

# 14 Reconstruction

SS8H6.c

After the Civil War, the South was left in ruins. Cities and farms had been burned to the ground. **Reconstruction** was the time period when rebuilding began. During this time, the South was ruled by the Union army. Southern states began to rejoin the Union.

## Presidential Reconstruction

President *Abraham Lincoln* believed that the Southern states should be admitted back into the Union following some initial steps. Only 10% of the voting population in each state needed to promise to be loyal to the Union. Also, the state had to outlaw slavery. Many Northerners believed Lincoln was too lenient with the South and desired that the South be punished for the war.

A group of anti-slavery activists called the **Radical Republicans** thought that more needed to be done. They wanted the Confederates to be punished. The Radical Republicans created a stricter bill called the **Wade-Davis Bill** that provided military leaders to govern the Confederate states until a series of actions allowed the states to return to the Union. Although Congress passed the bill, Lincoln vetoed it.

When President Lincoln was assassinated, shortly after the end of the war in April 1865, *Andrew Johnson* became president. He continued with Lincoln's moderate Reconstruction plan, however, he believed that some extreme measures needed to take place. Johnson did not let former Confederate officers and wealthy landowners vote. He also made reconciling states ratify the **Thirteenth Amendment** to the U.S. Constitution. This amendment officially ended slavery in the U.S.

Angered by his moderate stance on Reconstruction, Congress impeached President Johnson after he tried to fire a Radical Republican. **Impeachment** occurs when an elected person is formally accused of doing something wrong. The Radical Republicans were not able to kick President Johnson out of office. The impeachment was acquitted, but much of Johnson's power was taken away.

## Congressional Reconstruction

After Johnson's power was depleted by Congress, Congress took it upon itself to come up with a Reconstruction plan for the South. During Congressional Reconstruction, lawmakers created the **Freedmen's Bureau**. It helped the people who were enslaved. It provided food and clothing. It also built schools for African Americans. In Georgia, the bureau helped white landowners create contracts so that African Americans could be paid for their labor.

Congress also passed the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments. The **Fourteenth Amendment** defines U.S. citizenship and includes newly freed slaves.

The **Fifteenth Amendment** ensures that the right to vote cannot be denied to any U.S. citizen on account of "race, color, or previous condition of servitude." At that time, women still could not yet vote, and the voting age was 21.

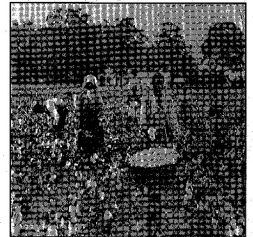
African Americans' support in Georgia helped to elect *Henry McNeal Turner*, an African American, to state legislature. Another African American politician in Georgia was *Tunis Campbell*. He was elected to the U.S. Senate. Campbell worked hard to protect African Americans, but he was eventually voted out of office. He was harassed and eventually jailed by white opponents in Georgia.

## White Backlash

Most white Southerners were angry that African Americans were freed. Those in power passed state laws to control African American people. These laws were called the **black codes**. Georgia's black codes were less strict than those in other states. African Americans in the state had the right to buy and sell property. They also were able to sue people in court. However, they were not allowed to serve as jurors and could not testify against whites in court. Georgia and other states also limited the rights of African Americans to vote, despite the Fifteenth Amendment.

Southern whites created a policy of **segregation**, which is the separation of the races. The Supreme Court said segregation was legal as long as different races had "separate but equal" accommodations. Schools, restaurants, theaters, bathrooms, and all public facilities were segregated.

Many whites also used violence to regain control of the South. The Ku Klux Klan (KKK) was a terrorist group that targeted blacks and often went out in robes and hoods. KKK members killed many African Americans and also beat and killed whites who helped African Americans. African American politicians like Georgia's *Tunis Campbell* and *Henry McNeal Turner* were often targeted by the Klan.



A group of poor sharecroppers harvest cotton in the fields of Georgia.

## Farming after Slavery

After the Civil War, farming continued to be the main source of income for Southerners. Now that slavery was illegal, planters had to pay workers for their labor. Some paid their former slaves a wage for their work. Many planters did not have money to pay their workers. This led to **sharecropping**, the most commonly used agricultural working relationship between African Americans and whites in the South. Under this system, a person planted crops on a landowner's land and paid the landowner a share of the profit. Most of the time there was little or no money left for the sharecropper after the debts, or money owed to the landowner, had been paid.

Renting small plots of land to individual farmers was another type of farming. This was called tenant farming. It was not as popular as sharecropping because most people did not have enough money to buy the seeds and equipment needed to plant crops.



**Show What You Know**

Divide the space below into two sections. In one section, brainstorm ways in which life was different for African Americans after the Civil War. In the other section, think of ways in which life was the same. Compare and discuss the two lists. Are any of the answers surprising?

Lined writing area for student response.

**Lesson Practice**

**DIRECTIONS**

Circle the letter of the best answer for each item.

**Thinking It Through**

1. Which of the ideas below did the Radical Republicans believe in?
  - A. more freedoms for African Americans
  - B. leniency for former Confederate soldiers
  - C. slowing down Reconstruction
  - D. preventing African Americans from holding office

*The Republican Party was founded as an anti-slavery party. The Radical Republicans wanted enslaved people to be free.*

2. How were landowners compensated by sharecroppers?
  - A. Sharecroppers collected rent from landowners.
  - B. Sharecroppers let landowners use their equipment.
  - C. Sharecroppers paid a portion of their profits.
  - D. Sharecroppers and landowners worked for no profit.

**HINT:** The word "sharecropping" describes how the profit from the harvest was split up.

3. Which person was one of the first African Americans elected to the U.S. Senate?
  - A. Tunis Campbell
  - B. Austin Dabney
  - C. Henry McNeal Turner
  - D. Andrew Johnson
4. Why did the Supreme Court allow Southern states to practice segregation?
  - A. They decided it was an issue of states' rights.
  - B. They allowed it if accommodations were "separate but equal."
  - C. The justices said black codes were illegal and banned them.
  - D. They believed it would decrease violence.