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i Think : U.S. History



by Sharon Coletti

** It is the goal of InspirEd Educators to create instructional materials that are interesting, engaging, and challenging. Our student-centered approach incorporates both content and skills, placing particular emphasis on reading, writing, vocabulary development, and critical and creative thinking in the content areas.

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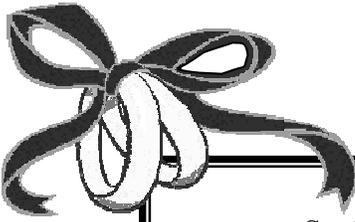
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Getting Back Together

Springboard:

Students should read “Reconstruction” and answer the questions.

(The definition is given below. Answers to the second question will vary but should be supported by facts.)

Objective: The student will be able to explain the conflicts over U.S. efforts to reconstruct the South after the Civil War.

Materials: Reconstruction (Springboard handout)
Strategic Planning (handout)
Committee Comments (handout)

Terms to know: **amnesty** - official government pardon
successor - one who follows another into a position of leadership
martial law – military rule over a state or region in a time of emergency

Procedure:

- After reviewing the Springboard, explain that there was no doubt about the bitterness Southerners held for the “Yankees” who defeated them in the war and destroyed their economy and way of life. There was also little question that the U.S. would abolish slavery and all that went with it: plantation life and political control by the wealthy landholders. The question facing the federal government in Washington was, “How?” Go on to explain that in this lesson the student(s) will learn more about various efforts to reconstruct the South after the Civil War. (A connection could be made to the difficulties faced in reconstructing ANY nation after a war.)
- Hand out copies of “Strategic Planning” and “Committee Comments.” Explain that in this activity the student(s) will be serving on a “Congressional Committee” to study the various plans and offer recommendations for Reconstruction. The student(s) should work individually or in groups, if possible, to complete the activity. (Emphasize that they should respond to the situation with the “hindsight” of the 21st century, rather than try to think like a politician of the day.)
- Have the student(s) share their answers and discuss. *(They should understand that the problems confronting the nation at that time were overwhelming; it was virtually impossible for everyone to agree on what should be done. The South needed to be physically and economically rebuilt; newly freed slaves needed to be cared for and educated; and a new way of life had to be constructed. The South had little or no experience with free Blacks, and racist attitudes developed over centuries were not to be erased easily.)*
- **EXTENSION:** In southern states the student(s) could find out the specifics of how and when their state was reconstructed into the Union.

RECONSTRUCTION

When the Civil War ended, large areas of the United States, particularly in the South, lay in ruin. The cost of reconstructing the nation was expected to be enormous. But how should the nation be rebuilt? What punishment, if any, should be inflicted on the South and the Confederate leaders? What should be done for the newly-freed slaves?

Debate about these and other issues began long before the war's end. Before his assassination, Lincoln had supported a plan aimed at healing the bitterness between the North and South. He wanted to grant amnesty to any Confederate who would swear loyalty to the national government. Many in Washington, however, disagreed and proposed their own plan.

When Lincoln's successor, Andrew Johnson, became president, he proposed a "middle-of-the-road" plan. Responding to members of Congress who called themselves "Radical Republicans," his plan required Southerners to not only declare loyalty to the Union but also to disavow their acts of secession, abolish slavery, and refuse to repay any war debts to banks, citizens, or others. Even so, the Radicals were not satisfied, especially when it became clear that most Southerners were insincere in their loyalty oaths and any statements of regret they made.

When the Radical Congress passed its own plans for Reconstruction, tension between Congress and President Johnson increased. The situation worsened until 1868 when Congress impeached the president, though the Senate fell one vote short of convicting him.

In the end a Congressional plan was executed and the South was "reconstructed," but bitterness remained. While once again part of the Union, the South maintained its identity and ideas and effectively ignored many of the laws and requirements which had been imposed.

Given the information in the passage, write a definition for "Reconstruction." _____

Based on the limited amount of information given in the passage, would you say that Reconstruction was a success or failure? Explain your reasoning. _____



STRATEGIC PLANNING

The Ten Percent Plan (1863)

While the war was still being fought, President Lincoln began planning for the eventual Reconstruction of the United States. In 1863 he announced an offer to pardon any Confederates in states already under Union control. According to his plan, all that was required was for the Confederates to swear an oath of allegiance to the Union. When ten percent of the state's citizens had done so, and when the state had abolished slavery, it would be welcomed back into the Union. By war's end Lincoln added the requirement that freed slaves should be given the right to vote.

The Wade-Davis Bill

Viewing Lincoln's plan as far too lenient, Republicans in Congress offered their own Reconstruction plan in 1864. The Wade-Davis Bill required southern states to disavow their acts of secession, refuse to repay any Confederate war debts, and, of course, to abolish slavery. It also required a majority (more than 50%) of citizens to take a loyalty oath before a state could rejoin the Union. Furthermore, it required Southerners to swear that they had never voluntarily supported the Confederacy.

Andrew Johnson's Plan

Johnson's 1865 Reconstruction plan was basically a compromise between those offered by Lincoln and by Congress. As Lincoln had, Johnson offered amnesty to Confederates who would swear loyalty to the Union. He also required the states to disavow their acts of secession, abolish slavery, and refuse payment of war debts as Congress had required.

In accordance with Johnson's plan, all of the southern states except Texas began the Reconstruction process. Though South Carolina refused to apologize for secession and Mississippi refused to ratify the Thirteenth Amendment to abolish slavery, Johnson announced the success of his plan by the end of the year. As it turned out, many of those elected to office in the states were former Confederate leaders. Therefore, in an act of protest, Congress refused to seat the newly elected representatives from the southern states.

Radical Republican Reconstruction

By the fall of 1866 it was evident to many that the reconstructed South was neither sorry for its role in the war nor willing to make changes to give the freed slaves required rights of citizenship. Consequently, when elections were held in 1866, Radical Republican candidates who favored punishing the South won two-thirds majorities in both houses of Congress. These large majorities insured that Congress could override all presidential vetoes, so Congress set about to redo Reconstruction.

The former Confederate states were divided into five military districts and put under martial law. States were then required to ratify the 14th Amendment guaranteeing citizenship to freed slaves, adopt new state constitutions, and hold new elections in which Black citizens could vote. The states complied with the "letter of the law" but had not adhered to the "spirit" by the time Reconstruction ended.

Committee Comments

DIRECTIONS: Considering what you have learned about Reconstruction and 21st century hindsight, record your group's comments for each question:

Summarize the challenges the United States faced in reconstructing the nation.

Summarize the concerns of Southerners about being reconstructed into the Union.

Which Reconstruction plan(s) or plan elements do you think would have had the greatest success? Why?

Which Reconstruction plan(s) or plan elements do you think would have met with the most opposition? Why?

Given your knowledge of race relations in the United States since the Civil War, what do you think SHOULD have been done to reconstruct the South into the Union?



To Right the Unrightable Wrongs

Springboard:

Students should read “What Do They Mean?” and answer the question.

(The 13th abolished slavery; the 14th insured citizenship to freedmen, banned Confederate officers from holding office, and deemed the Confederate debt illegal; the 15th said former slaves could not be prevented from voting.)

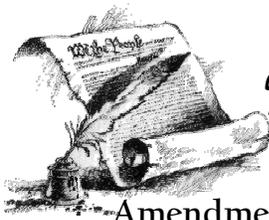
Objective: The student will be able to explain efforts to help the freed slaves and insure their rights of citizenship.

Materials: What Do They Mean? (Springboard handout)
Interview With Its Director (2 page handout)
Right and Wrong (1/2 sheet handout)

Terms to know: **freedmen** - former slaves
racism - belief that one’s race is superior to another
corruption - immoral and/or dishonest behavior

Procedure:

- In discussing the Springboard, explain that these three amendments were passed after the Civil War to guarantee the rights of citizenship to freedmen. As the last lesson illustrated, reconstruction of the southern states into the union was tied to the ratification of these amendments as a means of insuring that the freedmen would, in fact, be given their rights.
- Go on to explain that in this lesson the student(s) will learn of other government efforts to help the freedmen.
- Hand out copies of “Interview With Its Director.” Have the student(s) work individually or in pairs to read the interview and complete the “Right and Wrong” handout based on what they learn in the lesson.
- Have the student(s) share their answers and discuss. (*Suggested answers include:*
RIGHT: *passage of the XIII, XIV, and XV Amendments; the creation of the Freedmen’s Bureau; feeding, clothing, and sheltering newly-freed slaves; protecting freedmen’s rights, educating them, helping them find jobs and negotiating fair contracts with employers, giving them land, building schools and hospitals, and reuniting separated families.*
WRONG: *having illiterate former slaves sign unfair work agreements, cheating and bribing of freedmen by Freedmen’s Bureau workers and southern whites, racism and cruelty*)
- **EXTENSION:** The student(s) in southern states should find out more about the situation of the freedmen in their state at the time and add information to their chart.



What Do They Mean?

Amendment XIII - Ratification was completed on December 6, 1865

- Section 1.** Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.
- Section 2.** Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.

Amendment XIV - Ratification was completed on July 9, 1868

- Section 1.** All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, 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.
- Section 2.** Representatives shall be apportioned among the several States according to their respective numbers, counting the whole number of persons in each State, excluding Indians not taxed. But when the right to vote at any election ... is denied to any of the male inhabitants of such State, being twenty-one years of age and citizens of the United States, or in any way abridged, except for participation in rebellion, or other crime, the basis of representation therein shall be reduced...
- Section 3.** No person shall be a Senator or Representative in Congress, or ... hold any office, civil or military, under the United States, or under any State, who ... shall have engaged in insurrection or rebellion against the same, or given aid or comfort to the enemies thereof.
- Section 4.** The validity of the public debt of the United States, authorized by law ... shall not be questioned. But neither the United States nor any State shall assume or pay any debt or obligation incurred in aid of insurrection or rebellion against the United States, or any claim for the loss or emancipation of any slave; but all such debts, obligations and claims shall be held illegal and void.
- Section 5.** The Congress shall have power to enforce, by appropriate legislation, the provisions of this article.

Amendment XV - Ratification was completed on February 3, 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.
- Section 2.** The Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.



Interview with Its Director

Reprinted from InspirEd American Monthly, 1875

In April our editor sat down with Major General Oliver Otis Howard to discuss the United States Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands. Though the “Freedmen’s Bureau,” as it was commonly called, only officially existed for one year, it actually functioned from 1865 to 1872. InspirEd American wanted to talk to Major General Howard about the Bureau and its impact ten years after the war ended and the former slaves were freed.

Q - Major General, why do you think you were selected to head up the Freedmen’s Bureau?

A - I had been in the army for a long time and had fought in many of the battles in the Civil War. I think that since Congress created the Bureau with funding from the Department of War, it made sense that President Johnson would choose a military leader to head it.

Q - Could you tell me a little about the establishment of the Freedmen’s Bureau?

A - Well, more than four million people had been enslaved. When they were freed, most were helpless, homeless, and jobless. The government knew ahead of time that this would be the case and set up a commission in 1863 to decide how to cope with the problem.

The commission reported to Congress in March of ’65 and recommended the formation of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands. Congress created the Bureau officially for only a year, but it continued operating until 1872.

Q - What exactly was the mission of the Freedmen’s Bureau?

A - Basically to help the freedmen in any way they needed. It should be noted, though, that the intent was to help them get on their feet so they could take care of themselves.

Q - That still seems like a monumental task! Where did you start?

A - We started with the basics: food, clothing, fuel, and shelter. Then we worked on tougher issues. In order to protect their rights and see that, when they did get jobs, they were paid fairly, we set up temporary courts. We didn’t have much money or manpower to keep that going, though, so we turned that task over to local courts and then just helped with lawyers and such.

Q - As I understand it, the Bureau did not receive any money from the government. How then did you pay for ANY of these services?

A - We were funded somewhat by the Department of War, but we also earned money from the lands we managed. After the war the government confiscated lands from some wealthy Confederates. Our goal was to give each freed slave “forty acres and a mule,” but that would take time. In the meantime we rented out the lands and used the money to fund our work.

Q - But few freedmen, if any, ever received their land and mule, did they?

A - That's true. In the end only about 2,000 tracts of land in South Carolina and 1,500 in Georgia were given to freed slaves. Most of the lands were returned to their original owners after they were pardoned by President Johnson.

Q - That would mean that you also lost that source of money for your work. How did you keep the Bureau going without money?

A - Besides funding from the War Department, we also worked closely with other aid groups. For example, one of our main tasks was to help educate the freedmen who wanted and needed to learn to read and write. We set up schools and universities with a great deal of help from the American Missionary Association.

Q - Why was education so important? Most freedmen found work as field hands.

A - That's true, but they needed to be able to protect themselves from white landowners who could have them sign unfair contracts. It is also important to be able to read and write in order to make good voting decisions and as a group to work their way up in the world.

Q - O.K., so the Freedmen's Bureau helped educate the freed slaves, looked after their legal rights, and gave a few some land. What else did it do?

A - We helped them find jobs and negotiate fair labor contracts, we reunited family members who had been separated during slavery, and we provided health care. To that end we built a number of hospitals. And back to education, the Bureau did a great deal to find and train teachers.

Q - Based on all you're saying, it sounds like the freedmen should have been able to support themselves and move up in the world, but that hasn't happened. What went wrong?

A - Many things went wrong; some within the Bureau but mostly the fault lies with the southern whites. Southerners were used to Negroes as slaves have deeply held feelings of racism. It seems impossible for them to see people they've always thought of as "property" as their equals. They have and are doing all they can to prevent that from being the case.

Q - What went wrong within the Bureau?

A - Corruption. Not all of our workers were as trustworthy as I would have hoped. Unfortunately some took advantage of the very people they were hired to serve.

Q - In the end, though, do you feel like the Freedmen's Bureau made a difference?

A - I like to think that we helped at least somewhat.

Q - If you have nothing more to add, I'd like to thank you for speaking with me.

A - Thank you.



Right and Wrong



After the Civil War much was done that was good for the freedmen but bad things were also done. Fill in the chart with things done "Right" and "Wrong." Be ready to explain your ideas.

RIGHT	WRONG



Right and Wrong



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RIGHT	WRONG