



Name: _____ Date: _____

YOUR MISSION: THE CIVICS COMMISSION. Your state must decide: should every high-school student pass the citizenship test to graduate? You sit on the commission that will recommend the answer—and no commissioners vote without passing the test themselves. Watch the episode, then execute the tasks as you take on more responsibility.

Level 1 | NEW COMMISSIONER—Learn the Terms

A commissioner masters the language of the bill—as you watch, match each term to its meaning.

1. ____ Civics	A. Post-Civil War “tests” designed to exclude black voters, not educate them
2. ____ Naturalization	B. The law that banned the exclusionary voting tests
3. ____ The Basic Naturalization Act of 1906	C. “To make natural”—embracing a country’s values and way of life as your own
4. ____ Literacy tests	D. A requirement—murder or an aggravated felony bars an applicant
5. ____ A “grandfather clause”	E. The study of the rights and responsibilities of citizens and the workings of government
6. ____ The Voting Rights Act of 1965	F. Living in the U.S. lawfully for the required number of years
7. ____ Legal residency	G. The law that began the citizenship test
8. ____ Good moral character	H. The loophole that excused white voters from the tests

Level 2 | THE CONSTITUENT DESK—Answer the Mail

*Three constituents write to the commission: **can I become a citizen?** Check each letter against the requirements, advise the constituents and name the requirement that decides it.*

The letter	Your advice	The deciding requirement
ELENA: legal resident six years; reads and speaks basic English; spotless record.	☐ Eligible ☐ Not yet ☐ Barred	
MARCUS: fluent English; clean record; a legal resident for only two years.	☐ Eligible ☐ Not yet ☐ Barred	
VIKTOR: resident eight years; basic English; convicted of an aggravated felony.	☐ Eligible ☐ Not yet ☐ Barred	



Level 3 | REVIEW BOARD—A Test Can Be a Weapon or a Door

The commission reviews history before it rules. After the Civil War, some “tests” demanded the impossible—**name all 67 county judges in the state**—while grandfather clauses excused white voters. The Voting Rights Act of 1965 banned them.

THEN—What made those tests a weapon? _____

NOW—Today’s test: a public question bank, identical for every applicant, free study materials, a 60% bar. What makes it a door instead?

PRIMARY SOURCE—The Voting Rights Act of 1965, Section 2:

“No voting qualification or prerequisite to voting, or standard, practice, or procedure shall be imposed or applied by any State... to deny or abridge the right of any citizen of the United States to vote on account of race or color.”

1. **Underline** whose right the law protects. 2. **Circle** what states may no longer do.
 3. How does this section turn the old “weapon” into a dead letter?
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Level 4 | THE RECOMMENDATION—But First, the Test

Commission rule: no member votes without passing the very test the bill would require. Ten questions from today’s class—six correct answers (the real exam’s 60% bar) earns you your voting card.

1. What does “naturalization” mean? _____
2. What is “civics”? _____
3. Name one requirement to become a naturalized citizen. _____
4. What 1906 law began the citizenship test? _____
5. What law banned the unfair voting tests? _____
6. What conviction permanently bars an applicant? _____
7. What did “grandfather clauses” do? _____
8. About what share of Americans can name all three branches? _____
9. What do some states now require before high school graduation? _____
10. Today’s exam: up to how many questions, and how many correct to pass? _____

SCORE: ____ / 10. ☐ **6+ = PASSED (the real 60% bar)** ☐ **Under 6 = study and retake**

THE VOTE—Should students pass this test to graduate? (circle one) YEA/NAY. Defend it:

Rank achieved: ☐ **Commissioner** ☐ **Constituent Desk** ☐ **Review Board** ☐ **Lawmaker**

Answer Key | U.S. Citizenship

Level 1 | New Commissioner

1-E, 2-C, 3-G, 4-A, 5-H, 6-B, 7-F, 8-D

Level 2 | The Constituent Desk

Elena—Eligible. She meets every requirement: years of legal residency, basic English, good moral character.

Marcus—Not yet. The deciding requirement is legal residency: time will make him eligible. Nothing bars him.

Viktor—Barred. An aggravated felony fails good moral character permanently—unlike residency, waiting cannot cure it. Look for students distinguishing “not yet” from “barred.”

Level 3 | Review Board

THEN—sample answer: the tests were designed to be failed—impossible questions, applied only to black voters while white voters were excused. A test built to exclude is a weapon.

NOW—sample answer: today’s test is designed to be passed—a public bank (128 questions today), identical for everyone, free study materials, and a 60% bar. Same rules, knowable in advance, for all: a door. Look for the contrast—designed to fail versus designed to pass.

Primary source: underline “the right of any citizen of the United States to vote”; circle “deny or abridge ... on account of race or color” (or the qualification/practice language). Sample answer for 3: it outlaws every version of the trick at once—no state may impose any test or practice that blocks voting by race, so the weapon has nothing left to fire.

Level 4 | The Recommendation—test answers

1. “To make natural”—the process by which a foreign-born person becomes a citizen.
2. The study of the rights and responsibilities of citizens and the workings of government.
3. Any one: years of legal residency; basic English; good moral character.
4. The Basic Naturalization Act.
5. The Voting Rights Act of 1965.
6. Murder or an aggravated felony.
7. Excused white voters from the exclusionary tests.
8. Barely one third.
9. Passing a civics test similar to the citizenship test.
10. Up to 20 questions; 12 correct passes (60%)—per the teacher’s test update.

THE VOTE: recommendations will vary—mark student responses correct if the vote is defended with evidence from the episode: YEA can cite the one-third statistic and “civics knowledge is essential for every citizen”; NAY can cite the states that integrate civics into the curriculum instead, or history’s warning about tests as gatekeepers. Grade the reasoning, not the vote.

Note: This worksheet can be completed with the episode alone or as part of the full lesson—see the accompanying lesson plan.