

RECONSTRUCTION DEBATE (Guiding Questions)

Historical Context and Background: Reconstruction was the period of time between 1865 and 1877, when the United States tried to rebuild itself after the Civil War. One of the main questions facing Americans during Reconstruction was whether the federal government would pass laws and protect the rights of African Americans. During this activity, you will work in small groups to debate the focus question below.

FOCUS QUESTION: WERE AFRICAN AMERICANS FREE DURING RECONSTRUCTION?

Directions: With your group read through the document set and answer the questions below.

Document A: Reconstruction Amendments (13th, 14th, and 15th)

1. When were the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments passed respectively?
2. Why do you think Reconstruction Amendments were passed? What was the purpose of these constitutional changes?
3. What rights did these amendments guarantee for American citizens?

Document B: Black Codes

1. When were these Black Codes written? Who do you think wrote these laws?
2. Describe three specific things that freed men and women were NOT allowed to do according to the Black Codes.
3. Why would white Southerners pass laws that controlled the movement of African Americans? What would happen if African Americans left the South in huge numbers?
4. How do these laws help you to understand what life was like in Louisiana, and other Southern states, in the years after the conclusion of the Civil War?

Document C: Henry Adams Statement

1. Who wrote this document? When was it written? Why was it written?
2. According to Adams, what was life like for freed men and women after the Civil War?
3. Do you trust the account of life in the South from this document? Is the source reliable? Why or why not?

Document D: Elected Black Officials During Reconstruction

1. What does this information about African American politicians tell you about what political life was like for African Americans during Reconstruction? (think about both positive and negative effects of this information)

Document E: Education

1. Why do you think education was important to former slaves during Reconstruction?
2. How does this description of life for freedom compare to Henry Adams' statement (Doc. C)?

RECONSTRUCTION DEBATE (Arguments and Evidence)

Directions: With your group use this space to write down your main points and any relevant supporting evidence from the documents. During the debate record additional information made by the other side to better understand the overall arguments being made.

| PRO ARGUMENT – African Americans WERE FREE during Reconstruction because... | |
|--|--------------------------------|
| Argument #1: | |
| Supporting Evidence from Document _____ | Explanation of Evidence |
| Supporting Evidence from Document _____ | Explanation of Evidence |
| Argument #2: | |
| Supporting Evidence from Document _____ | Explanation of Evidence |
| Supporting Evidence from Document _____ | Explanation of Evidence |
| Argument #3: | |
| Supporting Evidence from Document _____ | Explanation of Evidence |
| Supporting Evidence from Document _____ | Explanation of Evidence |

CON ARGUMENT - African Americans WERE NOT FREE during Reconstruction because...

Argument #1:

Supporting Evidence from Document _____

Explanation of Evidence

Supporting Evidence from Document _____

Explanation of Evidence

Argument #2:

Supporting Evidence from Document _____

Explanation of Evidence

Supporting Evidence from Document _____

Explanation of Evidence

Argument #3:

Supporting Evidence from Document _____

Explanation of Evidence

Supporting Evidence from Document _____

Explanation of Evidence

Debate Procedures

During the debate groups will take turn presenting their primary arguments and explaining any supporting evidence. The following order and timing will be used to structure the debate.

Day 1: Preparation and Research

Groups will analyze documents by completing the guiding questions. Groups will then synthesize information and organize three different arguments for their assigned side of the debate, choosing document evidence and outside knowledge to support each argument.

Day 2: Debate Format

During the debate all group members must present at some point. You will be judged not only on participation, but on the quality of your response.

- 3 Minutes = PRO SIDE, present and explain ARGUMENT #1 with supporting evidence.
= CON SIDE, writes down Pro Arguments and supporting evidence
- 3 Minutes = CON SIDE, present and explain ARGUMENT #1 with supporting evidence
= PRO SIDE, writes down Con Arguments and supporting evidence
- 3 Minutes = PRO SIDE, present and explain ARGUMENT #1 with supporting evidence
= CON SIDE, writes down Pro Arguments and supporting evidence
- 3 Minutes = CON SIDE, present and explain ARGUMENT #1 with supporting evidence
= PRO SIDE, writes down Con Arguments and supporting evidence
- 5 Minutes = OPEN DEBATE, where both sides discuss back and forth, any rebuttals or counter-arguments, or additional arguments not made during previous rounds.

Wrap Up – Check for Understanding

Write an overall 2-3 sentence claim that expresses your own historical argument in response to the debate focus question. (Students may abandon their assigned positions)

Reconstruction Timeline

- 1865** The Civil War ends.
- Republican President Abraham Lincoln is assassinated.
Democrat Andrew Johnson becomes president.
- 13th Amendment to the Constitution passes.
- Congress creates the Freedmen's Bureau to help freed men and women transition from slavery.
- 1866** Civil Rights Act of 1866 allows African Americans to own property and to be treated equally in court.
- The Ku Klux Klan is founded.
- 1867** Radical Republicans take over the United States government.
- 1868** 14th Amendment to the Constitution passes.
- First African American elected to United States Congress.
- 1869** Ulysses S. Grant is elected president.
- 1870** 15th Amendment to the Constitution passes.
- 1871** Congress passes the Ku Klux Klan Act of 1871 in response to reports of widespread violence in the South.
- 1872** The Freedmen's Bureau ends.
- 1874** Democrats take control of the United States Congress.
Radical Republicans are no longer in power.
- 1877** Rutherford B. Hayes is elected President and officially ends Reconstruction. Hayes pulls all remaining Northern troops out of the Southern states.

Document A: The Reconstruction Amendments (Modified)

The 13th, 14th and 15th amendments to the United States Constitution are sometimes called the “Reconstruction Amendments.” They were passed in order to abolish slavery and to establish the rights of former slaves.

13th Amendment: 1865

Section 1. Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their **jurisdiction**.

14th Amendment: 1868

Section 1. All persons born or **naturalized** in the United States . . . are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside. No State shall make or enforce any law which shall **abridge** the privileges or **immunities** of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.

15th Amendment: 1870

Section 1. The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.

Vocabulary

jurisdiction: legal control
naturalized: made citizens
abridge: limit
immunities: rights

Document B: Black Codes (Modified)

In the years following the Civil War, many Southern states and cities passed Black Codes. These laws laid out what freed blacks were and were not allowed to do. The document below, passed July 3, 1865, is a Black Code from Opelousas, Louisiana.

SECTION 1. No negro shall be allowed to come within the limits of the town of Opelousas without special permission from his employers.

SECTION 3. No negro shall be permitted to rent or keep a house within the limits of the town under any circumstances.

SECTION 4. No negro shall **reside** within the limits of the town of Opelousas who is not in the regular service of some white person or former owner.

SECTION 5. No public meetings of negroes shall be allowed within the limits of the town of Opelousas under any circumstances without the permission of the mayor or president of the board of police. This, however, does not prevent the freedmen from attending the usual church services.

SECTION 7. No freedman who is not in the military service shall be allowed to carry firearms, or any kind of weapons, within the limits of the town of Opelousas without the special permission of his employer, in writing, and approved by the mayor or president of the board of police.

SECTION 11. All the foregoing provisions apply to freedmen and freedwomen.

Source: *Black Code from Opelousas, Louisiana, July 3, 1865.*

Vocabulary

reside: to live in

Document C: Henry Adams Statement (Modified)

In September 1865 I asked the boss to let me go to the city of Shreveport. He said, "All right, when will you come back?" I told him "next week." He said, "You had better carry a pass." I said, "I will see whether I am free by going without a pass."

I met four white men about six miles south of town. One of them asked me who I belonged to. I told him no one. So him and two others struck me with a stick and told me they were going to kill me and every other Negro who told them that they did not belong to anyone. They left me and I then went on to Shreveport. I saw over twelve colored men and women, beat, shot and hung between there and Shreveport.

Sunday I went back home. The boss was not at home. I asked the madam [the boss's wife], "where was the boss?" She said, "You should say 'master'. You all are not free . . . and you shall call every white lady 'missus' and every white man 'master.'"

During the same week the madam took a stick and beat one of the young colored girls, who was about fifteen years of age. The boss came the next day and whipped the same girl nearly to death. . . . After the whipping a large number of young colored people decided to leave that place for Shreveport. [On our way], out came about forty armed white men and shot at us and took my horse. They said they were going to kill every colored person they found leaving their masters.

Source: *Former slave Henry Adams made this statement before the U.S. Senate in 1880 about the early days of his freedom after the Civil War.*

Document D: Elected Black Officials during Reconstruction

During Reconstruction, thousands of African Americans were elected to local and state governments throughout the Southern states. In addition, 17 African Americans were elected to the United States Congress from Southern states between 1870 and 1877. Here are photographs of 6 of these 17 elected officials.



Blanche Bruce
U.S. Senator
Mississippi
1875-1881



Robert DeLarge
U.S. Representative
South Carolina
1871-1873



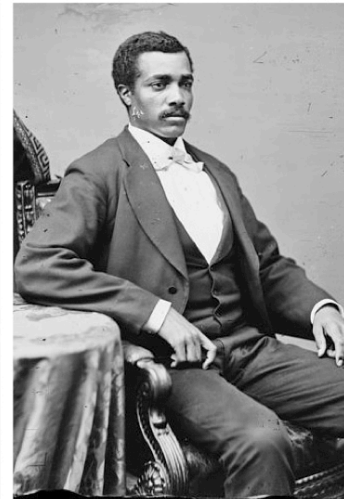
Jefferson Long
U.S. Representative
Georgia
1871



Joseph Rainey
U.S. Representative
South Carolina
1870-1879



Benjamin Turner
U.S. Representative
Alabama
1871-1873



Josiah Walls
U.S. Representative
Florida
1871-1876

Document E: Education (Modified)

In 1865 the United States government created the Freedmen's Bureau to help former slaves in Southern states. The Freedmen's Bureau helped people by providing medical supplies and health care and establishing schools.

The creation of schools for former slaves was an important part of Reconstruction. Before the Civil War, Southern states outlawed the teaching of reading and writing to slaves.

Many of the negroes . . . common plantation negroes, and day laborers in the towns and villages, were supporting little schools themselves. Everywhere I found them hoping to get their children into schools. I often noticed that workers in stores and men working in warehouses, and cart drivers on the streets, had spelling books with them, and were studying them during the time they were not working. Go outside any large town in the South, and walk among the negro housing, and you will see children and in many cases grown negroes, sitting in the sun alongside their cabins studying.

Source: *Sidney Andrews quoted in the Joint Report on Reconstruction, 1866. The document above is an excerpt from a report by a Northern white man to the United States government in 1866.*