

Highlight any/all information you feel is essential to understanding the time period of Reconstruction and the impact of the actions of people (leaders, ordinary citizens, etc.).

Piecing together a broken nation was not going to be an easy task. To maximize the chances of success, Lincoln felt it would be best to avoid making the readmission to the Union difficult; rather, Lincoln wanted to prevent revenge and instead heal the country. His 10% Plan for readmitting states was coupled with an offer of amnesty for those who had rebelled. However, Congress felt only they had the power to admit states to the Union (Article IV Section 3 of the Constitution), and they also felt that Lincoln's plan was too lenient, although Arkansas, Louisiana, Tennessee, and Virginia all rejoined under this plan.

Aside from dealing with the former Confederates, Lincoln also knew he had to ensure the well-being of the newly freed slaves. By January 1865, the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment, which declared the abolishment of slavery, was passed; it still needed to be ratified, but this was a critical step in ensuring that slavery would never again be part of the United States. Furthermore, in March 1865, an organization called the Freedmen's Bureau was created. Its task was to provide food and clothing for the former slaves and to aid them in finding jobs as well as attend to their medical needs. This group also set up schools for freed slaves across the South, though many freed people created their own schools as soon as they were able. By 1869, approximately 300,000 African-Americans attended a Bureau school; most teachers were Northern women who volunteered to teach in classrooms with students ranging from the very young to the elderly. Colleges and universities for African-Americans were also established, including institutions that still exist today. While the Freedmen's Bureau was beneficial for African-Americans, it served poor white Southerners, too.

When Lincoln was assassinated just days after Robert E. Lee's surrender to Ulysses S. Grant at Appomattox Courthouse, the future of Reconstruction landed in the hands of the new president, Andrew Johnson. Johnson was a Southern Democrat who had remained loyal to the Union during secession; Lincoln had intentionally selected Johnson as a unifying measure. Congressional Republicans were optimistic that Johnson would have a strict Reconstruction policy since he had stated "traitors must be punished", but it turned out his plan was quite mild, much like Lincoln's. There were several components to his plan to bring Southern states back into the Union. First, so long as a person took an oath of loyalty to the Union and agreed to support the abolition of slavery in the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment, then amnesty would be granted; the exception was that wealthy Southerners and former Confederate officials would need a presidential pardon to qualify for amnesty. Over time, Johnson pardoned 7,000+ people. Furthermore, each state had to appoint a temporary governor. To create a new state constitution, those who swore their loyalty oath could be elected as a delegate to a convention for that purpose. Each new state government had to declare secession illegal and refuse to pay Confederate debts. New state officials and representatives had to be elected to Congress, too.

Those in the South did as Johnson asked and he approved many new state governments. By the end of 1865, all states in the South except Texas created new governments, and Johnson declared the U.S. restored. Soon, Southerners were elected to Congress, many of whom were formerly high-ranking Confederates; in fact, a newly elected Senator from Georgia had been the Vice President of the Confederacy! Republicans in Congress were outraged. They could not believe that those who broke up the Union were now being voted into office while African-Americans hadn't been given the right to vote. When Congress convened in December 1865, many Republicans refused to let the Southerners from Reconstruction states take their seats, questioning their loyalty; they also refused the states' readmission. Instead, the Republicans set up a Joint Committee on Reconstruction to draw up a new plan for the South.

Meanwhile, by Spring 1866, concerning things were happening in the South. Peddlers were selling Confederate flags, a New Orleans restaurant was selling "Stonewall Jackson Soup" – named after the revered fallen Confederate general – along with "Confederate Hash", and there was hostility to the federal union and an intense pride in the Confederacy. It was starting to feel like the rebellion was simply continuing. Worst of all was the implementation of Black Codes. Black Codes were laws that severely limited the rights of freedmen. Essentially, these Codes denied African-Americans their civil rights by limiting their freedom. Despite the fact that the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment had been ratified by most Southern states, Black Codes were a way to deny African-Americans the right to vote. Black Codes also included preventing freedmen from owning guns, limiting freedmen's job options to servants or farm laborers, requiring freedmen to work in conditions similar to slavery, threatening arrest with a punishment of working on a plantation if they refused to sign the contracts offered, and limiting the cities in which a freed person could reside.

Congressional Republicans were once again outraged. The Black Codes, aside from a couple of instances, were basically preserving slavery as much as possible. When Congressional Republicans voiced their concerns to Johnson in a report, he ignored them. Therefore, a group of Republicans vowed to take Reconstruction out of Johnson's hands. Known as Radical Republicans, they had two main goals: 1) break the power of the rich planters who ruled the South since the Radical Republicans believed it was the "aristocrats" who caused the Civil War; and 2) ensure freedmen received the right to vote. This would require increased government involvement in Reconstruction. Radical Republicans were able to get many moderate Republicans on their side because they both advocated for a strict policy for the South and both groups agreed that Black Codes were horrific. Had the Southerners been seated in Congress, the momentum on this might have been stopped, but Republicans controlled both houses in Congress, so legislation began to counteract the South's doings.

In April 1866, Congress passed the Civil Rights Act to give citizenship to African-Americans. The hope was that this would combat the Black Codes and secure freedmen's rights, such as making contracts, suing in courts of law, owning property, and having the same legal rights as whites. Johnson vetoed this, but with a 2/3 majority in both houses, Congress overrode the veto. Yet, fearing that the Supreme Court might find the Civil Rights Act unconstitutional, a

proposal was made for a 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment to grant citizenship to all persons born in the U.S., guaranteeing all citizens “equal protection under the law” and stating that no state could “deprive any person of life, liberty, or property without due process of law”. In other words, no citizen could be denied the rights that are part of being a citizen in the U.S., like voting. Johnson was furious about the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment and urged former Confederate states to reject it.

The time known as Radical Reconstruction had begun. Republicans had overwhelming majorities after the 1866 midterm elections and they took over Reconstruction. In March 1867, the Reconstruction Act, passed over Johnson’s veto, threw out the Southern states that refused to ratify the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment; this meant all Southern states except Tennessee. Furthermore, the South was divided into five military districts, each commanded by an army general; the military would remain there until the Southern states rejoined the Union, and – to be readmitted – a state had to write a new Constitution supporting the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment and giving African-Americans the right to vote. Over time, additional Reconstruction acts were passed, and Johnson vetoed all of them; in turn, Congress overrode his vetoes. As president, it was Johnson’s job to enforce these Reconstruction laws, but many Republicans feared that he wouldn’t. Their concern grew when Johnson began removing Radical Republicans from his Cabinet.

Republicans then passed the Tenure of Office Act in 1867. It prevented the president from removing Cabinet officials without the Senate’s approval. Johnson quickly tested the law by firing Secretary of War Edwin Stanton. Stanton had been part of Lincoln’s Cabinet and he continued with his role under Johnson. Stanton wanted more punishment for the South and was helping the Republicans craft more Reconstruction laws; it was this support of Republicans that caused Johnson to fire Stanton. In response to this, the House voted on February 24, 1868, to impeach Johnson. Impeach means to bring formal charges of wrongdoing against an elected official. The Senate would determine if he was guilty or innocent. To convict – meaning find guilty – Johnson would be accused of “high crimes and misdemeanors”. Even though many disliked Johnson, those in the Senate knew Johnson’s actions were not at that level. Ultimately, the Senate voted 35-19 to acquit, meaning find innocent; the president came one vote short of the 2/3 majority needed to remove him from office. Later that year in the 1868 election, Republican Ulysses S. Grant won; Johnson did not run, and he returned to Tennessee and became involved in the Democratic party.

Also in response to the situation in the South, Republicans proposed the 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment in 1869; it would forbid any state from denying African-Americans the right to vote because of race. This would both protect the Reconstruction plans already implemented regarding voting and it would make the North and South have the same rules about African-American suffrage. Soon, freedmen were running for office at the local, state, and national levels and winning seats.

Yet, despite that progress, very negative things were also occurring. Desperate for jobs, some freed people were forced to sharecrop, which meant to work on land rented from a landowner with an understanding of paying back what’s owed through a share of the crops at the end of a season. Often, this arrangement landed African-Americans in a cycle of poverty and a situation close to slavery. Worse yet was the rise of terror groups, including the Ku Klux Klan.

Wearing hooded robes to conceal their identity, those in the KKK rode at night to African-American homes and areas to issue threats, burn crosses, and sometimes commit violent acts in order to intimidate and restore white rule. White Leagues were similar in their mission, though they did not hide themselves while using violence. To combat this, in 1870, Congress passed the Enforcement Act, also known as the First Ku Klux Klan Act, to make it a crime to use force to stop people from voting. While KKK activity decreased due to this, threats of violence lingered.

In 1875, the Republicans passed another Civil Rights Act to guarantee African-Americans equal rights in public places, like in theaters and on buses or trains. Yet, by the 1870s, the attention and support for Reconstruction was lessening and many white Southerners had regained government positions. Radical Republicans were losing power and the North was tiring of trying to manage and change the South.

Reconstruction ended in 1877 as part of a deal crafted from the 1876 election. Republicans nominated Rutherford B. Hayes and Democrats nominated Samuel Tilden. Tilden ended up with 250,000 more popular votes than Hayes but his 184 electoral votes was 1 vote shy of the needed 185 back then; 20 other votes were disputed, and the election hung on those votes from Florida, South Carolina, and Louisiana, states controlled by Republicans, who also challenged the electoral votes in Oregon. Congress set up a special commission, made up primarily of Republicans, and the group decided all disputed electoral votes would go to Hayes. The Democrats did not fight this because they privately secured a deal, called the Compromise of 1877, to have Hayes end Reconstruction once he got in office, which he did. Hayes removed all federal troops; also, as part of the arrangement, Hayes gave federal funding to the South to help them with internal improvements, and he put a Democrat from the South in his Cabinet.

With federal troops no longer in the South, discrimination against African-Americans and denial of their rights amped up. Segregation laws, called Jim Crow laws, forced separation of whites and blacks. Fees, called poll taxes, and literacy tests were enacted to deny African-Americans the right to vote. Violence against African-Americans increased. Soon, African-Americans who could leave the South began to move away. One former slave reflected, "I must go. If I stay here, I'll never know I'm free."