

Literacy Tests for Voters

BY JACKSON MCPETERS

1932-33

Signature of applicant
Man Woman [underscores]

Address of applicant

Place of examination (school or office;
locality)

193

Date of examination (mo., day, yr)

CERTIFICATE ISSUED:

(a) Day educ. cred. _____

(b) Eve. educ. cred. _____

(c) Regents test _____

Failed test _____
(check one of above)

Signature of examiner

Position of examiner

T481-7132-105,000(10312)*

1932-33

The University of the State of New York
Education Department

Be it Known that _____

(To be filled in by applicant in ink)

residing at _____ having met the requirements prescribed in Section 166 of the Election Law, and rules and regulations of the Regents of the State of New York, and having made the signature appearing above in the presence of the examiner, is herewith granted a **CERTIFICATE OF LITERACY**

Given at _____
School or office; locality

Signature of examiner

this _____ day of _____ 193

Position of examiner

Superintendent of Schools

Commissioner of Education

TO THE APPLICANT: Keep this Certificate of Literacy; show it to the election inspectors.

An amendment to the New York State Constitution, approved on November 8, 1921, required all voters registering after January 1, 1922 to be able to read and write English. Legislation in 1923 established that literacy certificates like the one above would be issued by the Board of Regents (of the State Education Department) after applicants passed a test that measured their comprehension of written English.

The following page shows one of several

versions of the test given in 1932. Documentation indicates that 137,555 applicants passed, while 11,523 failed. Another 12,866 applicants were granted literacy certificates after presenting proof that they had passed either a day school or an evening school literacy course. 3,595 examiners were used in 2,586 test locations. The State Archives holds copies of literacy tests through 1949.

The U.S. Voting Rights Act of 1965 eliminated literacy tests as a requirement for voting. ■

NEW YORK STATE REGENTS LITERACY TEST

1932 — Test 1

(To be filled in by the candidate in ink)

Write your name here.....
First name Middle initial Last name

Write your address here.....

Write the date here.....
Month Day Year

Read this and then write the answers. Read it as many times as you need to.

George Washington was born February 22, 1732, in Wakefield in the state of Virginia. In many countries of the world people are this year celebrating his two hundredth birthday. In America the celebrations began on February 22, and are to continue until Thanksgiving Day. President Hoover gave an address on George Washington before Congress, which was also heard over the radio in all sections of the United States, Canada and Mexico. Governor Roosevelt attended a great celebration at the New York State Armory in Albany. Special exercises were held in almost every community and school throughout the land. George Washington was a great soldier, statesman and patriot. He is honored by all Americans and is called The Father of His Country.

(The answers to the following questions are to be taken from the above paragraph)

- 1 Write the month, day and year when George Washington was born.....
- 2 Who are celebrating George Washington's two hundredth birthday?.....
- 3 Where was George Washington born?
- 4 Until what day are the celebrations to continue?
- 5 Give the month and the day when the celebrations began in America?
- 6 Who attended a great celebration at the State Armory in Albany?
- 7 Who gave an address before Congress?
- 8 What were held in almost every community and school?
- 9 Who is called The Father of His Country?

(To be filled in by the examiner)

Number of answers correct.....
Candidate's rating, P (passed), F (failed)Place where examination was held.....
City, Village or Town CountyCertificate of literacy was.....to successful candidate.
[Mailed or delivered in person]

Examiner's signature Title

Examiner will return all material previously delivered by local superintendent to the superintendent or his representative within 2 days after the last day on which examination has been conducted.

T476-Je32-192,000(10262)*