

3 Reconstruction

TERMS & NAMES

Reconstruction

Andrew Johnson

Fourteenth
Amendment

Fifteenth
Amendment

Ku Klux Klan

MAIN IDEA

During Reconstruction, the country struggled over how to rebuild the South and create racial equality.

WHY IT MATTERS NOW

Reconstruction was an important step in the African-American struggle for civil rights.

ONE AMERICAN'S STORY

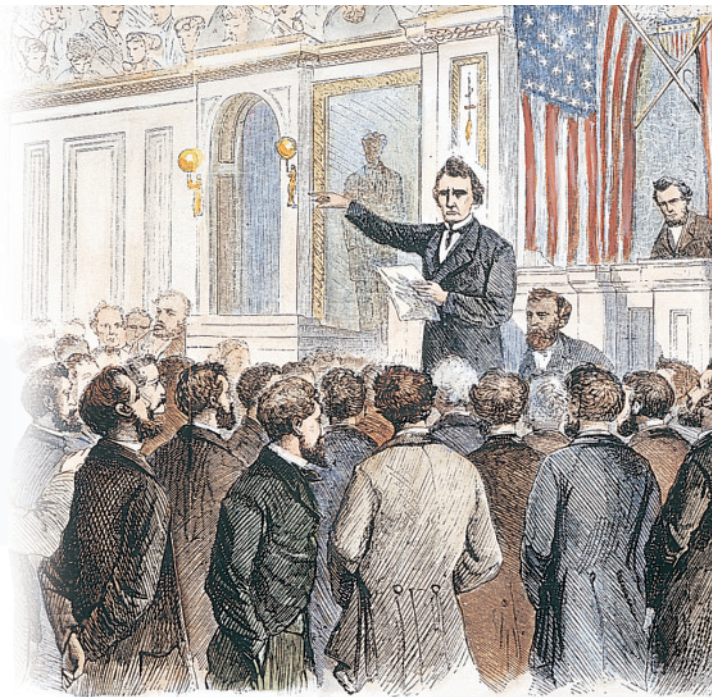
After the Civil War ended in 1865, Pennsylvania congressman Thaddeus Stevens became a leader of the Radical Republicans. This group of congressmen favored using federal power to reshape the South and promote full citizenship for African Americans.

A VOICE FROM THE PAST

The whole fabric of southern society must be changed. . . . If the South is ever to be made a safe Republic let her lands be cultivated by the toil of the owners, or the free labor of intelligent citizens.

Thaddeus Stevens, quoted in *The Era of Reconstruction* by Kenneth Stampp

In this section, you will read about the gains and setbacks in rebuilding the South and gaining equality for African Americans.



Thaddeus Stevens
addresses Congress.

Reconstruction Begins

The process the federal government used to readmit Confederate states to the Union is known as **Reconstruction**. It lasted from 1865 to 1877. After Lincoln's assassination, Vice-President **Andrew Johnson** became president. Johnson called for a moderate program for bringing the South back into the Union. He offered to pardon most white Southerners in return for a pledge of loyalty to the United States. He also required the new state governments to ratify the Thirteenth Amendment prohibiting slavery. But the Southern states set up governments that limited the freedom of former slaves. Some states even refused to ratify the Thirteenth Amendment.

New Civil Rights Laws

Some Republicans in Congress wanted to take a forceful approach toward Reconstruction. These people were called Radical Republicans. Urged on by the Radicals, Congress passed the Civil Rights Act of 1866.

Vocabulary
civil rights: those rights granted to all citizens

It declared that all persons born in the United States (except Native Americans) were citizens and entitled to equal rights.

Republicans also wanted equality to be protected by the Constitution itself. To achieve this goal, Congress proposed a new constitutional amendment in 1866. This proposed amendment stated that all people born in the United States were citizens and had the same rights. Johnson refused to support the amendment. Only one former Confederate state approved it.

Outraged Republicans then passed the Reconstruction Acts of 1867, which began a period known as Radical Reconstruction. From this point on, Congress controlled Reconstruction. It divided the South into five military districts and took away the right of Confederate leaders to vote. Before Southern states could reenter the Union, they had to approve new state constitutions giving the vote to all adult men. They also had to ratify the amendment to extend citizenship to African Americans. When they did so in 1868, it became the **Fourteenth Amendment**.

In 1867, Southern voters chose delegates to draft new state constitutions. About three-fourths of the delegates were Republicans. About half of these were poor white farmers. They were called scalawags (scoundrels) for going along with Radical Reconstruction. Another one-fourth of the Republican delegates were known as carpetbaggers—white Northerners who had come to the South after the war. Many Southerners accused them, often unfairly, of seeking only to get rich or gain political power. African Americans made up the rest of the Republican delegates. Most were ministers, teachers, or skilled workers.

By 1870, voters in all the Southern states had approved the new constitutions written by these delegates. The states then were let back into the Union and allowed to send representatives to Congress.

Johnson and Grant

President Johnson fought against many of the Radical Republican reform efforts. The conflict between Johnson and Congress came to a showdown. In 1867, Congress passed the Tenure of Office Act, which prohibited the president from firing government officials without Senate approval. In February 1868, Johnson fired his secretary of war without getting Senate approval. The House of Representatives voted to impeach him, or formally accuse him of improper conduct. The case moved to the Senate for a trial, where Johnson was acquitted by one vote.

HISTORY through ART

His First Vote, an 1868 oil painting by Thomas Waterman Wood, shows a new African-American voter.

How do you think the man felt about voting?



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A. Contrasting

How did Radical Reconstruction differ from Andrew Johnson's plan?

Background

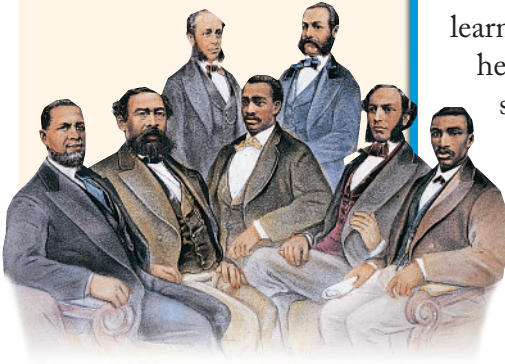
Carpetbaggers were said to have headed south carrying only a cheap suitcase, known as a carpetbag.

Now and then

AFRICAN AMERICANS IN CONGRESS

Between 1870 and 1877, 16 African Americans served in Congress. Seven are shown in the picture below. Two were senators: Hiram R. Revels and Blanche K. Bruce, both of whom were from Mississippi.

In 1999, there were 38 African Americans in Congress. The longest-serving member was John Conyers, a representative from Michigan elected in 1964. Only two African-American senators were elected in the 20th century. Massachusetts senator Edward W. Brooke served from 1967 to 1979. Illinois senator Carol Moseley-Braun served from 1993 to 1999.



In 1868, Americans elected Ulysses S. Grant to be president. During his tenure, the **Fifteenth Amendment** (1870), which stated that citizens could not be stopped from voting “on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude,” was ratified.

Grant won a second term, but his support declined because of political scandals involving officials in his administration. In addition, a five-year economic depression began in 1873. During the depression, many white Americans lost interest in Reconstruction.

Daily Life During Reconstruction

Reconstruction spelled a new beginning for recently freed African Americans. To assist former slaves, Lincoln had established the Freedmen’s Bureau. This federal agency set up schools and hospitals for African Americans and distributed clothes, food, and fuel. Children and adults flocked to freedmen’s schools to learn to read and write. The Freedmen’s Bureau also helped reunite many family members who had been separated during slavery.

With freedom, African Americans no longer had to work for an owner’s benefit. However, without their own land to support themselves, many African Americans returned to work on plantations as wage earners. They earned very low wages, and many owners cheated workers out of wages. Some African Americans decided to turn to share-

cropping. In this system, a worker rents land to farm and gives the landowner a share of the crop.

Landowners forced sharecroppers to grow cash crops, such as cotton, instead of food. As a result, farmers had to buy food from the local store, which was usually owned by the landlord. Most farmers did not have money and so bought on credit. Many got caught in a cycle of debt that kept them poor.

Besides poverty, African Americans in the South continued to face racial violence. Many white Southerners did not want African Americans to achieve equality. In 1866, such feelings spurred the rise of the **Ku Klux Klan**. This secret group aimed to keep former slaves powerless. Klansmen burned houses and beat and killed people. As gun-toting Klansmen kept Republicans from voting, the Democrats increased their power.

The End of Reconstruction

Supreme Court decisions also prevented African Americans from exercising their rights. For example, the Court ruled in 1876 that the federal

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B. Drawing Conclusions Why did Congress decide to impeach President Johnson?

Reconstruction: Civil Rights Amendments and Laws

Civil Rights Act of 1866	• Granted citizenship and equal rights to all persons born in the United States (except Native Americans)
Fourteenth Amendment (1868)	• Granted citizenship and equal protection of the laws to all persons born in the United States (except Native Americans)
Fifteenth Amendment (1870)	• Protected the voting rights of African Americans
Civil Rights Act of 1875	• Outlawed racial segregation in public services • Ensured the right of African Americans to serve as jurors

SKILLBUILDER Interpreting Charts

1. Which amendment and law are most similar?
2. Which amendment specifically protects voting rights?

government could not punish individuals, such as Klansmen, who violated the civil rights of African Americans.

The final blow to Reconstruction came with the 1876 presidential election. The race between Democratic candidate Samuel J. Tilden and Republican candidate Rutherford B. Hayes was so close that both parties claimed victory. Leaders of the two parties then agreed to a deal that made Hayes president. In exchange, the South won several promises, including a pledge to remove federal troops from the South. After the election, Reconstruction governments in the South collapsed, and the Democrats returned to power. The new Southern state governments quickly gutted the Reconstruction civil rights laws.

Reconstruction had mixed results. African Americans did not achieve equality. Most still lived in poverty and faced violence and prejudice. However, the nation did reunite. Black schools and churches endured. And civil rights protections that became part of the Constitution supported the civil rights struggles of the 20th century.

ReadingHistory

B. Summarizing

What events weakened support for Reconstruction?

Section 3 Assessment

1. Terms & Names

Explain the significance of:

- Reconstruction
- Andrew Johnson
- Fourteenth Amendment
- Fifteenth Amendment
- Ku Klux Klan

2. Taking Notes

Review the section and find five significant events to place on a time line as shown.



In your opinion, which event was most important and why?

3. Main Ideas

- a. What role did the Radical Republicans play in Reconstruction?
- b. What impact did the Reconstruction Acts of 1867 have on the South?
- c. How did the lives of African Americans improve during Reconstruction?

4. Critical Thinking

Analyzing Causes Despite greater civil rights, why did African Americans still face difficulty in improving their lives?

THINK ABOUT

- ownership of farm land
- the Ku Klux Klan's rise
- Supreme Court rulings

ACTIVITY OPTIONS

LANGUAGE ARTS

CIVICS

Research Ku Klux Klan activities barring African Americans from voting. Then write a protest **letter to the editor** or propose a **law** to protect voting rights.