

“THE NEGROES’ TEMPORARY FAREWELL”: JIM CROW AND THE EXCLUSION OF AFRICAN AMERICANS FROM CONGRESS, 1887–1929



RECOMMENDED GRADE LEVEL: Grades 7 to 12



OVERVIEW

This activity is designed to accompany the contextual essay “The Negroes’ Temporary Farewell’: Jim Crow and the Exclusion of African Americans from Congress, 1887–1929,” from the *Black Americans in Congress* website, history.house.gov/exhibitions-and-publications/baic/black-americans-in-congress/. Students have the opportunity to learn more about the Black Americans who served in Congress from 1887 to 1929. Students are encouraged to analyze the role African-American Representatives played in Congress during this era, as well as the ways in which they may have changed the institution.



CURRICULUM CONNECTION

- U.S. History, American Government, Social Studies, African-American Studies
- Segregation, Jim Crow, Civil Rights, Great Migration, Progressive Era, World War I



OBJECTIVES

1. Students should be able to identify the African Americans who served in Congress from 1887 to 1929.
2. Students should be able to recognize the ways in which African Americans won national elective office from 1887 to 1929.
3. Students should be able to identify important issues and trends surrounding the African Americans who served in Congress from 1887 to 1929.



LESSON PLAN

1. To help introduce students to the upcoming activity, lead a brief discussion using the questions below:
 - a. What were some of the important issues and events in America from 1887 to 1929?
 - b. If asked to describe an average Member of Congress (House or Senate) during this time period, how would you answer?
 - c. Have there been many African Americans who have served in Congress? (Ask students to compile a quick list.)
2. Ask students to read the contextual essay “The Negroes’ Temporary Farewell’: Jim Crow and the Exclusion of African Americans from Congress, 1887–1929,” either independently or in groups. Encourage students to take notes and to write down any unanswered questions they encounter during the reading.
3. Once students have completed the reading, have them answer the **Comprehension Questions**. Review the answers as a class.
4. Next have students answer the **Critical Thinking Questions**. Review the answers as a class.
5. Choose one of the options listed under the category **Main Exercise** (Cooperative or Hypothetical). If necessary, students can use the online resources listed at the end of the activity to complete the **Main Exercise**.
6. Time permitting, conduct one of the **Suggested Extended Activities**.



COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS ON THE SURFACE

1. Who were the five black Congressmen who served from 1887 to 1901? What were their service dates?
2. Define “Jim Crow.” Provide two examples of Jim Crow laws.
3. How had the educational background and previous political experience of black Members of this era changed in relation to the earlier generation? Compare two African-American Congressmen from different generations.
4. Describe the “reformer” and “money men” factions of the Republican Party. Which faction primarily supported legislation upholding the rights of African Americans?
5. What were some of the means by which African-American voters were disfranchised? Describe one of these methods.
6. What is meant by the terms “packing” and “cracking” electoral districts? Name and locate two “packed” congressional districts in which African-American candidates were successful.
7. What were some of the major legislative issues affecting African-American Members in the 1890s? What were some of the major legislative issues affecting African Americans in the early 1900s?
8. Define “reduction.” What were some of the arguments for and against reduction?
9. What was the Great Migration? List the factors that contributed to this phenomenon.



CRITICAL THINKING QUESTIONS DIGGING DEEPER

1. Historian Robert Wiebe describes late-19th-century America as a “distended society.” What did he mean by this description? How did the “distended society” affect black politicians’ ability to obtain office?
2. Representative Henry Cheatham of North Carolina told the *Washington Post* in 1889, “Politically, I am a Republican. I was elected to Congress by the Republican party and upon Republican principles and there is no question about my not cheerfully supporting the party.” Did the black Members of this era demonstrate this type of unswerving loyalty to the Republican Party? Explain your answer.
3. Compare and contrast the congressional careers of any two African-American Members who served during this period. (Make sure to discuss tenure, legislation, committees, and basic background such as the district or the state in which each man served.)
4. What is the Progressive movement? How did supporters of this movement use Progressivism to both support and combat segregation?
5. Political scientist Michael Fauntroy characterized the late 19th century and early 20th century as the beginning of a “multigenerational deterioration” of the relationship between black and white Republicans. What do you think he meant by this statement? Provide two examples to support your opinion.



MAIN EXERCISE OPTION 1: COOPERATIVE

Working in small groups, choose a black Member of Congress from this era and follow the directions below:

- a. Read the profile for your Member.
- b. Write down any important notes.
- c. Scenario: You have been assigned the task of designing a museum exhibit to describe the life of Congressman _____. The exhibit should include information on all aspects of his life, but should focus on the Member’s congressional service.

What should be included:

- Original title of exhibit that helps explain his legacy
- 50-word exhibit label that summarizes his congressional career
- Three artifacts chosen by you that best represent the Member’s legacy
- A creative teaching tool for museum visitors that covers the highlights of his career in Congress (committees, key legislation, state or district he represented, etc.)

OPTION 2: HYPOTHETICAL

1. You are a newspaper writer in North Carolina covering the 1894 election pitting incumbent Henry Cheatham against George White in the “Black Second” District. Write an article detailing your observations on the election.
2. You are an African-American Congressman representing a rural district in South Carolina in the 1890s. You have been asked to speak on the House Floor on the issue of coining silver. Draft a speech defending your position to either support or reject the coinage of silver and deliver it to your class.
3. You are a lobbyist for the NAACP in 1917. Write a diary entry detailing your day spent advocating anti-lynching legislation on Capitol Hill.



SUGGESTED EXTENDED ACTIVITIES

1. Design a timeline of significant events for African-American Members who served during this era.
2. Write a 100-word obituary for one of the black Members.
3. Read the campaign song composed for Representative John Langston of Virginia in the Elections subsection of the contextual essay “‘The Negroes’ Temporary Farewell’: Jim Crow and the Exclusion of African Americans from Congress, 1887–1929,” from the *Black Americans in Congress* website, history.house.gov/exhibitions-and-publications/baic/historical-essays/temporary-farewell/elections/. Write a three-verse campaign song or poem for another black Member of Congress from this era.
4. Design a campaign button for a black candidate for Congress during this period.
5. Draft language for a resolution sponsored by a black Congressman in the 1890s on one of three hypothetical topics:
 - a. Posting of federal troops to guard the polling places in your state or district
 - b. Trying lynch mobs in federal, instead of local courts
 - c. Supporting or opposing to American imperial advances



ONLINE RESOURCES

History, Art & Archives | U.S. House of Representatives

A collaborative project between the Office of the Historian and the Clerk of the House's Office of Art and Archives. Together, the offices serve as the House's institutional memory, and a resource for Members, staff, and the general public.

history.house.gov

Online *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress*

Searchable database that contains biographical information on every person who served in Congress.

bioguide.congress.gov

Senate Historical Office

Includes information on the history and art of the U.S. Senate such as facts and milestones, historical statistics, featured biographies, and a photographic collection.

senate.gov/artandhistory/history/common/generic/Senate_Historical_Office.htm

Congress.gov | Library of Congress

Searchable database of congressional legislation from 1973 to present (bill text and roll call votes are available from 1989 to present).

congress.gov

GPO Federal Digital System

Includes links for searchable databases of the *Congressional Record* and *House Journal* (1994 to present) as well as information on how to find the nearest federal depository library.

gpo.gov/fdsys