

ESSENTIAL QUESTION

- How should societies settle disputes?

THE STORY BEGINS...

Hiram Rhodes Revels was the first African American to serve in the U.S. Senate. ▶

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LESSON 1

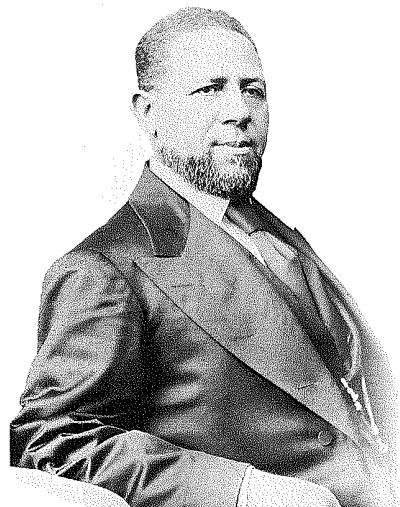
The Impacts of Reconstruction

During Reconstruction, African Americans gained more than just their freedom. Constitutional amendments granted citizenship rights to all African Americans and voting rights to African American men. Such gains, however, did not end poverty or discrimination.

As Reconstruction came to an end, even the political rights of African Americans were stripped away. Hiram Rhodes Revels of Mississippi was the first African American to serve in the U.S. Senate, where he spoke up for the rights of African Americans. In the excerpt below, Revels explains how the gains made by African Americans during Reconstruction were eroded.

“Since reconstruction, the masses of my people have been, as it were, enslaved in mind by unprincipled adventurers, who, caring nothing for country, were willing to stoop to anything no matter how infamous, to secure power to themselves, and perpetuate it. . . . My people have been told by these schemers, when men have been placed on the ticket who were notoriously corrupt and dishonest, that they must vote for them. . . . The bitterness and hate created by the late civil strife has, in my opinion, been obliterated in this state, except perhaps in some localities, and would have long since been entirely obliterated, were it not for some unprincipled men who would keep alive the bitterness of the past.”

—Hiram Rhodes Revels, from a letter to President Ulysses S. Grant, November 6, 1875



TEXT: Revels, H.R. 1875. "Letter from H.R. Revels to President Grant," November 6, 1875. In *Reconstruction in Mississippi*, by James Wilson Garner, 1901. New York: The Macmillan Company. PHOTO: Reconstruction in Mississippi. By James Wilson Garner, 1901. New York: The Macmillan Company. PHOTO: Reconstruction in Mississippi. By James Wilson Garner, 1901. New York: The Macmillan Company. PHOTO: Reconstruction in Mississippi. By James Wilson Garner, 1901. New York: The Macmillan Company.

The Impacts of Reconstruction

- I. Reconstruction
 - A.
 - B.
 - C.

ANALYZING KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS

ORGANIZING As you read the lesson, use the major headings to create an outline similar to the one here.

RECONSTRUCTION

GUIDING QUESTION *What important decisions had to be made concerning the fate of the seceded states and the rights of those freed from slavery?*

After the end of the Civil War, large areas of the former Confederacy lay in ruins. The South's economy was in a state of collapse. Roughly two-thirds of the transportation system no longer functioned: dozens of bridges had been destroyed and miles of railroad track were useless. Most dramatically of all, the emancipation of African Americans had upended the South's economic system. Until the South adjusted to this new reality, it could not maintain its agricultural output.

While some Southerners were bitter over the Union's victory, for others the most important struggle was rebuilding their land and their lives. President Lincoln and Congress now had to grapple with the difficult task of Reconstruction.

OPPOSING PLANS FOR RECONSTRUCTION

In December 1863, President Lincoln offered a general amnesty, or pardon, to Southerners who took an oath of loyalty to the United States and accepted the Union's requirements concerning emancipation. However, certain people, such as former Confederate government officials and military officers, could not take the loyalty oath or be pardoned. In his Second Inaugural Address in March 1865, Lincoln spoke of ending the war "with malice toward none, with charity for all." President Lincoln wanted a moderate policy to reconcile the South with the Union instead of punishing it for treason.

Resistance to Lincoln's plan surfaced among a group of Republicans in Congress known as Radical Republicans. They wanted to prevent the leaders of the Confederacy from ever returning to power. They also wanted the federal government to guarantee African Americans their right to vote.

Vice President Andrew Johnson, a Democrat from Tennessee, assumed the presidency after Lincoln's death. His 1865 plan for Reconstruction resembled Lincoln's and offered amnesty to all former citizens of the Confederacy except for former Confederate officials and wealthy planters. However, Johnson was less concerned with protecting the political rights and new freedoms for formerly enslaved people than Lincoln had been, and this led to repeated clashes with Radical Republicans.

Many congressional Republicans were angered when Southerners elected many former Confederate officials to Congress. They were further outraged

UNDERSTANDING CRAFT AND STRUCTURE

1. ANALYZING TEXT STRUCTURE

In what order does the writer present the information about Reconstruction? Does the way the text is organized help you better understand the information?

2. DETERMINING MEANING

The text about the Fourteenth Amendment explains that it "declared that no state could deprive any person of life, liberty, or property 'without due process of law.'" What does the word *deprive* mean in this context?

when Southern state legislatures passed a series of laws known as **black codes** that limited African Americans' rights and recreated many of the oppressions of slavery.

THE FOURTEENTH AMENDMENT

In June 1866, in order to attempt to block states from imposing black codes or other restrictions on African American rights, Congress passed the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution. This amendment granted citizenship to all persons born or naturalized in the United States and declared that no state could deprive any person of life, liberty, or property "without due process of law."

In March 1867, Congressional Republicans passed the Military Reconstruction Act, which divided the former Confederacy into five military districts. Tennessee had ratified the Fourteenth Amendment in 1866 and was not included in the military districts. In order for the former Confederate states to regain control of their state government and be allowed to elect members to Congress, they had to give the right to vote to all adult male citizens, regardless of race, and ratify the Fourteenth Amendment.

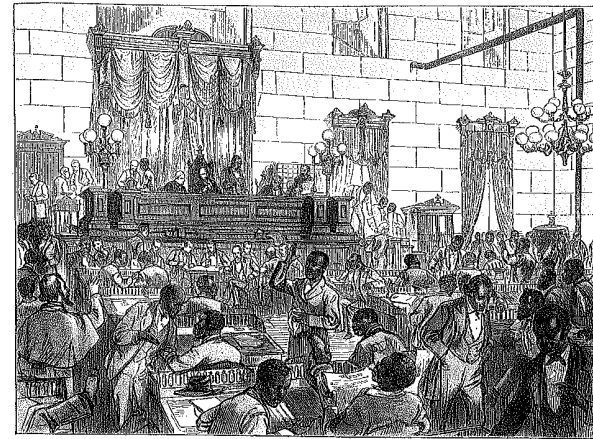
The Fourteenth Amendment was a turning point in American political and legal history. Since its ratification in 1868, it has been used to expand federal power over the states and to extend civil rights through its equal protection clause. It also led to the doctrine of **incorporation**, the idea that the Bill of Rights applied to state governments as well as the federal government. Although the amendment did not prevent Southern states from imposing restrictions on African Americans, especially after the Compromise of 1877, the Fourteenth Amendment would provide the basis for the African American civil rights movement in the 1950s and 1960s.

THE FIFTEENTH AMENDMENT

Tensions between Radical Republicans and Johnson increased. Eventually the House of Representatives voted to impeach the president. The impeachment trial in the Senate ended one vote short of convicting Johnson. Although Johnson remained in office, he did not run for re-election in 1868. That year the Republicans nominated General Ulysses S. Grant for president. During the campaign, ongoing violence in the South convinced many that the Southern states could not be trusted to reorganize their governments without military supervision. Grant won five of Southern states—Tennessee, Alabama, South Carolina, North Carolina, and Florida—and most of the Northern states. Republicans kept control of Congress.

Republicans moved rapidly to expand their Reconstruction program. Recognizing the importance of African American suffrage, Congress passed the Fifteenth Amendment to the Constitution. This amendment declared that the right to vote "shall not be denied . . . on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude." By March 1870, enough states had ratified the amendment to make it part of the Constitution.

Radical Reconstruction had a dramatic impact on the South, particularly in the short term. It changed Southern politics by bringing hundreds of thousands of African Americans into the political process for the first time. It also began to change Southern society. As it did so, it angered many white Southerners, who began to fight back against the federal government's policies.



This sketch from the 1870s shows South Carolina's legislature—the only state legislature with an African American majority during Reconstruction.

DETERMINING CENTRAL IDEAS

Why do you think African Americans were so enthusiastic about participating in politics?

THE SOUTH DURING RECONSTRUCTION

By the autumn of 1870, all former Confederate states had rejoined the Union. The Freedmen's Bureau worked to feed and clothe war refugees and help educate formerly enslaved people. It also helped formerly enslaved people negotiate contracts and set up special courts to deal with grievances.

A large number of Northerners traveled to the South, where many were elected or appointed to positions in the new state governments. Southerners called these newcomers **carpetbaggers** because some arrived with their belongings in suitcases made of carpet fabric. Local residents saw them as intruders seeking to exploit the South for their own profits. Some white Southerners did work with the Republicans and supported Reconstruction. Other Southerners called such supporters **scalawags**—an old Scots-Irish term for weak, underfed, worthless animals.

Having gained the right to vote, African American men entered into politics with great enthusiasm. Despite the racism and oppression African Americans still faced, many went from being enslaved laborers to legislators and administrators within a few years. They served in all levels of government. Republicans built a coalition of poor Southern-born white farmers, African Americans, and Northern carpetbaggers to elect Republican candidates.

CHECKING FOR UNDERSTANDING

1. **UNDERSTANDING CONTEXT** What important decisions had to be made concerning the fate of the seceded states and the rights of those freed from slavery?
2. **SUMMARIZING** What steps were taken during Reconstruction to rebuild the South?
3. **UNDERSTANDING CONTEXT** What steps did the United States take during this period to preserve the rights of African Americans?

RECONSTRUCTION ENDS

ANALYZING KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS

1. PREDICTING Before you read this section, consider what you have already learned about Reconstruction. What do you predict will happen when Reconstruction ends? How does your prediction compare with what you learn in this section?

2. DETERMINING CENTRAL IDEAS What is the central idea of this section? How does this central idea build off of what you learned in the previous section?

GUIDING QUESTION *Why was the Compromise of 1877 considered the end of Reconstruction?*

After Ulysses S. Grant became president in 1869, scandals and economic pressures damaged his administration. Democrats began to regain power in the South, which made enforcing Reconstruction more difficult. At the same time, an economic crisis, known as the Panic of 1873, hit the country. Dozens of smaller banks closed, and the stock market plummeted. Thousands of businesses shut down, and unemployment soared. Many Northerners became more concerned with their own economic problems than with conditions in the South.

"REDEEMING" THE SOUTH

In the 1870s, Southern Democrats had worked to regain control of their state and local governments. Southern terrorist groups, such as the Ku Klux Klan and the Knights of the White Camellia, intimidated African American and white Republican voters, while some Democrats resorted to various forms of election fraud, such as stuffing ballot boxes and stealing ballot boxes in Republican precincts. Southern Democrats also called on all whites to help "redeem"—or save—the South from "Black Republican" rule.

By appealing to white racism and defining elections as a struggle between whites and African Americans, Democrats were able to win back the support of white owners of small farms who had supported Republicans. By 1876, the Democrats had taken control of all Southern state legislatures except those in Louisiana, South Carolina, and Florida. In these three states, the large number of African American voters, protected by Union troops, were able to keep the Republicans in power.

POLITICAL CARTOON

EXTREMIST ORGANIZATIONS

During Reconstruction, secret societies such as the White League and the Pale Faces formed to prevent African Americans from exercising their rights. The largest of these groups, the Ku Klux Klan, used violence to drive out carpetbaggers and intimidate African Americans. Other white extremist organizations included the Red Shirts, originating in Mississippi, and the Knights of the White Camellia, which first formed in New Orleans.

INTEGRATING INFORMATION Study this political cartoon from 1874. The text on the shield reads "Worse than Slavery." What other details do you notice in the picture? Why do you think the artist suggests that the terror and intimidation of African Americans during Reconstruction is worse than slavery?



THE COMPROMISE OF 1877

With Grant's reputation damaged by scandals, the Republicans decided not to nominate him for a third term in 1876. Instead, they nominated Rutherford B. Hayes, a former governor of Ohio. Hayes wanted to end Radical Reconstruction.

The Democrats responded by nominating Samuel Tilden, a wealthy corporate lawyer and former governor of New York. Tilden was famous for trying to end the corruption in New York City's government. On Election Day, Tilden clearly won 184 electoral votes, 1 short of a majority. Hayes clearly won 165 electoral votes, leaving 20 votes in dispute. Nineteen of the votes were in the three Southern states Republicans still controlled: Louisiana, South Carolina, and Florida. There had been so much election fraud on both sides that no one could tell which candidate had won.

To resolve the situation, Congress appointed a 15-person commission made up of 8 Republicans and 7 Democrats, which voted along party lines to give all the disputed votes to Hayes. The commission's recommendations, however, were not binding if either house of Congress rejected them. After much debate, several Southern Democrats joined with Republicans and voted to accept the commission's findings, giving the election to Hayes. Some people believed Hayes could not have won without the support of Southern Democrats and concluded that an informal deal, known as the Compromise of 1877, had likely been made.

Since the informal deal would not have been documented, historians have had to guess what its exact terms were. The Compromise of 1877 reportedly included a Republican promise to pull federal troops out of the South if Hayes were elected. In fact, troops were pulled out within a month of Hayes taking office. It is also true that the nation was tired of Reconstruction and that even Republican leaders were ready to end it. Indeed, President Grant pulled troops out of Florida even before Hayes took office, so it is possible that no deal was actually made. However, if the Compromise of 1877 did take place, it meant that Hayes had abandoned the black voters in the South that had helped elect him.

In his inaugural speech, President Hayes stated that the United States was ready to be fully reunited. As federal troops were removed from the South, the last Republican governments in South Carolina and Louisiana collapsed. The Democrats had "redeemed" the South. Reconstruction was over.

THE RESULTS

After Reconstruction, some Southern leaders called for the creation of a "New South" focused on a strong industrial economy. Powerful white Southerners and Northern financiers did bring great economic changes to parts of the South. By 1890, thousands of miles of railroad track crisscrossed the South, and a thriving iron and steel industry developed around Birmingham, Alabama. Tobacco processing became big business, and numerous cotton mills appeared. Despite its industrial growth, however, the South remained largely agrarian. Only a small percentage of the labor force worked in manufacturing.

The collapse of Reconstruction ended African Americans' hopes of being granted their own land in the South. Instead, many returned to plantations owned by whites, where they either worked for wages or became **tenant farmers**, paying rent for the land they farmed. Most tenant farmers eventually became **sharecroppers**. Sharecroppers did not pay their rent in cash.

Instead, they paid a share of their crops—often as much as one-half to two-thirds. Many sharecroppers also needed more seed and supplies than their landlords provided. As a result, country stores sold them supplies on credit—often at interest rates as high as 40 percent. To ensure sharecroppers paid their debts, laws allowed merchants to put liens on their crops. These **crop liens** meant that the merchants could take crops to cover the debts.

The crop-lien system and high interest rates led many sharecroppers into a financial condition called **debt peonage**. Debt peonage trapped sharecroppers on the land because they could not make enough money to pay off their debts and leave, nor could they declare bankruptcy.

While the passage of the Fourteenth Amendment had put a stop to black codes, the end of Reconstruction also allowed Southern states to start passing similar legislation that became known as **Jim Crow laws**. These laws enforced segregation and reinstated many of the institutional oppressions that had been a part of slavery. Jim Crow effectively disenfranchised African Americans, and it would take until the 1965 Voting Rights Act for their right to vote to be restored.

The Civil War had ended slavery, but the failure of Reconstruction trapped many African Americans in economic and political circumstances that severely limited their new freedom.

CHECKING FOR UNDERSTANDING

- 1. SUMMARIZING** What events led to the end of Reconstruction?
- 2. UNDERSTANDING CONTEXT** What is the Compromise of 1877? Why are historians not sure whether it happened or not?
- 3. EXPLAINING ISSUES** What was the situation for African Americans after the end of Reconstruction? Use evidence from the text to support your assertions.

LESSON 1 REVIEW

Time and Place

1. UNDERSTANDING CHANGE Use the notes you completed during the lesson to sequence some of the events leading to the Compromise of 1877. Consider how people at the time may have reacted to the events of the election of 1876.

Building History-Social Science Analysis Skills

- 2. INTERPRETING** Who were the scalawags? Why do you think Southerners used this term?
- 3. EVALUATING** How did African Americans participate in politics during Reconstruction?
- 4. UNDERSTANDING CONTEXT** What consequences do you think the damage caused by the Civil War and the impact of Reconstruction had on the South in years to come?

Writing About History

5. EXPLANATORY WRITING Write a short essay explaining the effects of the three Reconstruction amendments at the time of their passage and how they continue to shape the United States today. Make sure you revise your essay to ensure you are clear in your explanation.

Collaborating

6. INFORMATIVE WRITING Describe how the lives of African Americans changed and did not change in the South during this time. Use material from the lesson and your own research to support your observations.