

## RECONSTRUCTION

The Union defeated the Confederate states in the Civil War and now the United States government had the task of reuniting the country. Political leaders disagreed on how to treat the Confederate states that had unsuccessfully fought for their independence. President Lincoln thought the southern states should be readmitted to the union as quickly and easily as possible. He opposed harsh punishment for the southern states. Let the nation rebuild and move forward. Some politicians in Congress disagreed with this and thought the south should be punished for being disloyal to the United States.

After President Lincoln was assassinated in April 1865, his Vice-President Andrew Johnson became President. He agreed with Lincoln's ideas of reconstruction. However, the Radical Republicans in Congress, rejected his plan. The Radical Republican's Reconstruction plan made it more difficult for a state that had seceded to be readmitted to the union. This was the plan that was accepted. Their plan included the following:

1. Southern military leaders were not allowed to hold office or to vote.
2. The south was divided into 5 military districts that were under the command of Union soldiers.

Life in the south became difficult for many. There had been a lot of damaged property in the war. Jobs were hard to find. People did not have money to meet expenses. In addition many northern politicians came to the South and were able to win elections there because they instructed black voters to elect them. These people were called **Carpetbaggers** because they carried their possessions in a bag made of old carpet material. Many grew rich through illegal means and by bribing black voters, which caused major resentment by Southerners towards the North.

Congress did help the newly freed slaves in several ways. They created the **Freedman's Bureau**, which helped blacks find food, shelter, and clothing as well as find jobs for the former slaves. The passage of three amendments to the United States Constitution was also significant. These amendments are:

**13th Amendment** -bans slavery forever in the United States and any of its territories

**14th Amendment**-guarantees citizenship to all persons born in the United States

and guarantees them equal protection under the law.

**15th Amendment-** ensures the right to vote to all citizens regardless of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.

These amendments make sure all citizens are treated equally under the law.

Reconstruction was a difficult period for the United States. It did finally end with the passage of the **Amnesty Act** in 1872 that made it easier for former Confederates to regain their right to vote. After the Election of 1876 President Rutherford B. Hayes agreed to remove all troops from the south. Gradually the healing was complete and the United States was again a strong union.

**Activity:** To show your understanding of the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments write at least one sentence and draw a picture or symbol to illustrate each. Use loose-leaf paper to complete the assignment.

**Directions:** Using your “Reconstruction” story answer the following questions. You are to write out the question, skip a space, and then answer it on loose-leaf paper.

1. Who won the Civil War?
2. What was President Lincoln’s view on bring the South back into the Union? (name 2 points he made)
3. What were the two points made in the Radical Republicans Reconstruction plan?
4. Who were the carpetbaggers?
5. What was the purpose of the Freedman’s Bureau?
6. What was the 13th amendment?
7. What was the 14th amendment?
8. What was the 15th amendment?

9. The election of what president brought the Reconstruction Era to an end?

10. What was the purpose of the Reconstruction amendments?