

**Lesson Plan #3 for *Genius of Freedom: Northern Blacks and the Fifteenth Amendment* by Terry Ann Wildman**

**Grade Level:** Upper elementary or middle school

**Topics:** Voting Rights, Fifteenth Amendment, Reconstruction, Pennsylvania politics

**Pennsylvania History Standards:** 8.1.6 B, 8.1.9 B, 8.2.9 A, 8.2.9 C, 8.2.9 D, 8.3.9 A, 8.3.9 B, 8.3.9 D

**Pennsylvania Core Standards:** 8.5.6-8 A, 8.5. 6-8 B, 8.5. 9-10 B

***African American History*, Prentice Hall textbook:** pages 440-443

**Overview:** Pennsylvania fourth and fifth grade students are introduced to major events in American History, focusing on local connections to significant milestones. The Civil War is one such topic that is taught from both the national and Pennsylvania perspectives. Reconstruction, however, is only touched upon through study of the “Reconstruction Amendments” (the 13<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, and 15<sup>th</sup> Amendments). The 1866 *The Constitutional Amendment!* cartoon can be used to depict a Pennsylvania example of the racial and political challenges the nation faced in the period following the Civil War. Students will examine and analyze the cartoon in order to understand post-Civil War disagreements over black suffrage.

**Materials:**

From the Exhibit: *The Constitutional Amendment!*

Smartboard/overhead projector

*The Constitutional Amendment!* Analysis Sheet and Answer Key

Cartoon Analysis Reflection Worksheet

**Procedure:**

1. If students do not have experience with political cartoons, the Ben Franklin cartoon “Join, or Die” would be useful to introduce before this lesson as a form of political persuasion. Have students read the caption and discuss what message Franklin had for the colonies (*to unite against Britain*).

2. Indicate that the possibility of granting voting rights (suffrage) to African Americans was a highly controversial issue following the Civil War. Ask students to think of arguments both for and against black suffrage; you may want to create a simple “T-chart” on the board. Possible responses include:

Arguments in Favor of African American Suffrage	Arguments Against African American Suffrage
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• USA based on idea that “all men are created equal”</li> <li>• African Americans fought for Union Army in Civil War</li> <li>• Basic fairness</li> <li>• Some African Americans (e.g. Frederick Douglass, Martin Delaney) had demonstrated capacity for brilliant writing and oratory</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The vast majority of African American were uneducated</li> <li>• Because of their lack of education, blacks could be easily manipulated by white politicians</li> <li>• White women were not allowed to vote and were often more educated than black men</li> <li>• Too much responsibility too soon after emancipation</li> <li>• Most African Americans would want to vote for the Republicans (Abraham Lincoln’s party) which would be a severe disadvantage to other parties</li> </ul>

3. Introduce the word “amendment” (*a change or addition to a document*) if this has not been taught. The Bill of Rights can be referred to or introduced as a set of amendments used to change/modify the U.S. Constitution. Indicate that in order for African Americans to vote, there would need to be an amendment to the Constitution. Explain that for amendments to be passed, 2/3 of members of Congress and ¾ of the states would have to approve; there have only been twenty-seven amendments passed in American history.

4. Divide students into groups (3 or 4 in a group) and give students a copy of *The Constitutional Amendment!* Have students work together to complete *The Constitutional Amendment!* Analysis Sheet. You may want to complete the first row of the sheet as a whole class so that students understand what is expected of them.

5. Using a transparency or Smartboard image, have student groups share their answers and correct any misconceptions or mistakes. An answer key is provided to help guide this discussion.

6. Next, have students look at the list of names outside the cartoon. Explain who these people were - *people who were running for elected positions and were in favor of black suffrage*. Indicate that “Radicals” were Republicans who supported extending rights to African Americans. John White Geary was a Radical Republican running for Governor; the other names listed on the left are of fellow Radical Republican politicians who supported black suffrage. The names on the right are of Radical Republicans who were running for Congress. Ask why the cartoonist would have added these names to the cartoon.

7. Finally, look at the caption below the cartoon. Complete a close reading of the caption - *“The Radical Platform—“Negro Suffrage The*

*Only Issue! Every man who votes for Geary or for a Radical Candidate for Congress, votes as surely for Negro Suffrage and Negro Equality, as if they were printed on his ballot.*” This can be completed as a whole class and should be read two or three times. Discuss the cartoonist’s overall message to the reader. Ask what he was trying to persuade the reader to do. Make sure students understand that the cartoonist was urging Pennsylvania voters not to support politicians who were in favor of the Fifteenth Amendment; he was appealing to poor whites to oppose black suffrage because it would put African Americans on the same social plane.

**8. Extension** - Explain to students that in recent years, many state legislatures have tried to impose new laws requiring that voters present specific forms of identification in order to vote. People advocating such laws claim that they are trying to prevent voter fraud, however, there is no evidence indicating that in-person voter fraud (*pretending to be someone else in order to vote*) is a widespread or frequent occurrence. Critics of these proposals have noted that voter ID laws have been consistently sponsored by Republican state legislators who are trying to keep down the turnout of young, old, poor, and minority voters—all of which are groups that tend to vote for Democratic candidates.

Voter ID can be difficult for some people to get because:

- Some states do not accept college IDs, which may be the only kind some young people have.
- Young, old, and poor people are less likely to drive and therefore have a drivers’ license, the most widely accepted form of identification.
- Older people who were born at home, immigrated to the United States, or are from the South during the Jim Crow era (where black births were sometimes not documented) often lack birth certificates that are required to obtain alternative forms of ID.

Have students complete the Cartoon Analysis Reflection Sheet in order to tie the *Constitutional Amendment!* cartoon to current day challenges.

# THE CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT!

**GEARY**

Is for Negro Suffrage.

**STEVENS**

Advocates it.

**FORNEY**

Howls for it.

**MCCURTRE**

Speaks for it.

**CAMERON**

Wants it.

**The LEAGUE**

Sustains it.

They are rich, and want to make

**The Negro the Equal**

OF THE POOR WHITE MAN,  
and then rule them both.



Surely, we did not fight for this!

I thought we fought for the Union!

Come on, my brave boys, you saved the Nation.

Dat's so, Brudder Yank, and you need our votes now. De poor White Trash must stand back.

Negroes rule us now

We have no chance here.

## The BLACK Roll

CANDIDATES FOR CONGRESS WHO VOTED FOR THIS BILL.

- THAD. STEVENS
- WM. D. KELLEY
- CHAS. O'NEILL
- LEONARD MYERS
- JNO. M. BROOMALL
- GEORGE F. MILLER
- STEPHEN F. WILSON
- ULYSSES MERCUR
- GEN. V. LAWRENCE
- GLENNI W. SCHOFFIELD
- J. K. MOORHEAD
- THOMAS WILLIAMS

**THE RADICAL PLATFORM--"NEGRO SUFFRAGE THE ONLY ISSUE!"**

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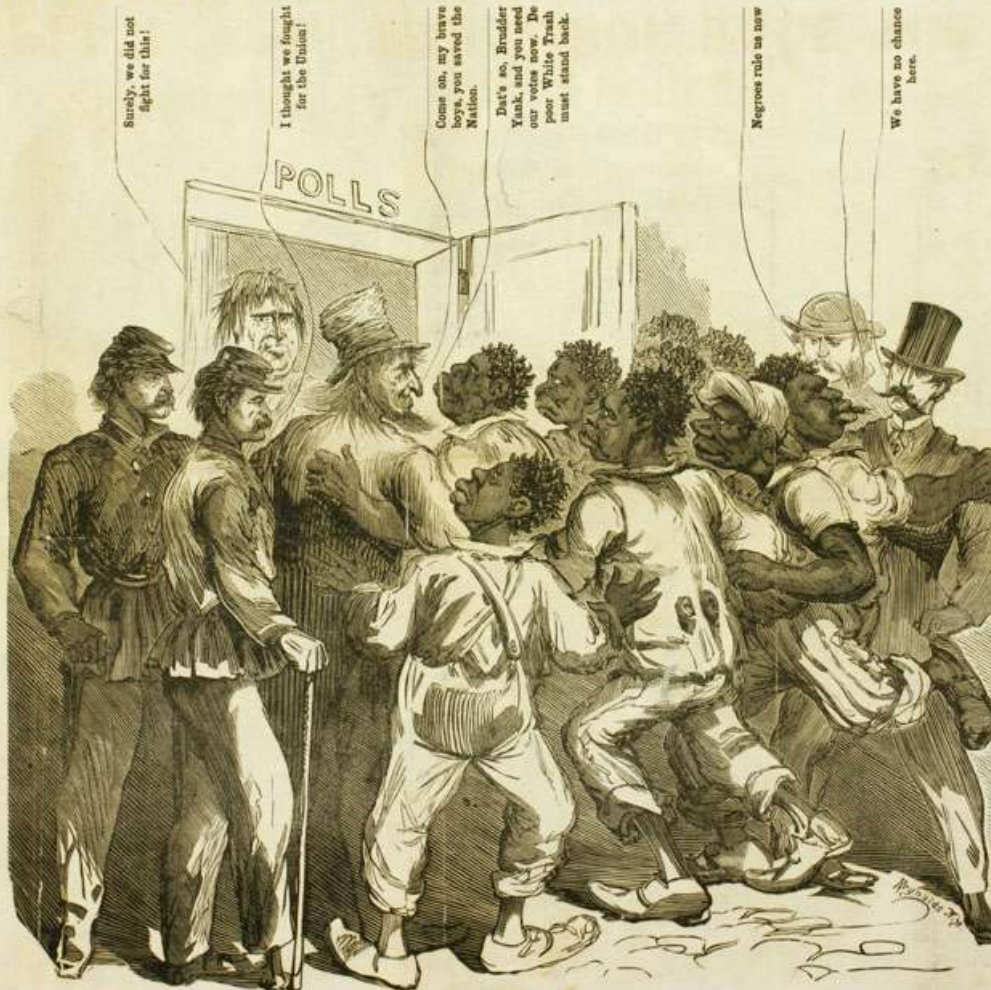
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*The Constitutional Amendment! Analysis Sheet*

<b>Image</b>	<b>Physical appearance and clothing</b>	<b>Quotation(s)</b>	<b>Cartoonist's message about this group or individual</b>
Union Soldiers (insert image)		<p>"Surely we did not fight for this."                      "I thought we fought for the Union."</p>	
Bearded "Yankee" (insert image)		<p>"Come on, my brave boys, you saved the Nation."</p>	
Black men (insert image)		<p>"Dat's so Brudder Yank, and you need our votes now. De poor White Trash must stand back."</p>	
White gentlemen (insert image)		<p>"Negroes rule us now."                      "We have no chance here."</p>	

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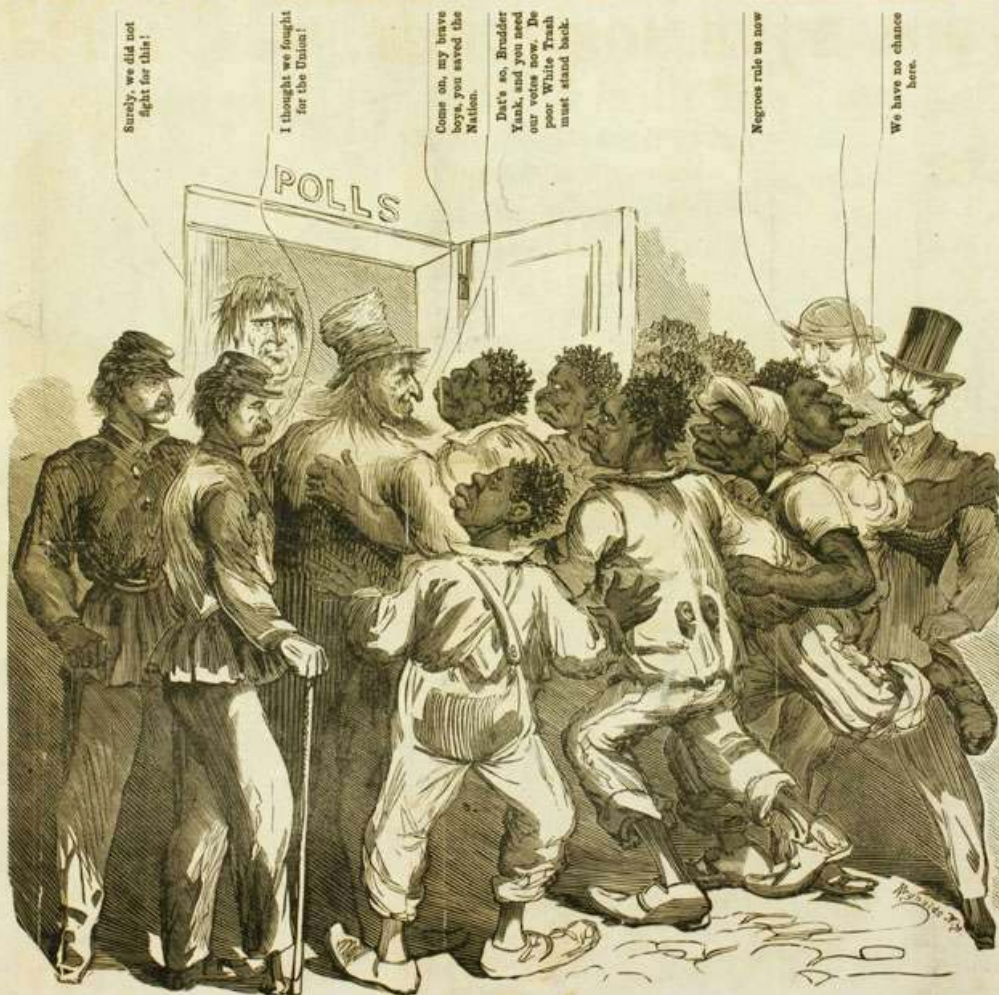
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*The Constitutional Amendment!* Analysis Sheet  
ANSWER KEY

Image	Physical appearance and clothing	Quotation(s)	Cartoonist's message about this group or individual
Union Soldiers (insert image)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wearing uniforms and caps</li> <li>• One man has a cane (perhaps a war injury)</li> </ul>	<p>“Surely we did not fight for this.” “I thought we fought for the Union.”</p>	<p>These are honorable soldiers who are angry that their efforts have led to votes for African Americans.</p>
Bearded “Yankee” (insert image)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wearing silly hat</li> <li>• Long scraggly beard</li> <li>• Large hooked nose</li> </ul>	<p>“Come on, my brave boys, you saved the Nation.”</p>	<p>This “Yank” (northerner) is telling the blacks that they deserve the vote. He seems untrustworthy; perhaps he just want to use black votes to keep his party in power.</p>
Black men (insert image)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One man is in overalls</li> <li>• Silly, oversize shoes</li> <li>• Nappy hair</li> </ul>	<p>“Dat’s so Brudder Yank, and you need our votes now. De poor White Trash must stand back.”</p>	<p>The poor and ignorant blacks know that their votes are needed—and they claim that they have more right to vote than poor whites.</p>
White gentlemen (insert image)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One is in a top hat; the other has a bowler</li> <li>• Well-groomed mustaches</li> </ul>	<p>“Negroes rule us now.” “We have no chance here.”</p>	<p>Distinguished white gentlemen are losing their power and social place to the poor and ignorant blacks.</p>



*The Constitutional Amendment* Reflection Sheet

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

1. Describe your reaction to *The Constitutional Amendment* cartoon. What thoughts came to mind as you read each quotation?
2. How did the cartoonist use exaggeration to communicate to the reader how each character was feeling about African American suffrage?
3. What is the opinion of the cartoonist?
4. Why so you think the writers of the Constitution allowed amendments to change the Constitution?
5. What groups of people are not allowed to vote today? Why do you think they are banned from voting?
6. Where (what types of media) would you see this type of political cartoon today?

7. Present day political cartoon - reflect  
<http://blogs.thetimes-tribune.com/johncole/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/092612coleton1.jpg>

a. What is the issue this cartoon is showing? Why is this still an issue today?

b. Why do you think the cartoonist is showing the Republican party pushing voter ID?

8. Reflect on - if voting rights are still an issue today, is the 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment being upheld?