



*My Rights and Liberties:*  
SS.7.CG.3.6  
**Voting Rights**  
**READING #3**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



**SS.7.CG.3.6 Benchmark Clarification 3:** Students will examine how these amendments increased participation in the political process.

The **13<sup>th</sup> Amendment:** Slaves were considered property. They were not considered citizens, and so they could not vote. While this amendment did not increase voting rights, it gave all slaves their freedom and was an important first step toward voting rights for former slaves.

The **14<sup>th</sup> Amendment:** This amendment said that anyone who had been born a slave was a citizen of the United States. It also said state governments could not pass laws limiting U.S. citizens' rights. Finally, it extended the right to vote to all males aged 21 and over.

The **15<sup>th</sup> Amendment:** This amendment protected the right to vote for any male over the age of 21. It strengthened the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment.

The **19<sup>th</sup> Amendment:** A person's gender (meaning whether someone is male or female) could not be used as a reason to deny **suffrage**, or the right to vote. This amendment said that states and the federal government could not prevent women from voting.

The **24<sup>th</sup> Amendment:** Before the 24<sup>th</sup> Amendment, many states tried to charge people money (a **poll tax**) to let them vote. This often kept minorities (especially African-Americans in the former slave states) or poor people from voting. The ratification of the 24<sup>th</sup> Amendment allowed more minorities and poor people to vote because it made poll taxes **unconstitutional**.

The **26<sup>th</sup> Amendment**, ratified in 1971, said that any United States citizen age 18 or older could vote. Before 1971, the federal government and some states only allowed people aged 21 or older to vote.

**13th Amendment** - an amendment to the U.S. Constitution that made slavery unconstitutional in the United States

**14th Amendment** - an amendment to the U.S. Constitution that defines citizenship, grants citizenship to former slaves, and defines voters as males at least 21 years of age

**15th Amendment** - an amendment to the U.S. Constitution that makes it illegal for the federal or state governments to deny someone the right to vote based on their race

**19th Amendment** - an amendment to the U.S. Constitution that gave women the right to vote

**24th Amendment** - an amendment to the U.S. Constitution that made poll taxes illegal as a requirement for voting

**26th Amendment** - an amendment to the U.S. Constitution that lowered the minimum voting age to 18

**poll tax** - a fee someone has to pay in order to vote ratification - the process of formally approving something

**suffrage** - the right to vote

**unconstitutional** - not in agreement with the U.S. Constitution