

Reconstruction

Backwards Planning Curriculum Units

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How to Use This Unit

Backwards planning offers an innovative yet simple approach to meeting curriculum goals; it also provides a way to keep students engaged and focused throughout the learning process. Many teachers approach history instruction in the following manner: they identify a topic required by state and/or national standards, they find materials on that topic, they use those materials with their students, and then they administer some sort of standard test at the end of the unit. Backwards planning, rather than just starting with a required instructional topic, goes a step further by identifying exactly what students need to know by the end of the unit—the so-called “enduring understandings.” The next step involves assessment: devising ways to determine whether students have learned what they need to know. The final step involves planning the teaching/learning process so that students can acquire the knowledge needed.

This product uses backwards planning to combine a PowerPoint presentation, activities that involve authentic assessment, and traditional tests (multiple-choice and essay) into a complete curriculum unit. Although the materials have enough built-in flexibility that you can use them in a number of ways, we suggest the following procedure:

1. Start with the “essential questions” listed on slide 2 of the PowerPoint presentation (these also appear in the teacher support materials). Briefly go over them with students before getting into the topic material. These questions will help students focus their learning and note taking during the course of the unit. You can also choose to use the essential questions as essay questions at the end of the unit; one way to do this is to let students know at the outset that one of the essential questions will be on the test—they just won’t know which one.
2. Next, discuss the activities students will complete during the unit. This will also help focus their learning and note taking, and it will lead them to view the PowerPoint presentation in a different light, considering it a source of ideas for authentic-assessment projects.
3. Present the PowerPoint to the class. Most slides have an image and bullet points summarizing the slide’s topic. The Notes page for each slide contains a paragraph or two of information that you can use as a presentation script, or just as background information for your own reference. You don’t need to present the entire PowerPoint at once: it’s broken up into several sections, each of which concludes with some discussion questions that echo parts of the essential questions and also help students to get closer to the “enduring understandings.” Spend some time with the class going over and debating these questions—this will not only help students think critically about the material, but it will also allow you to incorporate different modes of instruction during a single class period, offering a better chance to engage students.
4. Have students complete one or more of the authentic-assessment activities. These activities are flexible: most can be completed either individually or in groups, and either as homework or as in-class assignments. Each activity includes a rubric; many also have graphic organizers. You can choose to have students complete the activities after you have shown them the entire PowerPoint presentation, or you can show them one section of the PowerPoint, go over the discussion questions, and then have students complete an activity.

5. End the unit with traditional assessment. The support materials include a 20-question multiple-choice quiz; you can combine this with an essay question (you can use one of the essential questions or come up with one of your own) to create a full-period test.

6. If desired, debrief with students by going over the essential questions with them again and remind them what the enduring understandings are.

We are dedicated to continually improving our products and working with teachers to develop exciting and effective tools for the classroom. We can offer advice on how to maximize the use of the product and share others' experiences. We would also be happy to work with you on ideas for customizing the presentation.

We value your feedback, so please let us know more about the ways in which you use this product to supplement your lessons; we're also eager to hear any recommendations you might have for ways in which we can expand the functionality of this product in future editions. You can e-mail us at access@socialstudies.com. We look forward to hearing from you.

Dr. Aaron Willis
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Reconstruction: Backwards Planning Activities

Enduring understandings:

- The Reconstruction era was a period of struggle between the executive and legislative branches of the U.S. government
- The Reconstruction era revealed deep divisions in the nation regarding the return of the former Confederate states to the Union
- Reconstruction greatly redefined the place of African Americans in American society
- African Americans made limited political gains throughout the era of Reconstruction
- Reconstruction led to the emergence of the “Solid South,” in which the Democratic Party dominated Southern politics into the later 20th century
- Reconstruction led to a period of Republican dominance in national politics, which continued until the early 20th century
- Changes brought about by Reconstruction led to formation of several Southern white-supremacist groups, most notably the Ku Klux Klan
- The Reconstruction Era saw a period of reform in the new Southern state governments

Essential questions:

- How did “executive Reconstruction” differ from “legislative Reconstruction”?
- Why did the Supreme Court interpret pivotal Reconstruction legislation and constitutional amendments in a narrow fashion?
- How did Reconstruction change life for African Americans?
- What lasting social and economic changes occurred in the South during and as a result of Reconstruction?
- How did Reconstruction alter the U.S. Constitution and its interpretation?
- How did the Reconstruction era change land ownership and use?
- What results of the Reconstruction era are evident in later U.S. history and in modern-day America?

Learning Experiences and Instruction

Students will need to know...	Students will need to be able to...
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How Lincoln’s Reconstruction plan differed from those of Andrew Johnson and the Radical Republicans 2. How Radical Republicans came to prominence in the U.S. Congress 3. Why the Radicals attempted to impeach President Andrew Johnson in 1868 4. How African Americans sought to increase their social and political influence during the period 5. How the federal government sought to assist freedmen in their quest to become successful in their new lives 6. How the 14th and 15th Amendments were intended to provide civil rights for freedmen 7. How sharecropping ensured a “return to slavery” for most blacks 8. How groups such as the Ku Klux Klan came to prominence in the period, and their tactics 9. The long-term legacy of Reconstruction 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Read and interpret primary source documents from the Reconstruction era 2. Make conclusions about various views on how former Confederate states should reenter the Union 3. Identify important figures, both political and social, from the Reconstruction era 4. Determine how the U.S. Supreme Court and Southern governments interpreted changes in the Constitution made during the period 5. Analyze how the Reconstruction period affected both Southern whites and blacks 6. Determine the long-term effects of the period on American society and politics

Teaching and learning activities that will equip students to demonstrate targeted understandings:

- Overview of essential questions and basic understandings
- Questions for class discussion of subject matter in the PowerPoint presentation
- Teacher introduction of common terms and ideas in the essential questions and related projects
- Provide students with primary source materials from which they will complete related projects in the unit
- Students conduct research in groups to be used later in individual and group projects
- Informal observation and coaching of students as they work in groups
- Evaluation and delivered feedback on projects and research reports
- Having students create and present their unit projects
- A posttest made up of multiple-choice questions covering the presentation, with one or more essential questions as essay questions.

Project #1: Sharecropper's Letter

Overview:

In this lesson, students research daily life and problems facing Reconstruction-era sharecroppers. Based on their research, they assume the roles of sharecroppers or white landowners writing letters to a fictitious congressman or senator, asking for assistance with improving their economic condition and life, and describing the positive aspects and problems both whites and blacks faced with this system.

Objectives:

After completing this lesson, students will:

- Collect information about the process of sharecropping, as well as the positive and negative effects for freedmen
- Develop conclusions about the impact of sharecropping
- Express conclusions regarding sharecropping and its impact via expository writing

Time required:

One to three 50-minute class periods

Materials:

Computer(s) with Internet access; paper, writing utensils, word processor, and printer, if desired

Methodology:

Begin the lesson by asking the class to discuss the concept of sharecropping. You or a student volunteer can write terms about sharecropping on a chalkboard or overhead projector. If needed, have the class review the presentation slide dealing with sharecropping (slide #43).

After the class has reviewed the material, read the included script to students to introduce the assignment.

Once students have completed research, allow adequate time for them to fill out the "Sharecropping Comparison Chart" and write their letters based on the information they collected.