



Mary Chesnut and her husband, James ►

WITNESS HISTORY

Nothing Left But the Bare Land

Mary Chesnut was the wife of a wealthy and respected South Carolina planter and politician. During the Civil War, her husband resigned from the United States Senate to fight for the Confederacy. Now, at war's end, the family was penniless. The world they had known was gone. Mary Chesnut described the devastation.

“Mrs. Barrow drove me to our house at Mulberry. On one side of the house, every window was broken, every bell torn down, every piece of furniture destroyed, every door smashed in. . . . [The Yankee soldiers] carried off sacks of our books and our papers, our letters were strewn along the Charleston road. Potter’s raid ruined us. He burned our mills and gins, and a hundred bales of cotton. Indeed nothing is left now but the bare land.”

—Mary Boykin Chesnut, May 1865

Rival Plans for Reconstruction

Objectives

- Explain why a plan was needed for Reconstruction of the South.
- Compare the Reconstruction plans of Lincoln, Johnson, and Congress.
- Discuss Johnson’s political difficulties and impeachment.

Terms and People

Reconstruction
 Radical Republican
 Wade-Davis Bill
 Freedmen’s Bureau
 Andrew Johnson

black code
 Civil Rights Act of 1866
 Fourteenth Amendment
 impeach
 Fifteenth Amendment

Note Taking

Reading Skill: Identify Main Ideas Use a chart to record main ideas about Reconstruction.

| Plans for Reconstruction | | |
|--------------------------|---------|----------|
| Lincoln | Johnson | Congress |
| • | • | • |
| • | • | • |
| • | • | • |

Why It Matters Even before the end of the Civil War, Congress and the President disagreed over how the seceded states would rejoin the Union. When the war ended, bitterness between North and South was compounded by a power struggle between the executive and legislative branches of government. The issues that arose and how they were dealt with would have consequences for generations to come. **Section Focus Question: How did the Radical Republicans’ plans for Reconstruction differ from Lincoln’s and Johnson’s?**

The Issues of Reconstruction

When the Civil War ended, parts of the South lay in ruins—homes burned, businesses closed, many properties abandoned. African Americans, though emancipated, lacked full citizenship and the means to make a living. During the era of Reconstruction (1865–1877), the federal government struggled with how to return the eleven southern states to the Union, rebuild the South’s ruined economy, and promote the rights of former slaves.

How Will Southern States Rejoin the Union? To many Americans, the most important issue was deciding the political fate of Confederate states. Should Confederate leaders be tried for treason, or should they be pardoned so that national healing could proceed as quickly as possible? And what should be the process by which southern representatives could reclaim their seats in Congress?

The Constitution provided no guidance on secession or readmission of states. It was not clear whether Congress or the President should take the lead in forming Reconstruction policy. Some argued that states should be allowed to rejoin the Union quickly with few conditions. But many claimed that the defeated states should first satisfy certain stipulations, such as swearing loyalty to the federal government and adopting state constitutions that guaranteed freedmen’s rights.

How Will the Southern Economy Be Rebuilt? The Civil War devastated the South’s economy. Between 1860 and 1870, the South’s share of the nation’s total wealth declined from more than 30 percent to 12 percent. The Union army had destroyed factories, plantations, and railroads. Nearly half of the region’s livestock and farm machinery were gone. About one fourth of southern white men between the ages of 20 and 40 had died in the war. In addition, more than 3 million newly freed African Americans were now without homes or jobs. After the war, the land was the South’s most valuable asset, and arguments raged over who should control it.

During Reconstruction, some people proposed using the land to benefit former slaves. General William Tecumseh Sherman proposed that millions of acres abandoned by planters, or confiscated by the federal government, should be given to former slaves. “Forty acres and a mule,” he suggested, would be sufficient to support a family. Many northerners thought this might also be a way to restore the South’s productivity, reconstruct its economy, and provide employment as well as income for many African Americans.

Not everyone agreed. Southern landowners rejected the idea that the government could simply give away their land. Many white northerners worried that confiscating property violated the Constitution. Even some southern African Americans felt that the government should pay white southerners for farmland, and then sell it to former slaves on easy terms.

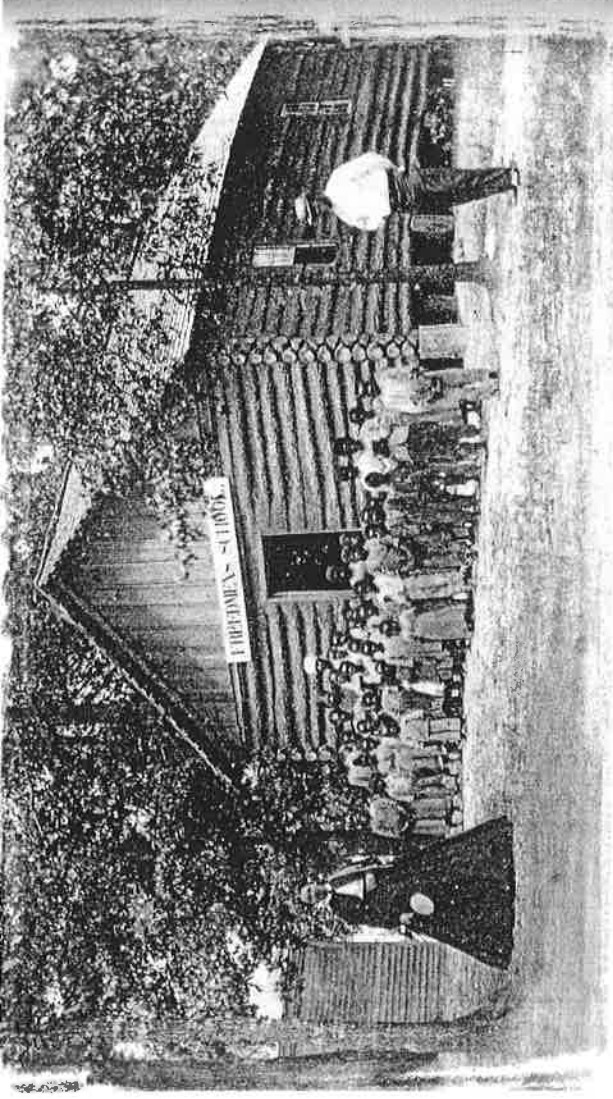
What Rights Will African Americans Have? The Thirteenth Amendment freed African Americans from slavery, but it did not grant them the privileges of full citizenship. The former slaves hoped that they would gain voting rights and access to education, benefits that most northern black people also did not have. Most leaders of the Republican Party, which at the time dominated the federal government, supported programs to extend full citizenship to African Americans. However, most white southerners opposed the idea. They feared it would undermine their own power and status in society.

Checkpoint What were three major issues of Reconstruction?

Lincoln Sets a Moderate Course

Even while the war was in progress, Union politicians had debated programs for repairing the nation’s political structure and economy. For President Lincoln, one of the first major goals was to reunify the nation.

Ten Percent Plan Offers Leniency Throughout the war, Lincoln had felt some sympathy for the South and hoped that southern states might easily rejoin the Union after the war. To this end, in 1863 he issued a Proclamation of Amnesty and Reconstruction, known as the “Ten Percent Plan.” According to its terms, as soon as ten percent of a state’s voters took a loyalty oath to the Union, the state could set up a new government. If the state’s constitution abolished slavery and provided education for African Americans, the state would regain representation in Congress.



reedmen's Bureau
 eedmen's Bureau schools like this
 ne brought new educational
 opportunities for African Americans.
*ow old do the students at this
 school appear to be?*

Lincoln was generous in other ways to white southerners. He was willing to grant pardons to former Confederates, and he considered compensating them for lost property. In addition, Lincoln did not require a guarantee of social or political equality for African Americans. He recognized pro-Union governments in Arkansas, Louisiana, and Tennessee even though they denied African Americans the right to vote.

Lincoln took the position that the Union was unbreakable and therefore the southern states had never really left the Union. In his Second Inaugural Address, delivered a month before the war ended, Lincoln promised forgiveness:

Primary Source “With malice toward none, and charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in, to bind up the nation’s wounds . . . to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and a lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations.”
 —Lincoln’s Second Inaugural Address, March 1865

Radicals Oppose the Ten Percent Plan Members of Lincoln’s own party opposed his plan. Led by Representative Thaddeus Stevens and Senator Charles Sumner, these “**Radical Republicans**” in Congress insisted that the Confederates had committed crimes—by enslaving African Americans and by entangling the nation in war.

The Radical Republicans advocated full citizenship, including the right to vote, for African Americans. They favored punishment and harsh terms for the South, and they supported Sherman’s plan to confiscate Confederates’ land and give farms to freedmen.

Rejecting Lincoln’s Ten Percent Plan, Congress passed the **Wade-Davis Bill** in 1864. It required that a majority of a state’s prewar voters swear loyalty to the Union before the process of restoration could begin. The bill also demanded guarantees of African American equality. President Lincoln killed this plan with a “pocket veto” by withholding his signature beyond the 10-day deadline at the end of the congressional session.

HISTORY MAKERS

Andrew Johnson (1808–1875)
 Despite a lack of formal schooling, Andrew Johnson became a skilled public speaker and entered Tennessee politics as a Democrat. When Tennessee seceded in 1861, Johnson was the only southern senator who refused to join the Confederacy. When the Union occupied Tennessee in 1862, Lincoln appointed him military governor. Hoping to attract Democratic voters, the Republican Party chose Johnson as Lincoln’s Vice President in 1864.



Government Aids Freedmen One Radical Republican plan did receive the President’s support. This was the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, known as the **Freedmen’s Bureau**. Created a few weeks before Lincoln’s death, its goal was to provide food, clothing, health care, and education for both black and white refugees in the South.

The Freedmen’s Bureau helped reunite families that had been separated by slavery and war. It negotiated fair labor contracts between former slaves and white landowners. By representing African Americans in the courts, the Bureau also established a precedent that black citizens had legal rights. The Freedmen’s Bureau continued its efforts until 1872.

✓ **Checkpoint** How did Lincoln’s goals differ from those of the Radical Republicans?

Johnson’s Reconstruction Plan

Lincoln was assassinated in April 1865, just weeks after his second inaugural. Lincoln’s death thrust his Vice President, **Andrew Johnson**, into the presidency.

Johnson Seeks to Restore the Union Like Lincoln, Johnson wanted to restore the political status of the southern states as quickly as possible. He offered pardons and the restoration of land to almost any Confederate who swore allegiance to the Union and the Constitution. His main requirement was that each state ratify the Thirteenth Amendment and draft a constitution that abolished slavery. However, Johnson resented wealthy planters and required that they and other Confederate leaders write to him personally to apply for a pardon.

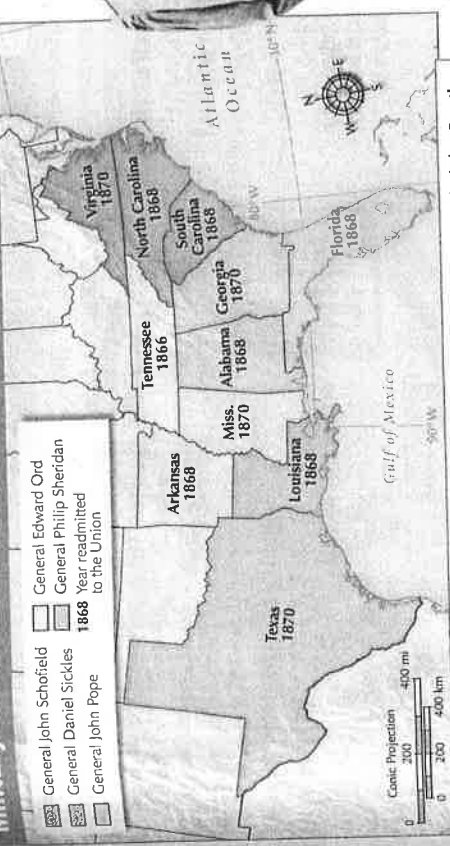
Johnson’s dislike of the planter class did not translate into a desire to elevate African Americans. Like many southerners, Johnson expected the United States to have a “government for white men.” He did not want African Americans to have the vote. In fact, he had little sympathy for their plight. Johnson supported states’ rights, which would allow the laws and customs of the state to outweigh federal regulations. States would, therefore, be able to limit the freedoms of former slaves.

By the time Congress reconvened in December 1865, most Confederate states had met Johnson’s requirements for readmission. Radical and moderate Republicans were concerned about the lack of African American suffrage, but they remained hopeful that black political rights would soon follow.

Southerners Aim to Restore Old Ways That hope was soon dashed. Beginning with the state conventions required by Johnson, southern leaders proceeded to rebuild their prewar world. Many states specifically limited the vote to white men. Some states sent their Confederate officials to the United States Congress. All of the states instituted **black codes**—laws that sought to limit the rights of African Americans and keep them as landless workers.

The codes required African Americans to work in only a limited number of occupations, most often as servants or farm laborers. Some states prohibited African Americans from owning land, and all set up vagrancy laws. These laws stipulated that any black person who did not have a job could be arrested and sent to work as prison labor. Even though the South remained under Union military occupation, white southerners openly used violence and intimidation to enforce the black codes.

Military Districts in the South



Map Skills Over Johnson's veto, Congress passed legislation that divided the South into five military districts under the command of former Union generals. Philip Sheridan (right), who had won several important Union victories in the final battles of the Civil War, was named military commander of Texas and Louisiana.

Identify Points of View How do you think southerners felt about military rule by northern generals?

Congress Fights Back Both Radical and moderate Republicans were infuriated by the South's disregard of the spirit of Reconstruction. When the southern representatives arrived in Washington, D.C., Congress refused them their seats. Congress also created a committee to investigate the treatment of former slaves. Through the spring of 1866, the political situation grew worse. While the Radicals claimed that federal intervention was needed to advance African American political and civil rights, President Johnson accused them of trying "to Africanize the southern half of our country." When Congress passed a bill to allow the Freedmen's Bureau to continue its work and provide it with authority to punish state officials who failed to extend civil rights to African Americans, Johnson vetoed it. Undaunted, Congress sought to overturn the black codes by passing the **Civil Rights Act of 1866**. This measure created federal guarantees of civil rights and superseded any state laws that limited them. But once again, Johnson used his veto power to block the law. Johnson was now openly defying Congress.

✓ **Checkpoint** How did the southern states try to reestablish conditions before the war?

Congressional Reconstruction

As violence against African Americans in the South increased, moderate and Radical Republicans blamed the rising tide of lawlessness on Johnson's lenient policies. Congress then did something unprecedented. With the required two-thirds majority, for the first time ever, it passed major legislation over a President's veto. The Civil Rights Act of 1866 became law.

Discussion Point

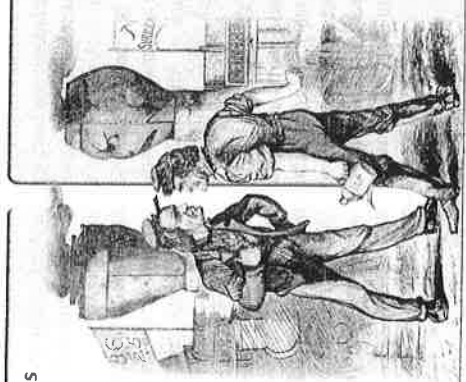
How Controls the Readmission of States?

What was their main purpose was to reunite the nation, Reconstruction policies actually created divisions between the President and Congress. A critically divisive issue was how the southern states should be readmitted into the Union.

Primary Source

eleven States are not at this represented in either branch Congress, it would seem to be President's duty on all er occasions to present their claims to Congress. . . . [I]f are all excluded from press, if in a permanent te they are declared not to be l constitutional relations to ountry, they may think they cause to become a unit in ig and sentiment against the rnement?"

—President Andrew Johnson, 1866



Stevens Favors Tight Restrictions

Primary Source

"The late war between two acknowledged belligerents . . . broke all the ties that bound them together. The future condition of the conquered power depends on the will of the conqueror. . . . Hence a law of Congress must be passed before any new State member can be lawfully admitted into either House. . . . Then each House must judge whether the members . . . possess the requisite qualifications."

—Thaddeus Stevens, 1865

You Decide

1. Why did Johnson favor immediate readmission?
2. Why did Stevens want tight restrictions?
3. What decision would you have made? Why?

Racial Reconstruction Begins Feeling their strength in Congress, a coalition of Radical and moderate Republicans spent nearly a year designing a sweeping Reconstruction program. To protect freedmen's rights from presidential vetoes, southern state legislatures, and federal court decisions, Congress passed the **Fourteenth Amendment** to the Constitution. It guaranteed equality under the law for all citizens. Under the amendment, any state that refused to allow black people to vote would risk losing the number of seats in the House of Representatives that were represented by its black population. The measure also counteracted the President's pardons by barring leading Confederate officials from holding federal or state offices.

Congress again passed legislation over Johnson's veto with the ratification of the Military Reconstruction Act of 1867. The act divided the 10 southern states that had yet to be readmitted into the Union into five military districts governed by former Union generals (see map above). The act also delineated how each state could create their new state government and receive congressional recognition. In each state, voters were to elect delegates to write a new constitution that guaranteed suffrage for African American men. Then, once the state ratified the Fourteenth Amendment, it could reenter the Union.

Congress Preaches the President The power struggle between Congress and the President reached a crisis in 1867. To limit the President's power, Congress passed the Tenure of Office Act. Under its terms, the President needed Senate approval to remove certain officials from office. The Johnson tries to be Secretary of War Edwin Stanton, the last Radical Republican in his Cabinet. Stanton barricaded himself in his office for about two months. Finally, the House of Representatives voted to impeach Johnson that is to charge him with wrongdoing in trying to bring to spare Stanton. The trial in the