



SECTION  
4

# Reconstruction and Its Effects

## MAIN IDEA

After the Civil War, the nation embarked on a period known as Reconstruction, during which attempts were made to readmit the South to the Union.

## WHY IT MATTERS NOW

The Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments, passed as part of Reconstruction, gave civil rights to Americans of all races.

## Terms & Names

- Freedmen's Bureau
- Reconstruction
- Radical Republicans
- Andrew Johnson
- Fourteenth Amendment
- Fifteenth Amendment
- scalawag
- carpetbagger
- Hiram Revels
- sharecropping
- Ku Klux Klan (KKK)

## One American's Story

Robert G. Fitzgerald was born a free African American in Delaware in 1840. During the Civil War, he served in both the U.S. Army and the U.S. Navy. In 1866, he taught former slaves in a small Virginia town. A year after his arrival in Virginia, Fitzgerald looked back on what he had accomplished.

### A PERSONAL VOICE ROBERT G. FITZGERALD

"I came to Virginia one year ago on the 22nd of this month. Erected a school, organized and named the Freedman's Chapel School. Now (June 29th) have about 60 who have been for several months engaged in the study of arithmetic, writing, etc. etc. This morning sent in my report accompanied with compositions from about 12 of my advanced writers instructed from the Alphabet up to their [present] condition, their progress has been surprisingly rapid."

—quoted in *Proud Shoes*

Fitzgerald was working for the **Freedmen's Bureau**, which had been established by Congress to provide food, clothing, hospitals, legal protection, and education for former slaves and poor whites in the South in 1865.



**VIDEO**  
**TEACHER OF A FREED PEOPLE**  
Robert Fitzgerald and Reconstruction

## The Politics of Reconstruction

The need to help former slaves was just one of many issues the nation confronted after the war. In addition, the government, led by Andrew Johnson, Lincoln's vice-president and eventual successor, had to determine how to bring the Confederate states back into the Union. **Reconstruction**, the period during which the United States began to rebuild after the Civil War, lasted from 1865 to 1877. The term also refers to the process the federal government used to readmit

the defeated Confederate states to the Union. Complicating the process was the fact that Abraham Lincoln, Andrew Johnson, and the members of Congress all had different ideas about how Reconstruction should be handled.

**LINCOLN'S PLAN** Lincoln made it clear that he favored a lenient Reconstruction policy. In December 1863, Lincoln announced his Proclamation of Amnesty and Reconstruction, also known as the Ten-Percent Plan. Under this plan, the government would pardon all Confederates—except high-ranking officials and those accused of crimes against prisoners of war—who would swear allegiance to the Union. As soon as ten percent of those who had voted in 1860 took this oath of allegiance, a Confederate state could form a new state government and send representatives and senators to Congress. Under Lincoln's terms, four states—Arkansas, Louisiana, Tennessee, and Virginia—moved toward readmission to the Union.

However, Lincoln's Reconstruction plan angered a minority of Republicans in Congress, known as **Radical Republicans**. The Radicals, led by Senator Charles Sumner of Massachusetts and Representative Thaddeus Stevens of Pennsylvania, wanted to destroy the political power of former slaveholders. Most of all, they wanted African Americans to be given full citizenship and the right to vote.

**JOHNSON'S PLAN FOR RECONSTRUCTION** Lincoln was assassinated before he could fully implement his Reconstruction plan. In May 1865, his successor, **Andrew Johnson**, announced his own plan. Johnson's plan differed little from Lincoln's. The major difference was that Johnson tried to break the planters' power by excluding high-ranking Confederates and wealthy Southern landowners from taking the oath needed for voting privileges. However, Johnson also pardoned more than 13,000 former Confederates because he believed that "white men alone must manage the South." **A**

The seven remaining ex-Confederate states quickly agreed to Johnson's terms. In the following months, these states—except for Texas—set up new state governments and elected representatives to Congress. In December 1865, the newly elected Southern legislators arrived in Washington to take their seats. Congress, however, refused to admit the new Southern legislators. At the same time, moderate Republicans pushed for new laws to remedy weaknesses they saw in Johnson's plan. In 1866, Congress voted to enlarge the Freedmen's Bureau and passed the Civil Rights Act of 1866. That law gave African Americans citizenship and forbade states from passing discriminatory laws—black codes—that severely restricted African Americans' lives. Johnson shocked everyone when he vetoed both the Freedmen's Bureau Act and the Civil Rights Act. Congress, Johnson contended, had gone far beyond anything "contemplated by the authors of the Constitution."

**CONGRESSIONAL RECONSTRUCTION** Angered by Johnson's actions, radical and moderate Republican factions decided to work together to shift the control of the Reconstruction process from the executive branch to the legislature. In mid-1866, they overrode the president's vetoes of the Civil Rights Act and Freedmen's Bureau Act. In addition, Congress drafted the **Fourteenth Amendment**, which prevented states from denying rights and privileges to any U.S. citizen, now defined as "all persons born or naturalized in the United States." This definition was expressly intended to overrule and nullify the *Dred Scott* decision.



▲ Clearing battlefields of human remains was just one of the many tasks facing Reconstruction governments.

### Vocabulary

**amnesty:** a general pardon by a government, usually for political offenses

### MAIN IDEA

#### Contrasting

**A** How did the views of Presidents Lincoln and Johnson on Reconstruction differ from the views of the Radical Republicans?



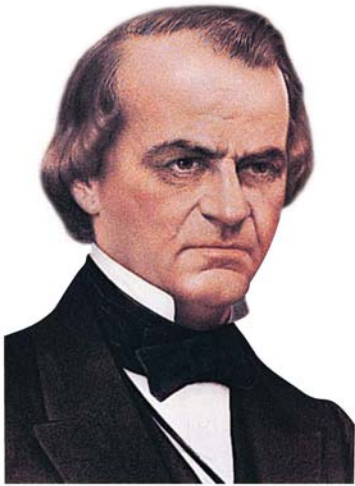
In the 1866 elections, moderate and radical Republicans gained control of Congress. They joined together to pass the Reconstruction Act of 1867, which did not recognize state governments—except Tennessee—formed under the Lincoln and Johnson plans.

The act divided the former Confederate states into five military districts. The states were required to grant African-American men the vote and to ratify the Fourteenth Amendment in order to reenter the Union. When Johnson vetoed the Reconstruction legislation, Congress promptly overrode the veto. **B**

**JOHNSON IMPEACHED** Because the Radicals thought Johnson was blocking Reconstruction, they looked for grounds on which to impeach him. They found grounds when Johnson removed Secretary of War Edwin Stanton from office in 1868. Johnson's removal of the cabinet member violated the Tenure of Office Act, which stated that a president could not remove cabinet officers during the term of the president who had appointed them without the Senate's approval. The House impeached Johnson, but he remained in office after the Senate voted not to convict.

**U. S. GRANT ELECTED** In the 1868 presidential election, the Civil War hero Ulysses S. Grant won by a margin of only 306,000 votes out of almost 6 million ballots cast. More than 500,000 Southern African Americans had voted. Of this number, 9 out of 10 voted for Grant. The importance of the African-American vote to the Republican Party was obvious.

After the election, the Radicals introduced the **Fifteenth Amendment**, which states that no one can be kept from voting because of "race, color, or previous condition of servitude." The Fifteenth Amendment, which was ratified by the states in 1870, was an important victory for the Radicals. **C**



*"I say, as to the leaders, punishment."*

ANDREW JOHNSON

#### MAIN IDEA

#### Analyzing Effects

**B** How did the election of 1866 affect the process of Reconstruction?

#### MAIN IDEA

#### Making Inferences

**C** Why was the African-American vote so important to the Republicans?

## Reconstructing Society

Under the congressional Reconstruction program, state constitutional conventions met and Southern voters elected new, Republican-dominated governments. By 1870, all of the former Confederate states had completed the process. However, even after all the states were back in the Union, the Republicans did not end the process of Reconstruction because they wanted to make economic changes in the South.

**CONDITIONS IN THE POSTWAR SOUTH** The war had devastated the South economically. Southern planters returned home to find that the value of their property had plummeted. Throughout the South, many small farms were ruined. The region's population was also devastated. Hundreds of thousands of Southern men had died in the war. The Republican governments began public works programs to repair the physical damage and to provide social services.

**POLITICS IN THE POSTWAR SOUTH** Another difficulty facing the new Republican governments was that the three groups that constituted the Republican Party in the South—scalawags, carpetbaggers, and African Americans—often had conflicting goals.

**Scalawags** were white Southerners who joined the Republican Party. Many were small farmers who wanted to improve their economic position and did not want the former wealthy planters to regain power. **Carpetbaggers** were Northerners who moved to the South after the war. This negative name came from the misconception that they arrived with so few belongings that they carried everything in small traveling bags made of carpeting.

## Analyzing Political Cartoons

### UNWELCOME GUEST

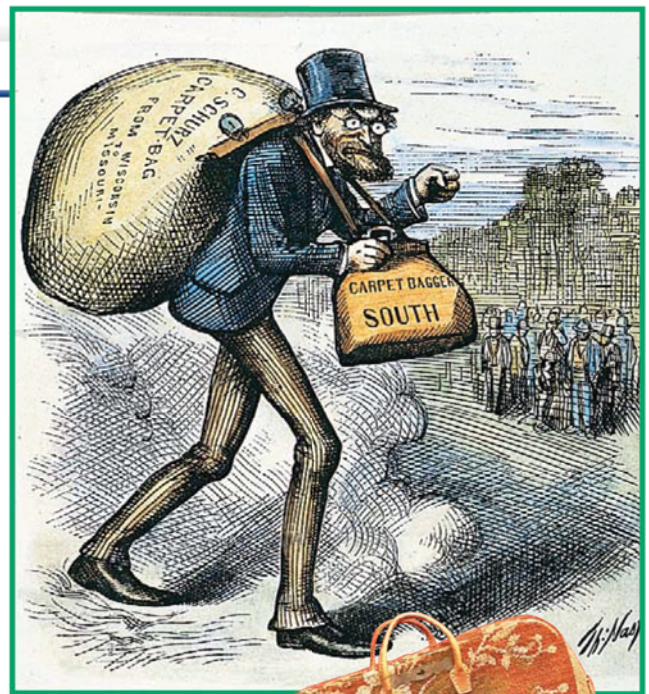
Of all the political cartoonists of the 19th century, Thomas Nast (1840–1902) had the greatest and most long-lasting influence. Nast created or popularized symbols that have become part of America’s visual heritage, symbols that include the Democratic donkey, the Republican elephant, Uncle Sam, and Santa Claus.

This cartoon from a Southern Democratic newspaper depicts Carl Schurz, a liberal Republican who advocated legal equality for African Americans. Schurz is shown as a carpetbagger trudging down a dusty Southern road as a crowd of people watch his arrival.

### SKILLBUILDER Analyzing Political Cartoons

1. Is Schurz shown in a positive or negative light? How can you tell?
2. Why do you think the cartoonist chose to place the crowd of onlookers at such a great distance from Schurz?

 SEE SKILLBUILDER HANDBOOK, PAGE R24.



 a carpet bag


The third and largest group of Southern Republicans—African Americans—gained voting rights as a result of the Fifteenth Amendment. During Reconstruction, African-American men registered to vote for the first time; nine out of ten of them supported the Republican Party. Although many former slaves could neither read nor write and were politically inexperienced, they were eager to exercise their voting rights.

### A PERSONAL VOICE WILLIAM BEVERLY NASH

**“We are not prepared for this suffrage. But we can learn. Give a man tools and let him commence to use them and in time he will earn a trade. So it is with voting. We may not understand it at the start, but in time we shall learn to do our duty.”**

—quoted in *The Trouble They Seen: Black People Tell the Story of Reconstruction*

The differing goals of scalawags, carpetbaggers, and African Americans led to a lack of unity in the Republican Party. In particular, few scalawags shared the Republican commitment to civil rights for African Americans.


The new status of African Americans required fundamental changes in the attitudes of most Southern whites. However, many white Southerners refused to accept blacks’ new status and resisted the idea of equal rights. 

**FORMER SLAVES IMPROVE THEIR LIVES** Before the Civil War, African Americans had been denied full membership in many churches. During Reconstruction African Americans founded their own churches, which often became the center of the African American community, and the only institutions that African Americans fully controlled. Many African American ministers emerged as influential community leaders who also played an important role in the broader political life of the country.

With 95% of former slaves illiterate, former slaves required education to become economically self-sufficient. In most of the Southern states, the first public school systems were established by the Reconstruction governments. The new African American churches, aided by missionaries from Northern churches and by \$6 million from the Freedmen’s Bureau, worked to create and run these and other

### MAIN IDEA

#### Contrasting

 Why did scalawags, carpetbaggers, and African Americans support the Radicals?



**HIRAM REVELS  
1822–1901**

Hiram Revels of Mississippi, pictured above on the far left, was born of free parents in Fayetteville, North Carolina. Because he could not obtain an education in the South, he attended Knox College in Illinois. As an African Methodist Episcopal minister, he recruited African Americans to fight for the Union during the Civil War and also served as an army chaplain.

In 1865, Revels settled in Mississippi, where he helped organize African-American schools and churches. He served on the Natchez city council and then was elected to Mississippi's state senate in 1869. In 1870, Revels became the first African American elected to the U.S. Senate.

schools. Atlanta, Fisk, and Howard Universities, for instance, were all founded by religious groups such as the American Missionary Association.

Thousands of African Americans also took advantage of their new freedom by migrating to reunite with family members or to find jobs in Southern towns and cities.

**AFRICAN AMERICANS IN RECONSTRUCTION** After the war, African Americans took an active role in the political process. Not only did they vote, but for the first time they held office in local, state, and federal government.

Nevertheless, even though there were almost as many black citizens as white citizens in the South, African-American officeholders remained in the minority. Out of 125 Southerners elected to the U.S. Congress during congressional Reconstruction, only 16 were African Americans. Among these was **Hiram Revels**, the first African-American senator. African Americans also served in political offices on the state and local levels. **E**

In January 1865, General Sherman had promised the former slaves who followed his army 40 acres per family and the use of army mules. For the most part, however, former slaves received no land. Most Republicans considered private property a basic American right, and thus refused to help redistribute it. As a result, many plantation owners in the South retained their land.

**SHARECROPPING AND TENANT FARMING** Without their own land, freed African Americans, as well as poor white farmers, could not grow crops to sell or to use to feed their families. Therefore, economic necessity forced many former slaves and impoverished whites to become sharecroppers. In the system of **sharecropping**, landowners divided their land and assigned each head of household a few acres, along with seed and tools. Sharecroppers kept a small share of their crops and gave the rest to the landowners. In theory, “croppers” who saved a little might even rent

land for cash and keep all their harvest in a system known as tenant farming.

## The Collapse of Reconstruction

Most white Southerners swallowed whatever resentment they felt over African-American suffrage and participation in government. Some whites expressed their feelings by refusing to register to vote. Others were frustrated by their loss of political power and by the South's economic stagnation. These were the people who formed vigilante groups and used violence to intimidate African Americans.

**OPPOSITION TO RECONSTRUCTION** The most notorious and widespread of the Southern vigilante groups was the **Ku Klux Klan (KKK)**. The Klan's goals were to destroy the Republican Party, to throw out the Reconstruction governments, to aid the planter class, and to prevent African Americans from exercising their political rights. To achieve these goals, the Klan and other groups killed perhaps 20,000 men, women, and children. In addition to violence, some white Southerners refused to hire or do business with African Americans who voted Republican.

To curtail Klan violence and Democratic intimidation, Congress passed a series of Enforcement Acts in 1870 and 1871. One act provided for the federal

**MAIN IDEA**

**Forming Generalizations**

**E** How did Southern African Americans respond to their new status?

**Vocabulary**

**vigilante:** one who takes law enforcement into one's own hands



supervision of elections in Southern states. Another act gave the president the power to use federal troops in areas where the Klan was active.

Although Congress seemed to shore up Republican power with the Enforcement Acts, it soon passed legislation that severely weakened the power of the Republican Party in the South. In May 1872, Congress passed the Amnesty Act, which returned the right to vote and the right to hold federal and state offices to about 150,000 former Confederates. In the same year Congress allowed the Freedmen’s Bureau to expire. These actions allowed Southern Democrats to regain political power. **F**

**MAIN IDEA**

**Summarizing**

**F** How did Southern Democrats regain political power?

**SUPPORT FOR RECONSTRUCTION FADES** Eventually, support for Reconstruction weakened. The breakdown of Republican unity made it even harder for the Radicals to continue to impose their Reconstruction plan on the South. In addition, a series of bank failures known as the panic of 1873 triggered a five-year depression, which diverted attention in the North away from the South’s problems. The Supreme Court also began to undo some of the social and political changes that the Radicals had made. Although political violence continued in the South and African Americans were denied civil and political rights, Republicans slowly retreated from the policies of Reconstruction.

**DEMOCRATS “REDEEM” THE SOUTH** As the Republicans’ hold on the South loosened, Southern Democrats began to regain control of the region. As a result of “redemption”—as the Democrats called their return to power—and a political deal made during the national election of 1876, congressional Reconstruction came to an end.

In the election of 1876, Democratic candidate Samuel J. Tilden won the popular vote, but was one vote short of the electoral victory. Southern Democrats in Congress agreed to accept Hayes if federal troops were withdrawn from the South. After Republican leaders agreed to the demands, Hayes was elected, and Reconstruction ended in the South.

Reconstruction ended without much real progress in the battle against discrimination. However, the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments remained part of the Constitution. In the 20th century, these amendments provided the necessary constitutional foundation for important civil rights legislation.

**Background**

The Twelfth Amendment (1804) gives the House of Representatives the power to elect the president if no candidate has a majority of electoral votes.



**ASSESSMENT**

**1. TERMS & NAMES** For each term or name, write a sentence explaining its significance.

- Freedmen’s Bureau
- Andrew Johnson
- scalawag
- sharecropping
- Reconstruction
- Fourteenth Amendment
- carpetbagger
- Ku Klux Klan (KKK)
- Radical Republicans
- Fifteenth Amendment
- Hiram Revels

**MAIN IDEA**

**2. TAKING NOTES**

Use a table like the one below to list five problems facing the South after the Civil War. Then describe the solution that was attempted for each problem.

Problem	Attempted Solution
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	

**CRITICAL THINKING**

**3. DRAWING CONCLUSIONS**

Do you think that Reconstruction had positive effects on Southern society? Why or why not?

**Think About:**

- the formation of the Ku Klux Klan
- the establishment of African American churches and schools
- why so many African Americans turned to sharecropping

**4. SUMMARIZING**

How did the Radical Republicans hope to reconstruct the South?

**5. ANALYZING PRIMARY SOURCES**

This humorous ticket was printed around the time of the Hayes-Tilden presidential election. What does it tell you about popular attitudes toward the candidates?

