

Student Handout #1- Voter Suppression Then and Now

Part A. Reconstruction, Part II, Hour 1,

<https://www.pbs.org/video/reconstruction-part-2-hour-1-ektoum/>, (minutes 25:50 to 27:00),

1. Before you watch this excerpt about voter suppression after Reconstruction:

What do you already know about this topic?	
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2. As you watch this excerpt, cite examples from this episode to complete this chart.

What is disenfranchisement?	
What were the voter suppression tactics common after Reconstruction?	
What was the combined effect of these tactics?	
What is the connection between voter suppression in the late 1800s and voter suppression today?	

Part B. PBS News Hour Podcast, “America, Interrupted, Why voter suppression continues and how the pandemic made it worse,

<https://www.pbs.org/newshour/podcasts/special-series/why-voter-suppression-continues-and-how-the-pandemic-has-made-it-worse> (27:30)

3. Before you listen to the podcast:

What do you already know about voter suppression?	
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4. As you listen to the podcast, cite specific examples from the podcast to complete this chart:

What specific rules are being put in place?	
Who has been most affected by voter suppression?	
Why is this happening today?	

5. After you listen to this podcast:

What surprised you?	
What questions do you still have?	
Read the following quotes from the podcast. Choose one of these	

quotes and consider to what extent the quote demonstrates the historical thinking skill, continuity and/or change over time. Your thesis statement should be between 3-5 sentences.	
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Chris Hollins, Harris County Clerk,

“My definition of voter suppression is anything that makes it less likely that a voter is ultimately going to cast their vote, stirring up confusion, making voting inconvenient, putting obstacles in the voters’ path, sharing misinformation with voters, and so forth. You’re making it so that they have to make a choice, I’m either going to risk my own safety to go and vote in person or I’m going to forego my right to vote. ...In what we call a democracy, one of the most critical and fundamental pieces of a democracy is the individuals and the citizens in that democracy being able to direct how that government is run and who sits in those seats. So to take that power away from voters flies in the face of what it should mean to be an American and is certainly voter suppression by definition.”

Carol Anderson, Historian,

“Voter suppression in 2020 looks like legalisms, policies that look race-neutral, but that are, in fact, targeted at key constituencies in the electorate to make it harder for them to vote. So we get, like voter I.D. laws, you require them to have driver licenses, but you know that African Americans disproportionately do not have driver licenses. That’s what voter suppression looks like. It looks like closing polling places so that ...twelve-hundred polling places have closed in states that have been under the voting rights act and most of those places that have been closed have been in Black, Latino, and poor communities, under the guise of being fiscally responsible and just consolidating polls.”