

## Literacy Tests in the United States - Generational Education

### **Introduction**

- a. Do you think you could pass a simple literacy test? Surely the average American citizen is more educated than their previous generations. With the passing of knowledge and higher education being more commonplace, it would be easy to say that people have been getting more intelligent. At least it wouldn't be too hard to believe, right?
- b. Literacy may still be a problem, but can you blame someone for not understanding a test when it was designed for them to fail?
- c. Americans still struggle with literary comprehension no matter their background and current education level. At least based on my short sample conducted for this essay. It may not be fair to say that they struggle with literary comprehension on every level, but it is fair to say that these historic literacy tests were designed not for the average person. These historic literacy tests were meant to keep the voiceless from obtaining their voice. The test stated that anyone with an education above a 5th grade level should be able to pass with no problem, but give this test to your average person and I imagine you'll see many people struggle.

### **First Main Point - Quick History**

- a. Literacy tests were implemented in the 1890's.
- b. Used primarily against African Americans to prevent them from voting.
- c. Some literacy tests were scored based on interpretation of judges, further pushing discrimination.

### **Second Point - Administering the Tests**

- a. I gave 5 participants the same tests with the same rules attached. They only have 10 minutes and any incorrect answer is grounds for immediate failure.
- b. The participants were from a variety of backgrounds with different cultural views and levels of education.
- c. Almost everyone didn't complete the test within the allotted time frame.
- d. Nobody scored perfectly. Everyone missed at least one or two questions.

### **Third Point - Reflection of Responses**

- a. Everyone deemed the test to be unfair in one way or another.
- b. No matter what level of education, everyone struggled with the same prompt.
- c. Everyone could see the prejudice in relation to how difficult the test was. As the test was meant for people who didn't have access to a proper education at the time.

### **Reference to Past Learnings**

- a. Week 3 - Literacy Issues in the US
- b. Many people have literary issues depending on the text given to them.
- c. Examples would be; unable to understand medical jargon and text from law professions.
- d. Convoluted text is one of the leading causes of illiteracy. People need to understand what was given to them in some way.

- e. An example of putting complicated text in layman's terms is how scientists write articles. The main goal of showing information is having your reader be able to process as much as possible by making it easy to digest. If the information given is too difficult to process, you lose what was supposed to be taught.
- f. This is seen in the literacy test. With many convoluted instructions, it can be difficult to grasp what is being asked of you.

**Possible Improvements**

- a. Due to my small sample size, I'd like to be able to administer the test to more people to get a better idea of the general consensus behind the test and how they feel about it.
- b. I would like to look more into different types of literacy tests if more were implemented. I would like to know if all of them were as difficult as the Louisiana test.
- c. I could go more in depth about the background of the literacy tests.