noun

1. a person or organization that is associated with another as a subordinate or subsidiary.

*The controversial advertisement will not be shown on this network or its affiliates.*

## Spanish cognate

*afiliado*: The Spanish word *afiliado* means affiliate.

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## These are some examples of how the word or forms of the word are used:

1. Her captors brought her to the Hidatsa-Mandan settlement near what is now Bismarck, North Dakota; the Mandan is an **affiliated** tribe.
2. Some people choose to run for president without being **affiliated** with a political party. Such independent candidates do not need the nomination of a political party, but they must meet other requirements.

# nomination

 nom · i · na · tion

## Advanced Definition

noun

1. the act of nominating, or the fact or condition of being nominated, esp. for office.

## Spanish cognate

*nominación*: The Spanish word *nominación* means nomination.

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## These are some examples of how the word or forms of the word are used:

1. In the West, anti-corporate sentiment contributed to the Democratic Party's **nomination** of Nebraska's William Jennings Bryan for the presidency in 1896.
2. She alienated the president's right flank just when the right-wing populist Governor Ronald Reagan was tempted to seek the Republican **nomination** and Ford needed to shore up conservative support.
3. Such independent candidates do not need the **nomination** of a political party, but they must meet other requirements. For example, independent candidates are required to collect a large number of signatures to support their nominations and typically submit a qualifying petition.
4. At the party's national convention, Addams seconded the **nomination** of Theodore Roosevelt for president and campaigned actively on his behalf. She advocated woman's suffrage because she believed that women's votes would provide the margin necessary to pass social legislation she favored.
5. U.S. Republican Senator Margaret Chase Smith is the first woman to have her name placed in **nomination** for the presidency on a major-party ticket.

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**1.** What begins once the national conventions of the political parties have been held and the candidates for president from the political parties have been chosen?

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**2.** Describe what candidates do prior to Election Day to gain votes.

Support your answer with at least two pieces of information from the text.

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**3.** What is the main idea of this text?

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# The Election of the President and Vice President: Primary Election

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According to the United States Constitution, a presidential election is to be held once every fourth year. To be able to run in an election for President one must be 35 years old, a natural born citizen of the United States, and a resident of the United States for at least 14 years. These qualifications are established in Article II, Section 1 of the Constitution.

The process of electing a president and vice-president begins long before Election Day. Candidates from both major and minor political parties and independent candidates begin to raise money and campaign well in advance of the general presidential election. In order to officially represent a political party, a candidate must be nominated by that party.

The nominating process officially begins with the first state primaries and caucuses, which usually begin in January of the election year. It is at these local events that voters are given their first chance to participate in electing the Nation's next president.

There are many factors that influence who will ultimately become the candidate for a party. The public's perception of the candidates is influenced by such things as media reports, public opinion polls, candidate preference surveys, and advertising.

The spring of an election year is characterized by intense campaigning for primaries and caucuses all over the nation. This process reaches its peak at the national conventions of the political parties. Once at the national party conventions, the delegates from the states cast votes for the person who will represent the political party in the November general election. In order to secure a party's nomination, a candidate must receive a majority of the votes from the delegates. It is not unusual for delegates to vote several times before one candidate secures the majority of the votes and officially becomes that party's candidate for the election to determine the next president of the United States. The candidate for president then must choose a vice-presidential candidate.

If a president is running for re-election, this nomination process must still be completed. Even if the president does not have any opponents from within his own political party, the national convention will occur. The conventions are extravaganzas, full of pageantry and showmanship. They serve to help jump start the general election campaign for the presidential candidates.

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**1.** In order to officially represent a political party, what or whom must a candidate be nominated by?

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**2.** Summarize the process through which a presidential candidate is nominated.

Support your answer with information from the text.

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**3.** What is the main idea of this text?

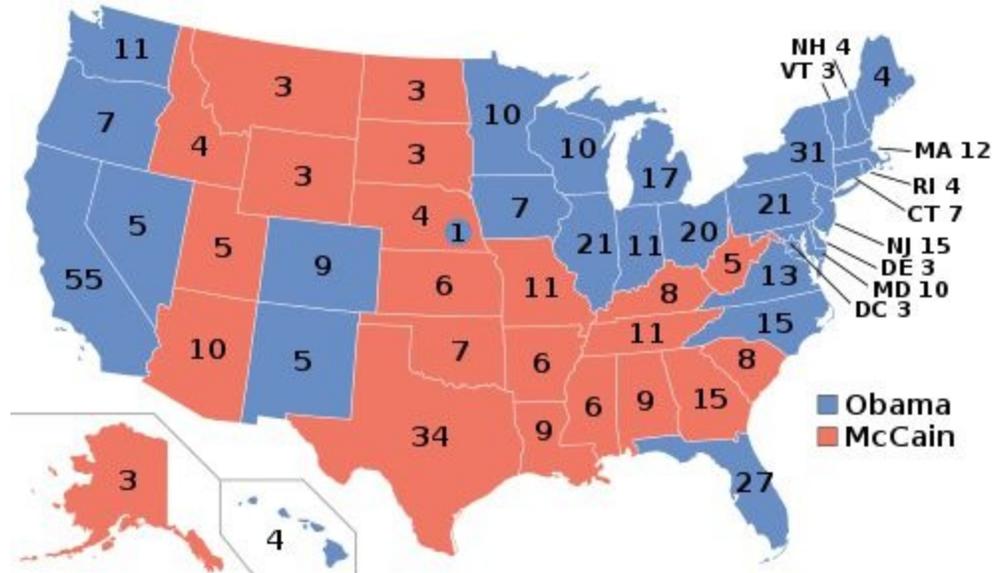
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# The Election of the President and Vice President: Electoral College

by Ben's Guide to the U.S. Government



2008 U.S. presidential election: Electoral College map

The Electoral College is a method of indirect popular election of the president of the United States. Instead of voting for a specific candidate, voters in an indirect popular election select a panel of individuals pledged to vote for a specific candidate. This is in contrast to a popular election where votes are cast for an individual candidate. For example, in a general presidential election, voters select electors to represent their vote in the Electoral College, and not for an individual presidential candidate.

The authors of the Constitution put this system in place so that careful and calm deliberation would lead to the selection of the best-qualified candidate. Voters in each state actually cast a vote for a block of electors who are pledged to vote for a particular candidate. These electors, in turn, vote for the presidential candidate. The number of electors for each state equals its Congressional representation.

After Election Day, on the first Monday after the second Wednesday in December, these electors assemble in their state capitals, cast their ballots, and officially select the next President of the United States. Legally, the electors may vote for someone other than the candidate for whom they were pledged to vote. This phenomenon is known as the "unfaithful" or "faithless" elector. Generally, this does not happen. The candidate who receives the most votes in a state at the general election will be the candidate for whom the electors later cast their votes. The candidate who wins in a state is awarded all of that state's Electoral College votes. Maine and Nebraska are exceptions to this winner-take-all rule.

The votes of the electors are then sent to Congress where the president of the Senate opens the certificates and counts the votes. This takes place on January 6, unless that date falls on a Sunday.

In that case, the votes are counted on the next day. An absolute majority is necessary to prevail in the presidential and the vice presidential elections, that is, half the total plus one electoral votes are required. With 538 electors, a candidate must receive at least 270 votes to be elected to the office of president or vice president.

Should no presidential candidate receive an absolute majority, the House of Representatives determines who the next president will be. Each state may cast one vote and an absolute majority is needed to win. Similarly, the Senate decides who the next vice president will be if there is no absolute majority after the Electoral College vote. Elections have been decided by Congress in the past. The House of Representatives elected Thomas Jefferson President in the election of 1800 when the Electoral College vote resulted in a tie. When the Electoral College vote was so split that none of the candidates received an absolute majority in the election of 1824, the House elected John Quincy Adams president. Richard Johnson was elected vice president by the Senate when he failed to receive an absolute majority of electoral votes in the election of 1836.

The president-elect and vice president-elect take the oath of office and are inaugurated two weeks later, on January 20th.

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

1. What is the Electoral College?
2. Explain how the Electoral College is different from a popular election.

Support your answer with evidence from the text.

3. What is the main idea of this text?

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_

# The American Electoral Process

By Mike Kubic  
2016

*In this article, Mike Kubic, a former correspondent of Newsweek, explains the history and function of the United States Electoral College. The Electoral College is a system that was designed by the founders of the U.S. and set forth in the Constitution as a compromise between allowing members of Congress to select a president and electing a president via a popular vote among citizens. As you read, take notes on potential pros and cons of the system the American people currently use to select a president.*

[1] Every four years, when we Americans set out to elect our president, we complain about our electoral<sup>1</sup> system. We gripe that it's more complicated than the Rubik's cube; it takes too much time; it's too expensive; and it is unfair. And, in fact, it is all of the above.

The problem can be traced back to 1787, when our Founding Fathers neglected to create rules regarding the official role of political parties (which they did not trust); instead, they left it to individual states to shape the process by which we choose the chief executive of our government. By and large, the states took their time to rise to the challenge. In the first place, they did not grant the right to vote to women or African Americans.



"Day 36/366.....I Voted" is licensed under CC BY 2.0.

Over the years, the United States Congress and the states have repeatedly taken steps to do away with these obvious systemic injustices:

- In 1879, the 15th Amendment of our Constitution guaranteed the right to vote to male African Americans.
- In 1920, the 19th Amendment gave the same right to women.
- In 1971, the 26th Amendment gave the vote to all citizens over the age of 18.
- In 1965, Congress passed the historic Voting Rights Act, which protected the viability of the 15th Amendment by guaranteeing that the federal government would intervene if any state would attempt to deny a citizen his or her voting rights on the basis of race.

But after all these legislative reforms, in 2000, Republican presidential candidate George W. Bush—who received fewer than 50.5 million votes—defeated Democrat Al Gore, whose popular support was just 103 votes short of 51 million. How could that happen?

1. Of or relating to elections

## An “Applesauce” System?

- [5] The explanation is that, while our system does give all citizens over 18 the right to vote, the votes they cast are not equal. With the details of the electoral system left to be worked out by the individual states and by the political parties, we now have a system that Will Rogers, America’s funny man and social commentator, famously described as “an applesauce.”

One glaring shortcoming of our existing system is the bewildering labyrinth<sup>2</sup> of ways in which the individual states, the Democrats, and the Republicans, decide who to nominate for the White House. To get the party’s nod as the presidential candidate, a Republican must win the support of 1,237 delegates<sup>3</sup> to the nomination convention; a Democrat must win over 2,382 of these party stalwarts.<sup>4</sup>

The processes through which these delegates are selected attests to the rule-making creativity of each party and state. Republicans generally prefer to choose their delegates through conventions and state-run primaries. These venues can be open (i.e., anyone can vote) or closed (i.e., only party members vote), and bound (i.e., the delegates are pledged to vote for the winning candidate) or unbound (i.e., the delegates are free to choose whomever they want). The number of delegates the candidate can win depends on whether their apportioning<sup>5</sup> is direct, proportional, or winner-take all.

Democrats, in addition to primaries, also have caucuses, which are conducted by the party and (like the primaries) can be open, closed, semi-open, or semi-closed. The caucus rules trump<sup>6</sup> the entire system. Typically, the participants assemble in a large hall and indicate their support for a particular candidate by standing in a designated area. A separate area may also be set aside for undecided participants.

Then, for about 30 minutes, the voters attempt to convince their neighbors to support their candidates of choice. Following that wheeling and dealing, the electioneering is temporarily halted, the votes are counted and the caucus officials determine which candidates—usually those with at least 15% of the votes—are viable.<sup>7</sup> With that done, participants then have another 30 minutes during which they may throw their support behind a new candidate if they so desire.

- [10] Perhaps the most astounding aspect of this convoluted<sup>8</sup> process is the dubious<sup>9</sup> nature of the results it delivers. For one thing, 712 of the 2,382 Democratic delegates needed for the nomination are not elected in the primaries or caucuses. They are so-called “super delegates”—the party’s former governors, Congress members, and other top officials—who are appointed, and can vote for any nominee they want.

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2. **Labyrinth (noun):** something that is extremely complicated or difficult to understand; a maze or complicated network of passages or pathways
  3. A delegate is kind of like a middleman between the American voters and the political parties. He or she is a person – often a party official or politician, but technically anyone can apply – who is elected or chosen to support a particular candidate at either the Republican or Democratic National Convention. Delegates are supposed to cast their ballot in favor of the candidate who received the most votes in their state’s or district’s primary or caucus, but each party has their own rules and sometimes delegates are allowed to vote for whomever they personally prefer.
  4. **Stalwart (noun):** a loyal and reliable member or supporter of an organization
  5. **Apportion (verb):** to assign or allocate
  6. **Trump (verb):** to beat; to do better than; to be more important than
  7. **Viable (adjective):** capable of happening or succeeding; feasible
  8. **Convoluted (adjective):** very complicated and difficult to understand
  9. **Dubious (adjective):** suspect or unreliable; doubtful

The rest of the delegates, both Democrats and Republicans, who are selected by the primaries and caucuses generally pledge to support the winning nominee. In most cases, however, the pledge is good only for the first, or the first three ballots in the nominating convention. If the nominee fails to win during those early rounds, the delegates are free to vote for whomever they chose.

## The Final Flaw

The final flaw of the system is that we do not vote directly for the presidential candidates (and the vice presidential candidates they chose) who won the Democratic and Republican conventions. We vote for members of an electoral college in which, under the Constitution, each state has the number of delegates equal to the total of its senators and members of Congress.

And therein lies potential unfairness of the system: because every state, regardless of the size of its population, has two senators, the voters in small states have—per capita<sup>10</sup>—greater electoral power than their big-state counterparts.

For example, the State of New York, with a population of 19.7 million, has 29 electoral delegates, or one for each 680,000 New Yorkers. Vermont, not very far away, has a population of 626,000 and 3 electoral delegates, or one each for about 209,000 Vermonters. When it comes to the choice of the U.S. president and vice president, one Vermonter's vote counts as much as the votes of three of his or her fellow citizens in New York.

- [15] This means that, to win the requisite<sup>11</sup> 270 votes, or 50 percent-plus-one of the 538-members of the electoral college—a total which is equal to 435 members of the U.S. Representatives, 100 U.S. Senators, and 3 electors from Washington, D.C.—the candidates have to focus on winning enough states, as well as enough voters. And that's what George W. Bush did in 2000 by winning 30 states with 271 electoral votes, while Al Gore, despite his greater popular support, carried only 26 states with 266 electoral delegates.

One consequence of our byzantine<sup>12</sup> electoral system is that it is extremely expensive and time-consuming. In 2012, for example, the presidential candidates spent \$2.6 billion and almost two years of intensive work before reaching Election Day on November 3. Another downside is that the complexity and uncertainties of the process tempt some would-be participants to try to win another way.

## Two Failed Mavericks

One prominent attempt to bypass the process was made by Theodore "Teddy" Roosevelt, a highly popular ex-president. After losing a bid for a return to power in the 1912 Republican convention, he started his own Progressive Party (nicknamed the "Bull Moose Party"). The result was that he split the votes for devotees of the Republican Party, which resulted in the nomination of the incumbent President William Howard Taft. Roosevelt won 27.4% of the popular vote and 88 electoral votes; Taft got 23% and 8 electoral votes; and Democrat Woodrow Wilson walked away with 41.87% of the vote—and the presidency.

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10. Per person

11. **Requisite** (*adjective*): necessary for the attainment of a specific aim or goal

12. Of or relating to the Byzantine Empire; in this context, the word means "excessively complicated"

Another attempt at an insurgency<sup>13</sup> was made in 1992 by Ross Perot, a successful businessmen, who ran for the White House as an independent. He had a sensible populist<sup>14</sup> program, campaigned in 16 states, made effective use of television, and spent an estimated \$12.3 million of his own money. Perot successfully debated with the two major party candidates, George Herbert Bush and Bill Clinton and, for a time, maintained a 39% rating in polls. In the election, he won 18.9% of the popular vote—but carried no states, and won no Electoral College votes.

What do these two failures say about our quadrennial<sup>15</sup> discontent? Do we have an “applesauce” or a system of remarkable endurance?

[20] Undoubtedly, reform is necessary. As Perot said, “Our founders did not know about electricity, the train, telephones, radio, television, automobiles, airplanes, rockets, nuclear weapons, satellites, or space exploration. There's a lot they didn't know about. It would be interesting to see what kind of document they'd draft today.”

But it's also true that, for all its warts, the system has served us well. It has helped create history's most stable, free, and affluent society, and it has had the consent of the governed—the bedrock of democracy.

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13. **Insurgency** (*noun*): a rebellion against an existing authority  
14. A populist is a member of a political party claiming to represent the common people  
15. Occurring every four years

## Text-Dependent Questions

**Directions:** For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. What does the author’s language reveal about his tone toward the American Electoral College system? What rhetorical strategies does he use to justify his perspective? [RI.6]

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2. PART A: Which statement BEST states the central idea conveyed in the text? [RI.2]

- A. It is inherently unfair that the votes of citizens from more populous states should count less than those of their small-state counterparts.
- B. The American Electoral College system – though somewhat effective – is flawed and excessively complex.
- C. The greatest flaw of the American Electoral College is that it forces presidential candidate to devote significant economic resources to their campaigns.
- D. The process by which we elect our president has been rendered irrelevant by modern technological innovations.

3. PART B: Which TWO phrases from the text best support the answer to Part A? [RI.1]

- A. “We gripe that [the electoral system is] more complicated than the Rubik’s cube; it takes too much time; it’s too expensive; and it is unfair. And, in fact, it is all of the above.” (Paragraph 1)
- B. “And therein lies potential unfairness of the system: because every state, regardless of the size of its population, has two senators, the voters in small states have—per capita—greater electoral power than their big-state counterparts.” (Paragraph 13)
- C. “One consequence of our byzantine electoral system is that it is extremely expensive and time-consuming. In 2012, for example, the presidential candidates spent \$2.6 billion and almost two years of intensive work before...Election Day.” (Paragraph 16)
- D. “Roosevelt won 27.4% of the popular vote and 88 electoral votes; Taft got 23% and 8 electoral votes; and Democrat Woodrow Wilson walked away with 41.87% of the vote—and the presidency.” (Paragraph 17)
- E. “As Perot said, ‘Our founders did not know about electricity, the train, telephones, radio, television, ... It would be interesting to see what kind of document they'd draft today.’” (Paragraph 20)
- F. “[The system] has helped create history’s most stable, free, and affluent society, and it has had the consent of the governed—the bedrock of democracy.” (Paragraph 21)

4. PART A: What does the word “gripe” most closely mean as it is used in paragraph 1? [RI.4]
- A. to express a grievance about a concern or problem
  - B. to whine unnecessarily in a childlike way
  - C. to joke sarcastically
  - D. to declare aggressively
5. PART B: Which phrase from the paragraph BEST supports the answer to Part A? [RI.1]
- A. “we complain”
  - B. “too much time”
  - C. “too expensive”
  - D. “unfair”

## Discussion Questions

**Directions:** *Brainstorm your answers to the following questions in the space provided. Be prepared to share your original ideas in a class discussion.*

1. What effect does paragraph 21 have on your reading of the text as a whole? Do you think it weakens or strengthens the author's points about the electoral system's flaws?
2. In your opinion, what is the most significant problem with the electoral system and why? Do you think the author of the text agrees with you?
3. What is the role of political parties in our government, given what is stated in the text? Do you think of them as a divisive force or as a way for likeminded people to come together to effect change?
4. What are some of the challenges associated with creating a truly "fair" procedure for electing a president of the United States? Are any of these obstacles specific to this country? In the context of this text, how is America unique?
5. Do you think the American Electoral College is a fair system? In the context of this text, what does it mean for something to be fair? Is it that which is in the best interest of the individual or that which serves the many? Defend your position using facts and figures from the text, your own experience, and other literature, art, or history.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_

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The processes through which these delegates are selected attests to the rule-making creativity of each party and state. Republicans generally prefer to choose their delegates through conventions and state-run primaries. These venues can be open (i.e., anyone can vote) or closed (i.e., only party members vote), and bound (i.e., the delegates are pledged to vote for the winning candidate) or unbound (i.e., the delegates are free to choose whomever they want). The number of delegates the candidate can win depends on whether their apportioning<sup>5</sup> is direct, proportional, or winner-take all.

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And therein lies potential unfairness of the system: because every state, regardless of the size of its population, has two senators, the voters in small states have—per capita<sup>10</sup>—greater electoral power than their big-state counterparts.

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One consequence of our byzantine<sup>12</sup> electoral system is that it is extremely expensive and time-consuming. In 2012, for example, the presidential candidates spent \$2.6 billion and almost two years of intensive work before reaching Election Day on November 3. Another downside is that the complexity and uncertainties of the process tempt some would-be participants to try to win another way.

## Two Failed Mavericks

One prominent attempt to bypass the process was made by Theodore “Teddy” Roosevelt, a highly popular ex-president. After losing a bid for a return to power in the 1912 Republican convention, he started his own Progressive Party (nicknamed the “Bull Moose Party”). The result was that he split the votes for devotees of the Republican Party, which resulted in the nomination of the incumbent President William Howard Taft. Roosevelt won 27.4% of the popular vote and 88 electoral votes; Taft got 23% and 8 electoral votes; and Democrat Woodrow Wilson walked away with 41.87% of the vote—and the presidency.

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10. Per person

11. **Requisite** (*adjective*): necessary for the attainment of a specific aim or goal

12. Of or relating to the Byzantine Empire; in this context, the word means “excessively complicated”

Another attempt at an insurgency<sup>13</sup> was made in 1992 by Ross Perot, a successful businessmen, who ran for the White House as an independent. He had a sensible populist<sup>14</sup> program, campaigned in 16 states, made effective use of television, and spent an estimated \$12.3 million of his own money. Perot successfully debated with the two major party candidates, George Herbert Bush and Bill Clinton and, for a time, maintained a 39% rating in polls. In the election, he won 18.9% of the popular vote—but carried no states, and won no Electoral College votes.

What do these two failures say about our quadrennial<sup>15</sup> discontent? Do we have an “applesauce” or a system of remarkable endurance?

[20] Undoubtedly, reform is necessary. As Perot said, “Our founders did not know about electricity, the train, telephones, radio, television, automobiles, airplanes, rockets, nuclear weapons, satellites, or space exploration. There's a lot they didn't know about. It would be interesting to see what kind of document they'd draft today.”

But it's also true that, for all its warts, the system has served us well. It has helped create history's most stable, free, and affluent society, and it has had the consent of the governed—the bedrock of democracy.

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13. **Insurgency** (*noun*): a rebellion against an existing authority  
14. A populist is a member of a political party claiming to represent the common people  
15. Occurring every four years

## Text-Dependent Questions

**Directions:** For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. What does the author’s language reveal about his tone toward the American Electoral College system? What rhetorical strategies does he use to justify his perspective? [RI.6]

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2. PART A: Which statement BEST states the central idea conveyed in the text? [RI.2]

- A. It is inherently unfair that the votes of citizens from more populous states should count less than those of their small-state counterparts.
- B. The American Electoral College system – though somewhat effective – is flawed and excessively complex.
- C. The greatest flaw of the American Electoral College is that it forces presidential candidate to devote significant economic resources to their campaigns.
- D. The process by which we elect our president has been rendered irrelevant by modern technological innovations.

3. PART B: Which TWO phrases from the text best support the answer to Part A? [RI.1]

- A. “We gripe that [the electoral system is] more complicated than the Rubik’s cube; it takes too much time; it’s too expensive; and it is unfair. And, in fact, it is all of the above.” (Paragraph 1)
- B. “And therein lies potential unfairness of the system: because every state, regardless of the size of its population, has two senators, the voters in small states have—per capita—greater electoral power than their big-state counterparts.” (Paragraph 13)
- C. “One consequence of our byzantine electoral system is that it is extremely expensive and time-consuming. In 2012, for example, the presidential candidates spent \$2.6 billion and almost two years of intensive work before...Election Day.” (Paragraph 16)
- D. “Roosevelt won 27.4% of the popular vote and 88 electoral votes; Taft got 23% and 8 electoral votes; and Democrat Woodrow Wilson walked away with 41.87% of the vote—and the presidency.” (Paragraph 17)
- E. “As Perot said, ‘Our founders did not know about electricity, the train, telephones, radio, television, ... It would be interesting to see what kind of document they’d draft today.’” (Paragraph 20)
- F. “[The system] has helped create history’s most stable, free, and affluent society, and it has had the consent of the governed—the bedrock of democracy.” (Paragraph 21)

4. PART A: What does the word “gripe” most closely mean as it is used in paragraph 1? [RI.4]
- A. to express a grievance about a concern or problem
  - B. to whine unnecessarily in a childlike way
  - C. to joke sarcastically
  - D. to declare aggressively
5. PART B: Which phrase from the paragraph BEST supports the answer to Part A? [RI.1]
- A. “we complain”
  - B. “too much time”
  - C. “too expensive”
  - D. “unfair”

## Discussion Questions

**Directions:** *Brainstorm your answers to the following questions in the space provided. Be prepared to share your original ideas in a class discussion.*

1. What effect does paragraph 21 have on your reading of the text as a whole? Do you think it weakens or strengthens the author's points about the electoral system's flaws?
2. In your opinion, what is the most significant problem with the electoral system and why? Do you think the author of the text agrees with you?
3. What is the role of political parties in our government, given what is stated in the text? Do you think of them as a divisive force or as a way for likeminded people to come together to effect change?
4. What are some of the challenges associated with creating a truly "fair" procedure for electing a president of the United States? Are any of these obstacles specific to this country? In the context of this text, how is America unique?
5. Do you think the American Electoral College is a fair system? In the context of this text, what does it mean for something to be fair? Is it that which is in the best interest of the individual or that which serves the many? Defend your position using facts and figures from the text, your own experience, and other literature, art, or history.

# Women Who Fought for the Vote

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On Election Day in 1920, millions of American women exercised their right to vote for the first time. For almost 100 years, women (and men) had been fighting to win that right: They had made speeches, signed petitions, marched in parades and argued over and over again that women, like men, deserved all of the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. The leaders of this campaign did not always agree with one another-in fact, sometimes their disagreements threatened to derail their movement-but each was committed to the enfranchisement of all American women.

## SUSAN B. ANTHONY, 1820-1906

Perhaps the most well-known women's rights activist in history, Susan B. Anthony was born on February 15, 1820, to a Quaker family in the northwestern corner of Massachusetts. Anthony was raised to be independent and outspoken: Her parents, like many Quakers, believed that men and women should study, live and work as equals and should commit themselves equally to the eradication of cruelty and injustice in the world.

***Did You Know?** Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton lived in a part of upstate New York that would become known as the "Burnt District" or the "Burned-Over District" because it was home to so many religious revivals, utopian crusades and reform movements: They swept through the region, people said, as unstopably as a forest fire.*

Before she joined the campaign for woman suffrage, Anthony was a temperance activist in Rochester, New York, where she was a teacher at a girls' school. As a Quaker, she believed that drinking alcohol was a sin; moreover, she believed that (male) drunkenness was particularly hurtful to the innocent women and children who suffered from the poverty and violence it caused. However, Anthony found that few politicians took her anti-liquor crusade seriously, both because she was a woman and because she was advocating on behalf of a "women's issue." Women needed the vote, she concluded, so that they could make certain that the government kept women's interests in mind.

In 1853, Anthony began to campaign for the expansion of married women's property rights; in 1856, she joined the American Anti-Slavery Society, delivering abolitionist lectures across New York State. Though Anthony was dedicated to the abolitionist cause and genuinely believed that African-American men and women deserved the right to vote, after the Civil War ended she refused to support any suffrage amendments to the Constitution unless they granted the franchise to women as well as men.

This led to a dramatic schism in the women's-rights movement between activists like Anthony, who believed that no amendment granting the vote to African Americans should be ratified unless it also granted the vote to women (proponents of this point of view formed a group called the National Woman Suffrage Association), and those who were willing to support an immediate expansion of the citizenship rights of former slaves, even if it meant they had to keep fighting for universal suffrage. (Proponents of *this* point of view formed a group called the American Woman Suffrage Association.)

This animosity eventually faded, and in 1890 the two groups joined to form a new suffrage organization, the National American Woman Suffrage Association. Elizabeth Cady Stanton was NAWSA's first president; Anthony was its second. She continued to fight for the vote until she died on March 13, 1906.

### **ALICE PAUL, 1885-1977**

Alice Paul was the leader of the most militant wing of the woman-suffrage movement. Born in 1885 to a wealthy Quaker family in New Jersey, Paul was well-educated-she earned an undergraduate degree in biology from Swarthmore College and a PhD in sociology from the University of Pennsylvania-and determined to win the vote by any means necessary.

While she was in graduate school, Paul spent time in London, where she joined the suffragist Emmeline Pankhurst's radical, confrontational Women's Social and Political Union and learned how to use civil disobedience and other "unladylike" tactics to draw attention to her cause. When she returned to the United States in 1910, Paul brought those militant tactics to the well-established National American Woman Suffrage Association. There, as the chair of NAWSA's Congressional Committee, she began to agitate for the passage of a federal suffrage amendment to the Constitution like the one her hero Susan B. Anthony had wanted so badly to see.

On March 3, 1913, Paul and her colleagues coordinated an enormous suffrage parade to coincide with-and distract from-President Wilson's inauguration. More marches and protests followed. The more conservative women at NAWSA soon grew frustrated with publicity stunts like these, and in 1914 Paul left the organization and started her own, the Congressional Union (which soon became the National Woman's Party). Even after the U.S. entered World War I, the NWP kept up its flamboyant protests, even staging a seven-month picket of the White House.

For this "unpatriotic" act, Paul and the rest of the NWP suffragists were arrested and imprisoned. Along with some of the other activists, Paul was placed in solitary confinement; then, when they went on a hunger strike to protest this unfair treatment, the women were force-fed for as long as three weeks. These abuses did not have their intended effect: Once news of the mistreatment got out, public sympathy swung to the side of the imprisoned activists and they soon were released.

In January 1918, President Wilson announced his support for a constitutional amendment that would give all female citizens the right to vote. On August 26, 1920, Tennessee became the 36th state to

ratify the amendment, making it law.

In 1920, Alice Paul proposed an Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) to the Constitution. ("Men and women," it read, "shall have equal rights throughout the United States.") The ERA has never been ratified.

### **ELIZABETH CADY STANTON, 1815-1902**

Elizabeth Cady Stanton was one of the foremost women's-rights activists and philosophers of the 19th century. Born on November 12, 1815, to a prominent family in upstate New York, Elizabeth Cady was surrounded by reform movements of all kinds. Soon after her marriage to abolitionist Henry Brewster Stanton in 1840, the pair traveled to the World Anti-Slavery Convention in London, where they were turned away: Female delegates, they were told, were unwelcome.

This injustice convinced Stanton that women needed to pursue equality for themselves before they could seek it for others. In the summer of 1848, she-along with the abolitionist and temperance activist Lucretia Mott and a handful of other reformers-organized the first women's-rights convention in Seneca Falls, New York. Some 240 men and women gathered to discuss what Stanton and Mott called "the social, civil, and religious condition and rights of women." One hundred of the delegates-68 women and 32 men-signed a Declaration of Sentiments, modeled on the Declaration of Independence, declaring that women were citizens equal to men with "an inalienable right to the elective franchise." The Seneca Falls Convention marked the beginning of the campaign for woman suffrage.

Like Susan B. Anthony, Stanton was a committed abolitionist; however, she too refused to compromise on the principle of universal suffrage. As a result, she campaigned against the ratification of the 15th Amendment to the Constitution, which guaranteed black men the right to vote but denied it to women.

After the fight over the 14th and 15th Amendments, Stanton continued to push for women's political equality-but she believed in a much broader vision of women's rights. She advocated for the reform of marriage and divorce laws, the expansion of educational opportunities for girls and even the adoption of less confining clothing (such as the pants-and-tunic ensemble popularized by the activist Amelia Bloomer) so that women could be more active. She also campaigned against the oppression of women in the name of religion-"From the inauguration of the movement for woman's emancipation," she wrote, "the Bible has been used to hold her in the 'divinely ordained sphere'"-and in 1895 published the first volume of a more egalitarian Woman's Bible.

Elizabeth Cady Stanton died in 1902. Today, a statue of Stanton, with fellow women's rights activists Susan B. Anthony and Lucretia Mott stands in the rotunda of the U.S. Capitol.

### **LUCY STONE, 1818-1893**

Lucy Stone, born in Massachusetts in 1818, was a pioneering abolitionist and women's-rights activist, but she is perhaps best known for refusing to change her last name when she married the abolitionist Henry Blackwell in 1855. (This tradition, the couple declared, "refuse[d] to recognize the wife as an independent, rational being" and "confer[red] on the husband an injurious and unnatural superiority.")

After she graduated from Oberlin College in 1847, Stone became a traveling lecturer for the American

Anti-Slavery Society-advocating, she said, "not for the slave only, but for suffering humanity everywhere. Especially do I mean to labor for the elevation of my sex." She continued her activism on behalf of abolitionism and women's rights until 1857, when she retired from the anti-slavery lecture circuit to care for her baby daughter.

After the Civil War, advocates of woman suffrage faced a dilemma: Should they hold firm to their demand for universal suffrage or should they endorse-even celebrate-the 15th Amendment while they kept up their own campaign for the franchise? Some suffragists, such as Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, chose the former, scorning the 15th Amendment while forming the National Woman Suffrage Association to try and win the passage of a federal universal-suffrage amendment. Stone, on the other hand, supported the 15th Amendment; at the same time, she helped found the American Woman Suffrage Association, which fought for woman suffrage on a state-by-state basis.

In 1871, Stone and Blackwell began to publish the weekly feminist newspaper *The Woman's Journal*. Stone died in 1893, 27 years before American women won the right to vote. *The Woman's Journal* survived until 1931.

### **IDA B. WELLS, 1862-1931**

Ida B. Wells, born in Mississippi in 1862, is perhaps best known for her work as a crusading journalist and anti-lynching activist. While working as a schoolteacher in Memphis, Wells wrote for the city's black newspaper, *The Free Speech*. Her writings exposed and condemned the inequalities and injustices that were so common in the Jim Crow South: disfranchisement, segregation, lack of educational and economic opportunity for African-Americans, and especially the arbitrary violence that white racists used to intimidate and control their black neighbors.

Wells's insistence on publicizing the evils of lynching, in particular, won her many enemies in the South, and in 1892 she left Memphis for good when an angry mob wrecked the offices of *The Free Speech* and warned that they would kill her if she ever came back. Wells moved north but kept writing about racist violence in the former Confederacy, campaigning for federal anti-lynching laws (which were never passed) and organizing on behalf of many civil rights causes, including woman suffrage.

In March 1913, as Wells prepared to join the suffrage parade through President Woodrow Wilson's inaugural celebration, organizers asked her to stay out of the procession: Some of the white suffragists, it seemed, refused to march alongside blacks. (Early suffrage activists had generally supported racial equality-in fact, most had been abolitionists before they were feminists-but by the beginning of the 20th century, that was rarely the case. In fact, many middle-class white people embraced the suffragists' cause because they believed that the enfranchisement of "their" women would guarantee white supremacy by neutralizing the black vote.) Wells joined the march anyway, but her experience showed that to many white suffragists, "equality" did not apply to everyone.

Wells continued to fight for civil rights for all until she died in 1931.

# advocate

 ad · vo · cate

## Advanced Definition

### transitive verb

1. to urge support or acceptance of.

*He advocates buying fruits and vegetables grown on local farms.*

### noun

1. one who supports a cause.

*I am an advocate of health care reform.*

2. one who defends or pleads on behalf of another, esp. in a court of law.

*Who is the advocate for the defendant?*

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## These are some examples of how the word or forms of the word are used:

1. This is why many people **advocate** using renewable energies as our primary power sources.
2. In the 20th century, writers, scientists and philosophers started to **advocate** space colonization for ecological and political reasons.
3. Temple Grandin, an animal welfare **advocate**, notes that breeding animals for size and strength interferes with natural animal processes.
4. Along with volunteer work helping **advocate** for people with [Tourette's], she participates in Girl Scouts and operates her own recycled jewelry business.
5. Although he had not intended to follow in his father's footsteps by joining the ministry, he changed his mind under the mentorship of Morehouse's president, Dr. Benjamin Mays, an influential theologian and outspoken **advocate** for racial equality.
6. The civil rights movement of the 1960s transformed the political climate, and in 1963, black leaders began to plan a new March on Washington, designed specifically to **advocate** passage of the Civil Rights Act then stalled in Congress.

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**1.** The text lists and profiles five American women who fought for women's right to vote. They are Susan B. Anthony, Alice Paul, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lucy Stone, and Ida B. Wells. Choose one of those suffragists and describe at least one thing she did to work towards getting women the right to vote.

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**2.** American suffragists had different views on fighting for the right of black Americans to vote. Use evidence from the text to support this statement. Support your answer with evidence from the text.

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**3.** What is the main idea of this text?

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**4.** Compare two of the American women suffragists profiled in this text. Support your answer with evidence from the text.

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**5.** Contrast two of the American women suffragists profiled in this text. Support your answer with evidence from the text.

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_

# The Voting Rights Act of 1965

By Jessica McBirney  
2016

*The signing of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 into law by President Lyndon B. Johnson was a landmark moment in the Civil Rights Movement of 1960s, which encompassed all social activism in the United States with the intent of ending racial segregation and discrimination against African-Americans. Burdened by a history of slavery and racial tensions, the United States, and particularly the South, was the site of an intense struggle for equality and justice. Common forms of protest included boycotts, sit-ins, marches, and a wide range of other nonviolent demonstrations. As you read, take notes on the events and actions that led to the Voting Rights Act of 1965.*

- [1] Today, most of us think of voting as an inalienable right that belongs to all Americans and cannot be taken away. Throughout history, however, many American citizens have not been allowed to vote in local and national elections, either on the basis of actual laws or discriminatory practices. Cultural and political barriers prevented racial minorities from heading to the voting booth every year. It was not until the 1960s that the United States government took serious action to make sure all citizens of the United States could safely and effectively exercise their right to vote. ;



"11 - Civil Rights Movement" is licensed under CC BY-ND 2.0.

## Strained Race Relations

African-Americans were first granted citizenship in the 1860s; African-American men were granted the right to vote in 1870.<sup>1</sup> After the Civil War,<sup>2</sup> Congress made three amendments to the Constitution to protect the rights of freed slaves. The 13th Amendment ended slavery everywhere. The 14th Amendment gave citizenship to every person born in the U.S., including recently freed slaves. The 15th Amendment reinforced the right to vote for all male citizens, regardless of race.

However, some southern states did not like these new amendments, and some whites wanted to keep blacks from having an equal place in society. They passed laws that prevented African Americans from voting. Some towns required literacy tests, which were supposed to simply prove the person could speak English well enough to understand the ballot,<sup>3</sup> but in reality they were used to prevent African Americans from being able to actually vote. Others required voters to pay a tax, own property, pass morality tests, or come from certain family lines. All of these laws were designed to do one thing: prohibit members of racial minority groups from voting.

1. Women were not granted the right to vote in the United States until the passage of 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution in 1919.
2. A war between northern and southern states that effectively ended slavery in the United States.
3. **Ballot (noun):** the piece of paper used to record someone's vote

## Change on the Horizon

These laws remained in place and went mostly unchallenged until the civil rights movement began in the 1950s. One of the leaders of the civil rights movement was Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.,<sup>4</sup> a minister and activist who believed that African Americans should have the same rights as whites in America. Because of the efforts of Dr. King and many other activists, the government began to make changes toward equality, including setting up a civil rights office in the Department of Justice, but it was not enough.

- [5] King organized another rally for equal rights in Selma, Alabama in early March 1965. However, Alabama state troopers violently attacked the peaceful protestors, and the whole event was broadcast on national television. This tragic event—referred to as “Bloody Sunday”—opened the eyes of many Americans across the country to the realities of racial discrimination. Over the next few weeks, civil rights activists organized and participated in more marches, sit-ins,<sup>5</sup> and other demonstrations.

## The Voting Rights Act of 1965

These actions had a powerful effect in Washington D.C. After witnessing TV coverage of “Bloody Sunday,” President Lyndon Baines Johnson<sup>6</sup> met with Alabama Governor George Wallace<sup>7</sup> at the nation’s capital to discuss the civil rights situation in his state. He tried to persuade Wallace to stop the state’s harassment of the protesters. Wallace refused, so Johnson took charge of Alabama’s National Guard and sent one thousand military policemen and two thousand army troops to escort protesters on a march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama.

Meanwhile, Johnson was working on a bill that would help create the change that the protesters were demanding. On March 15, 1965, Johnson presented the bill to Congress. In August 1965, the bill was passed and signed by Johnson into law as the Voting Rights Act. The Department of Justice has called it the strongest, most effective civil rights law in our nation’s history. It has several parts:

- First, it outlaws any regulation that might keep racial minorities from voting for any reason. This includes all of the tactics used in the south, such as literacy tests and poll taxes.<sup>8</sup> It also prohibits gerrymandering, the practice of redrawing voting districts to have as few minority voters as possible. Proponents of the Voting Rights Act wanted everyone to be able to vote, and wanted everyone’s vote to matter equally.

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4. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (1929-1968) was an American Baptist minister and activist who is best remembered for his role in the advancement of civil rights through the use of nonviolent civil disobedience based on his Christian faith.
  5. A type of protest in which demonstrators occupy a place and refuse to leave until certain demands are met.
  6. Lyndon Baines Johnson (1908-1973) was the 36th President of the United States from 1963 until 1969, assuming the office after serving as the Vice President under John F. Kennedy, who was assassinated in 1963. Johnson is remembered for his “Great Society” legislation, which upheld civil rights, social programs like Medicare and Medicaid, educational funding, and urban and rural development programs.
  7. George Wallace (1919-1998) was an American politician and the 45th Governor of Alabama. He was a U.S. presidential candidate for four consecutive elections between 1964 and 1976. He is remembered for his hardline stance in favor of segregation.
  8. This case was brought by Shelby County in Alabama, a region identified in the 1960s as having a strong history of preventing African Americans from registering and casting votes. More recently, the county sued the U.S. Attorney General in Washington, D.C. for the right to alter voting laws and practices without the approval of the federal government.

- Second, it identified areas in the country with large numbers of minority voters, and required that ballots be provided in multiple languages in those areas. For example, if a town had many Spanish-speaking residents, it must print its annual ballots in Spanish as well as English.
- Third, it picked out certain regions with a history of severe racism. These regions had special requirements that any changes they made to their voting rules had to be cleared with the federal government. Congress wanted to make sure no local government would try to reverse the rules laid out in the new Voting Rights Act.

## Long-Term Effects

The Voting Rights Act of 1965 had immediate positive effects for minority voters. Nearly 250,000 black citizens registered to vote in 1965 alone. By 1967, the percentage of blacks registered to vote in the regions identified in the law as having a severe history of racism rose from 30% to over 50%. Language minority groups experienced similar increases in registration. The number of African-Americans elected to government offices more than tripled by 1980.

In a 2013 case called *Shelby County v. Holder*,<sup>[9]</sup> the Supreme Court ruled that parts of the Voting Rights Act were unconstitutional. A majority of the justices believed it was wrong to require certain states to check with the federal government every time they changed their voting laws. They also thought it was unfair to continue making these demands based on data from the 1960s.

- [10] Unfortunately, some states have taken advantage of this new ruling to rewrite certain laws in ways that might enable discrimination against minorities. For example, some states require official IDs to get into the voting booth, and some people argue that, since it costs money to get an ID, this is a form of a poll tax. A federal court recently struck down one such law in North Carolina. Other states have tried to limit the hours voting booths are open, so that working people have trouble voting on time.

Technically, Congress can still override individual changes as they arise, but critics are skeptical that Congress will actually do this. Only time will tell whether this Supreme Court decision was a mistake or not.

## Text-Dependent Questions

**Directions:** For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. How does the author support her argument that some modern voting laws might be intended to prevent minorities from exercising their civil rights? Cite evidence from the text in your response. [RI.6]

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2. PART A: Which TWO of the following best identify the central themes of this article? [RI.2]
- A. While Congress has the right to overrule changes states make to their voting laws, members of Congress generally refrain from doing so out of respect for states' rights.
  - B. The Voting Rights Act of 1965, which followed on the heels of a deadly clash known as "Bloody Sunday," greatly increased the participation of African-Americans in elections.
  - C. The advances Lyndon B. Johnson made in terms of civil rights in the United States were only possible because of his control over a substantial military force.
  - D. Though many of us take the right to vote for granted today, African-Americans went through years of protests before their voting rights were secured.
  - E. Recent adjustments to the civil rights legislation of the 1960s, such as in the case of *Shelby County v. Holder*, has effectively undone President Johnson's achievements.
  - F. Advocates of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 believed that American election system was rigged such that only a small minority of "ruling elites" actually chose elected officials.

3. PART B: Which TWO phrases from the text best support the answers to Part A? [RI.1]
- A. "Throughout history, however, many American citizens have not been allowed to vote in local and national elections... Cultural and political barriers prevented racial minorities from heading to the voting booth..." (Paragraph 5)
  - B. "Wallace refused, so Johnson took charge of Alabama's National Guard and sent one thousand military policemen and two thousand army troops to escort protesters on a march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama." (Paragraph 6)
  - C. "Proponents of the Voting Rights Act wanted everyone to be able to vote, and wanted everyone's vote to matter equally." (Paragraph 7)
  - D. "The Voting Rights Act of 1965 had immediate positive effects for minority voters. Nearly 250,000 black citizens registered to vote in 1965 alone." (Paragraph 8)
  - E. "A majority of the justices believed it was wrong to require certain states to check with the federal government every time they changed their voting laws." (Paragraph 9)
  - F. "Technically, Congress can still override individual changes as they arise, but critics are skeptical that Congress will actually do this." (Paragraph 11)
4. 4. PART A: What does the word "inalienable" most closely mean as it is used in paragraph 1? [RI.4]
- A. sacred; handed down by a higher power
  - B. unable to be taken from the possessor
  - C. expressing political power; influential
  - D. transcendent of obstacles
5. PART B: Which phrase from the text best supports the answer to Part A? [RI.1]
- A. "voting" (Paragraph 1)
  - B. "belongs to all Americans" (Paragraph 1)
  - C. "cannot be taken away" (Paragraph 1)
  - D. "cultural and political barriers" (Paragraph 1)

## Discussion Questions

**Directions:** *Brainstorm your answers to the following questions in the space provided. Be prepared to share your original ideas in a class discussion.*

1. The article refers to the deeply disturbing events of “Bloody Sunday” (Paragraph 6) as a turning point that opened white American citizens’ eyes to the horrors of violence and prejudice against African-Americans. Is violence often necessary to show people that change is necessary? Why do you think it sometimes takes violence to move people to action?
2. Why do you think racism was particularly virulent and widespread in the southern states? Draw on your knowledge of history and the information presented in the text in formulating your answer.
3. Martin Luther King, Jr. was famously quoted as saying, “Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter.” Why are voting rights, insofar as they represent a chance to exert agency over political issues, so important? Why is it important to stand up for what you believe is right?
4. In the context of this text, how has America changed over time? Cite evidence from this text, your own experience, and other literature, art, or history in your answer.