# **Challenging History: The History of Voting Rights in the United States Discussion Guide**

## **Other Resources for Video 1 – Voting and Elections in the 19th Century**

* Smithsonian Magazine, “[The Electoral College Has Been Divisive Since Day One](https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/electoral-college-has-been-divisive-day-one-180961171/)”
* [History Channel Article on Jacksonian America](https://www.history.com/topics/19th-century/jacksonian-democracy)
* National Endowment for the Humanities, “[Back When Everyone Knew How You Voted](https://www.neh.gov/humanities/2016/fall/feature/back-when-everyone-knew-how-you-voted)”

### **Video 1 Discussion Questions**

1. Why did the Framers of the Constitution allow the individual states to determine voting rights and election laws? Explain your answer in a few sentences.
2. Briefly describe in a few sentences how the Electoral College works. Do you think this system of voting is fair? Why or why not?
3. List at least three different types of voter restrictions that were commonly used by the states in the early 19th century.
4. Why do you think voting rights for white men expanded during Andrew Jackson’s presidency?
5. In your opinion, how fair do you think voting was in the 19th century? Describe your thoughts on who got to vote in the 19th century and election rules at this time.

## **Other Resources for Video 2 – Absentee Voting During the Civil War**

* Military.com, “[How Absentee Voting for U.S. Troops Won the Civil War and Ended Slavery](https://www.military.com/military-life/how-absentee-voting-us-troops-won-civil-war-and-ended-slavery.html)”
* American Battlefield Trust, “[The Election of 1864](https://www.battlefields.org/learn/articles/election-1864)”
* Missouri Secretary of State, “[How to Vote in Missouri](https://www.sos.mo.gov/elections/goVoteMissouri/howtovote)”

### **Video 2 Discussion Questions**

1. Why did Abraham Lincoln insist on having a presidential election in 1864 even though the country was in the middle of a terrible civil war?
2. What were some of the reasons President Lincoln’s reelection was opposed in 1864? List at least three arguments Northern voters made against Lincoln at the time.
3. Briefly describe the absentee voting process for U.S. soldiers during the Civil War.
4. Voters in Missouri can request an absentee ballot, but must provide an explanation for receiving one. List at least five justifications Missouri voters can use in order to receive an absentee ballot.
5. Is absentee voting fair? Briefly describe your thoughts in an argument that highlights both the pros and cons of absentee voting.

## **Other Resources for Video 3 – What Techniques Have Been Used to Keep People From Voting**

* Eric Foner, “[Why Reconstruction Matters](https://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/29/opinion/sunday/why-reconstruction-matters.html)”
* Smithsonian National Museum of American History, “[White Only: Jim Crow in America](https://americanhistory.si.edu/brown/history/1-segregated/white-only-1.html)”
* [Literacy Test used in the State of Louisiana during the Jim Crow Era](https://sharetngov.tnsosfiles.com/tsla/exhibits/aale/pdfs/Voter%20Test%20LA.pdf).

### **Video 3 Discussion Questions**

1. List two pieces of legislation that opened a pathway for African American men to have voting rights during the Reconstruction Era.
2. List three different tactics that state governments and election officials used to keep Black men from voting during the Jim Crow era.
3. In at least two sentences, describe why you think groups like the Ku Klux Klan specifically targeted African American voters.
4. Look at the Literacy Test used in Louisiana during the Jim Crow era. Try to answer a few of the questions. What, if any, questions were confusing to you?
5. When did white women get the right to vote? When did African American women get the right to vote? List the years in which they became enfranchised.

## **Other Resources for Video 4 – Debates About Voting and Fair Elections Today**

* National Public Radio, “[Are States Purging or Cleaning Voter Registration Rolls](https://www.npr.org/2019/12/20/790319853/are-states-purging-or-cleaning-voter-registration-rolls)?”
* U.S. & World Report News, “[Voter ID Laws Protect the Integrity of our Democracy](https://www.usnews.com/debate-club/should-photo-id-be-required-to-vote/voter-id-laws-protect-the-integrity-of-our-democracy)”
* American Civil Liberties Union: “[Oppose Voter ID Legislation](https://www.aclu.org/other/oppose-voter-id-legislation-fact-sheet?redirect=oppose-voter-id-legislation-fact-sheet)”
* St. Louis Public Radio: “[Access to Voting Unequal for Those in Low-Income Communities](https://news.stlpublicradio.org/show/st-louis-on-the-air/2019-09-27/report-access-to-voting-unequal-for-those-in-low-income-communities-people-with-disabilities)”
* Reuters, “[Why Vote By Mail is Controversial](https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-election-absentee-voting-explaine/explainer-why-vote-by-mail-triggered-a-partisan-battle-ahead-of-novembers-election-idUSKCN21W162)”
* Britannica, “[Should Felons Be Allowed to Vote](https://felonvoting.procon.org/top-10-pro-con-arguments/)?”
* FairVote, “[Why Universal Voter Registration](https://www.fairvote.org/why_universal_voter_registration)?”
* Britannica, “[The Electoral College: Top 3 Pros and Cons](https://www.procon.org/headlines/the-electoral-college-top-3-pros-and-cons/)”

### **Video 4 Discussion Questions**

1. Select one issue from those mentioned by Ranger Nick in this video. In at least three sentences, take a stance and express your opinion on that issue.
2. What, in your opinion, is the most serious issue with voting in elections today? Write out your argument in at least four sentences.