



## Teaching Guide

### SEGMENT 2, WEBISODE 15

Please note: Each segment in this Webisode has its own Teaching Guide



#### Segment Overview

Lyndon Johnson, born on a small farm in Texas in 1908, grew up under the spell of politics. His father served in the Texas legislature, and Johnson knew he wanted to follow in his footsteps. When forced to drop out of college for lack of funds, Johnson taught poor Mexican American children, where he saw first-hand the despair and deprivation of poverty. After graduating from college, he taught high school in a small Texas community before he entered politics in the 1930s.

Johnson's formidable energy and political skills propelled him to higher and higher political offices; from secretary to a congressman to New Deal representative to (at age twenty-nine) youngest elected member of the House of Representatives. After his election to the Senate in 1948, Johnson became the youngest majority leader in history. He served as vice-president under John F. Kennedy and assumed the office of president after Kennedy's assassination. A strong proponent of civil rights, Johnson pushed through a civil rights bill and began working on his massive anti-poverty program. Seeking reelection in his own right, he won a landslide victory in 1964. He used this momentum to prod Congress to build the Great Society including Medicare, Operation Headstart, the Job Corps, Medicaid, and the Voting Rights Act. Johnson also accelerated American involvement in Vietnam—the policy that would eventually prove his undoing. Responding to growing anti-war sentiment, Johnson announced he would not run for reelection in 1968.

#### Teacher Directions

1. Share the following background information with students.

Lyndon Johnson assumed the office of president after the assassination of John F. Kennedy in November, 1963. He sought reelection in 1964 and won a landslide victory. This momentum—as well as a Democratic Congress—enabled him to push through many programs. In his first State of the Union message on January 8, 1964, President Lyndon Johnson outlined his plan for a war on poverty.

2. Display the following quote on a transparency or on the chalkboard.

In his State of the Union message, Johnson stated, “This administration today, here and now, declares unconditional war on poverty in America...It will not be a short or easy struggle, no single weapon or strategy will suffice, but we shall not rest until that war is won.”



#### Let's Discuss

Let's Discuss, Cont.

3. Ask students the following questions.

- What was Johnson's dream?
- What events in Johnson's early life helped shape that dream?
- What skills and talents helped Johnson fulfill his dream?

4. Make sure the students understand the following points in discussing the questions.

Johnson's dream was to improve the quality of life for all Americans and to end poverty. Growing up in rural Texas, Johnson saw poverty firsthand. He taught poor Mexican-American children, and worked as a janitor for a time during his college years. Because his father was a member of the Texas legislature, Johnson saw early on the opportunities that politics offered to improve the lives of his fellow citizens. A skilled politician, Johnson worked hard and excelled at lobbying and persuading people to support his positions.

### Teacher Directions

1. Display the Transparency: *President Johnson's Great Society*. In small learning teams, students briefly brainstorm to answer the following questions.

- According to these quotes, what are the goals of the Great Society?
- What areas does President Johnson believe need to be addressed?
- What sorts of programs would address these needs?

2. Explain to students that through his Great Society, Johnson hoped to improve the lives of all Americans, especially the poor. In his war on poverty, Johnson saw many areas to address, including education and our inner cities. Several programs sought to improve education for the poor.

3. Students read Chapter 23, "The Biggest Vote in History" and Chapter 24, "Salt and Pepper the Kids" in Joy Hakim's *All the People* (Book 10 of *A History of US*) or use the Internet or other resources to learn about specific programs of Johnson's Great Society. A partial list of these programs includes: the Voting Rights Act; Operation Headstart; Job Corps; Upward Bound; Neighborhood Youth Corps; Teacher Corps; Medicare; and Medicaid.

4. Working with teammates, students create an index card for each Great Society program. Each card should include a brief description of the program, its goal, and an illustration

5. Students display their work in the classroom or exchange cards with other learning teams.



History Sleuth



What do you  
Think?

### Teacher Directions

1. Write the following quotes from the Voting Rights Act of 1965 on the chalkboard, chart paper, or a transparency.

*The right to vote is the basic right without which all others are meaningless.*

*You must register. You must vote. Your future, and your children's future, depends on it.*

2. To stimulate student discussion, use the following questions. Students write their responses on the Student Sheet: *My Journal*.
  - Why is voting considered the basic right?
  - Why does your future, and your children's future depend on exercising the right to vote?

### Teacher Directions

1. Display a transparency of the Student Sheet: Johnson and Voting Rights.
2. Ask students the following questions.
  - Did all Americans have the right to vote in 1965? Why or why not?
  - What obstacles did some Americans face when they tried to vote?
  - What did Johnson believe about voting rights?
3. Share with students that by law all adult Americans had the right to vote in 1965. However, despite passage of the Fifteenth Amendment, many African Americans in the south faced obstacles that prevented them from exercising this right. In many southern states, African Americans had to pay poll taxes, own property, or pass difficult tests called literacy tests (not to be confused with citizenship tests given to immigrants).
4. Ask students to discuss the following question.
  - What if, when you applied for a driver's license, the official told you that people with your color eyes may not drive a car? Or what if all people with your eye color in your state had to pay an additional \$1000 to get a license? What if you paid this \$1000 fee, and then you were told that your car had to be a certain make, model, or color. (In fact, in one state black voters were turned away because their cars were the wrong color.)
5. Conclude by telling students that today all states have certain reasonable and logical laws covering voter registration. These laws vary, but most states have a residency requirement, for example. What are the voting laws for your state?
6. Distribute the Student Sheet: *Excerpts from President Johnson's Speech About the Voting Rights Act of 1965*. In small learning teams, students discuss what this act intended to accomplish.



Moving Toward  
Freedom

Make sure students understand that this act outlawed poll taxes and literacy tests, each of which was used to prevent African Americans from exercising their civil rights.

7. Distribute the Student Sheet: *Literacy Test*. Explain to students that many southern states instituted poll taxes, literacy tests, and grandfather clauses to prevent African Americans from voting. By 1964, Alabama had developed one hundred standard literacy tests which local registrars administered at their discretion. This is one of those tests.

Without providing any assistance, allow students five minutes to complete the test.

8. Review the test with students. Discuss the following:
  - On what document is this based? (The Constitution)
  - What residents of the United States might have had trouble passing this test? (those for whom English is a second language; senior citizens; people with low literacy levels)
  - Is it fair to ask people to pass this test before they vote?
  - How did the Voting Act of 1965 move the country toward freedom?

### Teacher Directions

Use the following activities with your students.

**Language Arts** — Write a letter to the editor of the *Southern Sun* (a fictitious newspaper) protesting the use of literacy tests in your town (also fictitious). Date it November 6, 1965.

**Art** — Students use pictures from magazines (or draw their own) to make a collage of people who probably would not have been allowed to vote in Alabama in the 1960s – regardless of whether they passed the test or not.

**Art** — Students draw a political cartoon in favor of the Voting Rights Act.

**Art** — Create a political cartoon, comic strip, drawing, or other visual representation that illustrates President Johnson's Great Society or his war on poverty.

**Math** — The following exercise helps students understand why some people wanted to keep African Americans away from the polls. If the town of Homeburg, Mississippi, had a population of 10,000 people, and all were registered voters, how many people could legally vote? (10,000) If the African American population of Homeburg was 3,000 – all of whom could legally vote – what would be the percentage of registered black voters? (30%) Imagine that Party One had a candidate who was very popular with black voters. What if only 40% of the 7,000 non-black voters voted? How many non-blacks voted? (2800) Imagine that all African Americans voted for the Party One candidate. Whose vote might have carried the city of Homeburg—whites or non-whites?



Connections, Cont.

**Science/Technology** — Using the Internet, students research different ways that people vote, from paper ballots to high-tech voting machines. Find photographs of the newest voting machines. How expensive are these machines? Can all voting districts in the United States afford them? Discuss with students the potential of casting ballots via a computer and the Internet.

**Local History** — Students research which of Johnson's Great Society programs still operate in their community. Students invite representatives of these programs to speak to their class.

**Music** — Students research the protest music of the 1960s using the Internet. Students prepare a scripted program that introduces each song within the context of the times.

**Art** — Students create a caricature of President Lyndon B. Johnson. One excellent resource for studying political caricature is *The Presidential Elections* (October 1980) issue of *Cobbleston*, "Drawing Caricatures" by D. B. Johnson.

# President Johnson's Great Society



1. “The Great Society is a place where every child can find knowledge to enrich his mind and to enlarge his talents.”
2. “It is harder and harder to live the good life in American cities today. Our society will never be great until our cities are great.”
3. “We must give every child a place to sit and a teacher to learn from. Poverty must not be a bar to learning, and learning must offer an escape from poverty.”



# My Journal

## Johnson and Voting Rights



“There is no Negro problem.  
There is no Southern problem.  
There is no Northern problem.  
There is only an American problem.”

2. “Every device of which human ingenuity is capable has been used {to prevent blacks from voting}. The Negro citizen may go to register only to be told that the day is wrong, or the hour is late... and if he persists...he may be disqualified because he did not spell out his middle name...and if he manages to fill out an application, he is given a test. He may be asked to recite the entire Constitution!”
3. “Until every qualified person regardless of... the color of his skin has the right, unquestioned and unrestrained, to go in and cast his ballot in every precinct in this great land of ours, I am not going to be satisfied.”

## Excerpts From President Johnson's Speech About the Voting Rights Act of 1965

....When the Liberty Bell rang out in Philadelphia, it did not toll for the Negro. When Andrew Jackson threw open the doors of democracy, they did not open for the Negro.

This act flows from a clear and simple wrong. Its only purpose is to right that wrong. Millions of Americans are denied the right to vote because of their color. This law will ensure them the right to vote. The wrong is one which no American, in his heart, can justify. The right is one which no American, true to our principles, can deny. This right to vote is the basic right without which all others are meaningless. It gives people...control over their own destinies. There were those who said this is an old injustice, and there is no need to hurry. But 95 years have passed since the 15th amendment gave all Negroes the right to vote. And the time for waiting is gone....And the time for injustice has gone.

The heart of the act is plain. Wherever...states and counties are using regulations, or laws, or tests to deny the right to vote, then they will be struck down. If it is clear that State officials still intend to discriminate, the Federal examiners will be sent in to register all eligible voters.

Tomorrow, the Attorney General {will} file a lawsuit challenging the constitutionality of the poll tax in the State of Mississippi...and additional poll tax suits will be filed in the States of Texas, Alabama, and Virginia.

So now let me say to every Negro in this country. You must register. You must vote. Your future, and your children's future, depends on it.



## Literacy Test

### EXCERPTS FROM THE CONSTITUTION

Part 1. In case of the removal of the president from office, or of his death, resignation or inability to discharge the powers and duties of the said office, the same shall devolve on the vice-president, and the congress may by law provide for the case of removal, death, resignation or inability, both of the president and vice president, declaring what officer shall then act as president and such officer shall act accordingly, until the disability be removed, or a president shall be elected.

Part 2. In all cases affecting ambassadors, other public ministers and consuls, and those in which a state shall be a party, the supreme court shall have original jurisdiction.

Part 3. In all the other cases before mentioned, the supreme court shall have appellate jurisdiction, both as to law and fact, with such exceptions, and under such regulations as the congress shall make.

Part 4. Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.

### INSTRUCTION "C"

(After applicant has read, not aloud, the foregoing excerpts from the Constitution, he will answer the following questions in writing and without assistance:)

1. In case the president is unable to perform the duties of his office, who assumes them? \_\_\_\_\_
2. "Involuntary servitude" is permitted in the United States upon conviction of a crime. (True or False)? \_\_\_\_\_
3. If a state is a party to a case, the constitution provides that original jurisdiction shall be in \_\_\_\_\_
4. Congress passes laws regulating cases which are included in those over which the United States Supreme Court has \_\_\_\_\_ jurisdiction.

I hereby certify that I have received no assistance in the completion of this citizenship and literacy test, that I was allowed the time I desired to complete it, and that I waive any right existing to demand a copy of same. (If for any reason the applicant does not wish to sign this, he must discuss the matter with the board of registrars)

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Applicant)