

Name _____

Date _____

Voting Rights Act & Selma March - Answer Key

Use the text to answer each question below.

1. Imagine you're an African-American man living in the South before 1965. Since 1870, you've had a constitutional right to vote, but your state and county have disenfranchised you, meaning they've denied you the right to vote or made it very difficult. Voter registration is only open twice a month. To register, you have to pass a literacy test. If you pass, there are other hurdles. You have to pay a poll tax, a fee for registering to vote. Grandfather clauses made these unfair voting practices only apply to African Americans. Grandfather clauses stated that if you, your father or your grandfather voted before 1867, you were allowed to vote without a literacy test or poll tax. Before 1867, only white men were allowed to vote, so white men who were illiterate or poor didn't have to worry about reading tests or poll taxes. There were other obstacles as well. Black people often lived far from polling places—the place you must go to vote. If they did manage to get to their polling place, white voters often harassed and intimidated them. These difficulties were a large part of why only 3% of eligible black voters were registered in the South in 1940.

Which of these protected poor and illiterate white men from being disenfranchised?

- A. a constitutional amendment
C. poll taxes

B. literacy tests



D.

grandfather clauses

“Grandfather clauses stated that if you, your father or your grandfather voted before 1867, you were allowed to vote without a literacy test or poll tax.” Because only white men could vote before 1867, “white men who were illiterate or poor didn’t have to worry about reading tests or poll taxes.”

2. The Ku Klux Klan, or KKK, is a violent hate group that still exists today. They are white supremacists, people who believe that white people are superior to other races, and that non-whites must be oppressed. The KKK formed after the Civil War to try to keep white people in control in the US. In the 1950s and 1960s, the KKK fought civil rights with violence. They did not believe that African Americans deserved the same rights as white people, including the right to vote.

The White Citizens' Council was another white supremacist group. They formed in the 1950s and spread through the South. Their goal was to keep schools segregated and enforce other forms of discrimination. Members of this group were often wealthy business leaders. In addition to violence, they used their money and power to intimidate African Americans. Their slogan was a single word challenge to integration: "Never!" Sheriff Jim Clark, who played a key role in the Selma marches, used to wear a "Never!" button on his sheriff's uniform.

Which of the following is true of both the KKK and the White Citizens' Council?

- A. They formed in the 1950s.
- B. They believed schools should be integrated.
- C. They used violence to fight against civil rights.
- D. Their members played no role in the Selma marches.



C.

They used violence to fight against civil rights.

According to the passage, "The KKK fought civil rights with violence," and the goal of the White Citizens' Council was "to keep schools segregated and enforce other forms of discrimination." They used money and power to do so, "in addition to violence."

3. Selma is a major city in Dallas County, Alabama. In 1961, 15,000 African Americans were eligible to vote in Dallas County, but only 130, less than 1%, had registered. The Dallas County Voters League (DCVL) was a group formed in 1920 to increase the number of African American voters. In 1963, the DCVL began working with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). The SNCC was a powerful civil rights group created by college students at Shaw University. Together, the SNCC and the DCVL built a team of volunteers who knocked on doors and encouraged people to register. They also held voter education classes and registration events. Sheriff Jim Clark responded to their activities with violence and arrests. Near the end of 1964, the DCVL asked another civil rights organization, the Southern Christian Leadership Council (SCLC), to join them. Members of the SCLC came to Selma with their president, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. By January 1965, civil rights leaders like Dr. King, Bernard Lafayette, John Lewis and Hosea Williams were working together, and Selma had become the center of the voting rights movement.

Selma became the center of the voting rights movement as a result of

A. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s arrest.



B.

several civil rights groups working together.

According to the passage, in 1963, "the DCVL began working with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating" to register black voters, and in 1964, "the DCVL asked another civil rights organization, the Southern Christian Leadership Council (SCLC), to join them," so that "by January 1965, civil rights leaders like Dr. King, Bernard Lafayette, John Lewis and Hosea Williams were working together."

C. the SCLC asking the DCVL to join them.

D. very high voter registration rates in Dallas County.

4. In February 1965, a state trooper in Alabama shot and killed civil rights activist Jimmie Lee Jackson. In response, the SCLC called for a peaceful march to Montgomery, the capital of Alabama. On March 7, 600 marchers left Selma and headed toward Montgomery, 54 miles away. They were met by state troopers almost immediately, along with Sheriff Clark and his deputies. On the Edmund Pettus Bridge, the officers began beating people and firing tear gas. Fifty-six people were brought to the hospital. John Lewis, a leader of the SNCC, was beaten so badly his skull was fractured. Television crews captured the scene, and footage was shown on the news. The day became known as "Bloody Sunday." The violence—and the media coverage of it—brought voting rights and issues of equality to the nation's attention. Many people wanted President Lyndon B. Johnson to protect the marchers by sending in federal troops. John Lewis was quoted in the *New York Times* saying, "I don't see how President Johnson can send troops to Vietnam—I don't see how he can send troops to the Congo—I don't see how he can send troops to Africa and can't send troops to Selma."

In 1965, John Lewis would most likely have agreed with which of these statements?



- A. President Johnson should send federal troops to Selma.
- According to the passage, John Lewis was quoted in the newspaper as saying, "I don't see how President Johnson can send troops to Vietnam... I don't see how he can send troops to Africa and can't send troops to Selma."*
- B. President Johnson did not understand the war in Vietnam.
- C. The media should not have shown the violence of Bloody Sunday.
- D. President Johnson had no power to protect civil rights activists in Alabama.

5. Two days after Bloody Sunday, a second march began. 2,000 marchers made it across the bridge, but they were met by officers trying to prevent them from leaving Selma. Dr. King encouraged the crowd to kneel and pray before turning around. This event became known as "Turnaround Tuesday." On March 15, President Johnson addressed a joint session of Congress that was broadcast on television. He spoke of the importance of voting, the bravery of the Selma marchers and the need to protect voting rights. He proposed an act that would guarantee African Americans the right to vote, a right they legally had but had been denied. The legislation he called for would soon become the Voting Rights Act of 1965 (VRA). President Johnson told Congress, "[I]t is all of us who must overcome the crippling legacy of bigotry and injustice." He added, "And we shall overcome." On March 17, the protesters were granted federal protection for a third march. The US Army and Alabama National Guard lined the roads as 3,200 people set out for Montgomery. The march lasted five days and grew along the way. On March 21, 25,000 people arrived in Montgomery and listened to Dr. King speak.

Which of the following statements is true of the March from Selma to Montgomery, March 17-21, 1965?

- A. President Johnson never authorized federal troops to protect the marchers. ☒

B.

It was the third attempt by protesters to march from Selma to Montgomery.

According to the passage, "On March 17, the protesters were granted federal protection for a third march." The first march ended in violence on Bloody Sunday, and the second attempt "became known as Turnaround Tuesday," when protesters were prevented from leaving.

- C. Dr. King was not able to speak in Montgomery as originally planned.

- D. President Johnson asked the marchers to turn around.

6. The Voting Rights Act was signed on August 6, 1965. It banned literacy tests and other policies that disenfranchised voters. It contained general provisions that applied to the entire country and special provisions that applied to certain states. Under the special provisions, the US Department of Justice and federal courts had the power to monitor places that had a history of violations and denying people their legal right to vote. These places had to receive approval by the federal government before changing their voting procedures. This special provision was described in Section 5 of the VRA. The places were identified by a specific formula outlined in Section 4. The VRA had an immediate effect on voter registration. Across the South, 250,000 new black voters had registered by the end of the year. Black voter turnout, the percentage of eligible voters who cast ballots in elections, skyrocketed. But challenges to African Americans' right to vote hadn't ended. Between 1965 and 2013, the Department of Justice prevented over 3,000 discriminatory changes to voting procedures. Recognizing the continued need to protect voting rights, Congress extended the Voting Rights Act for five years in 1970, for seven years in 1975 and for 25 years in 1982 and 2006.

Why was the Voting Rights Act extended in 1970, 1975, 1982 and 2006?

- A. to protect the voting rights of Hispanic and Asian Americans
- B. to keep schools integrated across the country
- C. because attempts to disenfranchise black voters continued
- D. because black voter turnout was still lower than white voter turnout

✓

According to the passage, "Between 1965 and 2013, the Department of Justice prevented over 3,000 discriminatory changes to voting procedures," and "recognizing the continued need to protect voting rights, Congress extended the Voting Rights Act" four times.

7. In 2013, the Supreme Court ruled 5-4 that Section 4 of the Voting Rights Act, which outlined a formula for determining preclearance, was unconstitutional. They said that the formula had been created a long time ago and didn't reflect current conditions in the areas it covered, so some places were still forced to seek preclearance when they shouldn't be. Section 5 remains, but without Section 4, it cannot be enforced. Some people believe that the preclearance is no longer necessary because they believe racial minorities don't face challenges to voting today. Others disagree. They fear that states will again try to disenfranchise black voters. After the 2013 ruling, Texas and North Carolina, which used to need preclearance, enacted new voting laws. Some say these laws target racial minorities and make it harder for them to vote, and there are lawsuits challenging new voting laws in these and other states. The status of voting rights in the US is still changing. The 2016 presidential election was the first election in almost 50 years that took place under the amended version of the Voting Rights Act, and scholars are studying minority voter turnout to see if it was affected by new voting laws or regulations.

After the 2013 Supreme Court ruling, which of the following became true?

- A. No state could change its voting laws.
- B. Eligible Americans were automatically registered to vote.
- ✓ C. States like Texas and North Carolina could change their voting laws without the preclearance once required.
- D. Every voter had to bring two forms of state-issued identification to their polling place in order to vote.

According to the passage, the Supreme Court's 2013 ruling held that "Section 4 of the Voting Rights Act, which outlined a formula for determining preclearance, was unconstitutional." After that, "Texas and North Carolina, which used to need preclearance, enacted new voting laws." They did so without the preclearance they once needed under Section 4.