CHAPTER 16

Reconstruction and the South

ANTICIPATION/REACTION

Directions: Before you begin reading this chapter, in the column entitled “Anticipation” place a check mark beside any of the following seven statements with which you now agree. When you have completed your study of this chapter, come back to this section and in the column entitled “Reaction” place a check mark beside any of the statements with which you then agree. Note any variation in the placement of check marks from anticipation to reaction and explain why you changed your mind.

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<th>Anticipation</th>
<th>Reaction</th>
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<td>1. _____ The Union armies that invaded the Confederacy treated the southern population with needless cruelty.</td>
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<td>2. _____ The Thirteenth Amendment that freed the slaves also increased the representation of southern states in Congress.</td>
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<td>3. _____ The northerners who imposed tough readmission requirements on southern states believed in racial equality, and southerners did not.</td>
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<td>4. _____ The Fourteenth Amendment outlawed racial segregation and prevented southern states from denying African Americans the right to vote.</td>
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<td>5. _____ By their own stubborn behavior, southerners brought a more severe reconstruction on themselves.</td>
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<td>6. _____ African Americans controlled the reconstruction governments Congress set up to govern the former Confederate states.</td>
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<td>7. _____ The fact that black free labor was less productive than slave labor proved that African Americans could not be trusted to work independently of white supervision.</td>
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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading Chapter 16 you should be able to:

1. Compare and contrast the provisions of both Presidential and Congressional Reconstruction plans.
2. Describe the problems and accomplishments of the Radical Reconstruction governments in the postwar South.
3. Explain why sharecropping and the crop-lien system came to dominate southern agriculture after the Civil War.

4. Explain why Radical Reconstruction governments faltered and were replaced by conservative Democratic party governments in the South by 1877.

5. List the provisions of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

Presidential Reconstruction

When the Civil War ended, the nation faced the complex legal question of how to readmit the former Confederate states back into the Union. President Lincoln’s lenient 1862 “Ten Percent Plan” merely required southern states to adopt a republican form of government, accept emancipation, and provide for African American education. It did not require black suffrage. Radical Republicans in Congress objected to the plan’s moderation and to Lincoln’s assumption that the president’s pardoning power mandated his control of Reconstruction policy. Lincoln pocket vetoed Congress’ Wade-Davis bill that would have required a majority (not merely ten percent) of southern voters to take a loyalty oath, and would have required southern states to disenfranchise former Confederates and repudiate their Confederate debt.

Lincoln’s successor, Andrew Johnson, was a spokesman for small farmers, but he held contempt for blacks and was a stubborn defender of states’ rights. He granted amnesty to all but a handful of southern planters and former Confederate officials, and by December 1865 southern states had organized new governments, ratified the Thirteenth Amendment, and elected new members to Congress.

Republican Radicals

Ultra-Radical Republicans led by Charles Sumner demanded immediate equal rights for African Americans and that they be given the vote, land, and an education. Most Republicans would settle for less. Congress objected to Johnson’s Reconstruction proposal because it would increase southern (Democratic party) representation in Congress, it allowed former Confederate leaders to hold public office, and it allowed southerners to adopt restrictive Black Codes to exploit and control African Americans.

Congress Rejects Johnsonian Reconstruction

Johnson alienated Congress by vetoing a new Freedmen’s Bureau bill and a Civil Rights Act that were designed to aid and protect the former slaves. Congress overrode his veto of the Civil Rights Act and took control of Reconstruction. Johnson’s combative personality played into the hands of the Radicals even though few northerners believed in racial equality or in providing special protection for the rights of the former slaves. But Radical Republicans understood that if African Americans were to achieve real equality, a political revolution would have to occur that would permit interference by the federal government in local affairs.
The Fourteenth Amendment

The Radical-sponsored Fourteenth Amendment increased the power of the federal government over the states. It confirmed the great change wrought by the Civil War: the growth of a more complex, more closely integrated social and economic structure requiring closer national supervision. The amendment made African Americans citizens and protected all citizens against state violations of their right to due process and equal protection of the law. It temporarily disenfranchised some former Confederates, repudiated the Confederate debt, and penalized states that refused to give African Americans the right to vote. It did not outlaw segregation, nor did it clearly prevent a state from disenfranchising African Americans. In his 1866 “swing around the circle” campaign, President Johnson denounced the amendment and encouraged southern states not to ratify it. But most northerners were determined that African Americans have at least formal legal equality. They elected Republicans in numbers that increased the Radicals’ strength in Congress and in Northern states to a level sufficient to complete the ratification of the Fourteenth Amendment.

The Reconstruction Acts

Southern recalcitrance and abuse of African American rights led to several Reconstruction Acts in 1867. The South was divided into five military districts. The army officers who commanded these districts were empowered to protect civil rights, maintain order, and supervise the organization of new state governments. These governments were required to ratify the Fourteenth Amendment and guarantee African Americans the right to vote.

Congress Supreme

The North’s effort to impose its will on the South was provoked by the suffering and frustration of the war years, postwar southern recalcitrance, Johnson’s stubbornness, and the threat of a Democratic party resurgence. In the course of Reconstruction, Republicans attempted a grand revision of the federal government that was designed to increase the authority of Congress over the president and the Supreme Court. It culminated in an attempt to impeach President Johnson and remove him from office, but the Senate failed to convict him of impeachment charges by a single vote. The impeachment trial weakened the presidency, but its outcome preserved the federal government’s checks-and-balance system.

The Fifteenth Amendment

The Reconstruction Acts and the Fourteenth Amendment enfranchised southern African Americans who immediately used their votes to help Ulysses S. Grant win the 1868 presidential election. Hoping to cement African American voting rights throughout the nation, Congress proposed the Fifteenth Amendment that forbade all states to deny the vote on account of race, color, or previous servitude (but not sex). The amendment was motivated in part by considerations of partisan advantage, but it also reflected the North’s discomfort with a double standard on voting rights, appreciation for African American soldiers’ service during the Civil War, and hope that it would end the strife of Reconstruction. The amendment contained
loopholes and was later subverted by southern states, but a more strongly worded amendment could not have been ratified at the time.

“Black Republican” Reconstruction: Scalawags and Carpetbaggers

Former slaves voted Republican, but the real rulers of the “black Republican” governments in the South were mostly white Republicans and former southern Whigs—“scalawags,” and, less frequently, idealistic or ambitious northern “carpetbaggers.” Most of the few African Americans who held office were better educated and more prosperous than most southern blacks, and a disproportionate number of them were mulattos or had been free blacks before the war. In the main, they were able and conscientious public servants and not vindictive toward ex-Confederates.

Like governments in all sections at every level at the time, Reconstruction state governments were guilty of waste and corruption and a callous disregard of the public interest. Still, Radical southern governments accomplished much: With higher taxes they financed railroad construction and expanded social services like free public education. African Americans eagerly grasped the opportunity to learn how to read and write, even though schools were segregated.

The Ravaged Land

The Civil War ravaged southern property, and emancipation created confusion. Most former slaves wanted their own land, and northern congressman Thaddeus Stevens tried to design a way to seize former plantations and divide the land among the former slaves. But most Americans had too much respect for private property to support his confiscation policy. Southern whites expected that blacks were inherently lazy and would not work as free men, and, in fact, after the abolition of slavery, cotton production diminished. The decline in productivity was not due to the inability of former slaves to work independently, however, but to their refusal to work like slaves. They quite reasonably devoted more time to their family and to leisure and refused to send their wives and children to the fields. In freedom, black families became more like white families.

Sharecropping and the Crop-Lien System

An early attempt to pay ex-slaves wages to work in the fields was unsuccessful because money was scarce and African Americans disliked working for wages. They wanted independence. So, planters broke up their estates into small units and “rented” land and supplies to African American families who provided the labor to work the land. The two then shared the crop at the end of the harvest—sharecropping. The scarcity of capital produced the crop-lien system where local merchants made loans against the collateral of the fall cotton harvest. It made both landowners and sharecroppers, black and white, dependent on credit obtained only at high rates of interest. Southern manufacturing made some gains during Reconstruction. The cigarette, coal and iron, and textile industries all increased production. Overall, however, the South’s share of the national output of manufactured goods sharply declined during Reconstruction.
The White Backlash

The key to the survival of Radical southern governments was the ability of wealthy merchants and planters to mobilize the African American vote. But racist vigilante groups like the Ku Klux Klan gradually drove African Americans out of politics by resorting to violence and intimidation. Congress responded to the KKK by placing southern elections under federal jurisdiction. But the Klan’s actions cowed many African Americans and weakened the will of southern white Republicans.

Northern and southern whites edged toward a new solidarity based on white supremacy. Nationalism was reasserting itself. With the former slaves protected against reenslavement, northerners’ commitment to Radical Reconstruction was waning, as was their interest in racial equality. Also, northern industrialists, who were coming to see the importance of a well-disciplined labor force, became more sympathetic to the southern insistence on more control over their own labor force, that is, the former slaves.

Grant as President

Interest in Reconstruction also flagged because other matters diverted the attention of northerners: industrial development, railroad construction, western settlement, and tariff and currency policy. The Republican party was also damaged by the incompetence, graft, and corruption that permeated the Grant administration. In 1872, a reform element organized the Liberal Republican party and nominated Horace Greeley for president. They advocated low tariffs, sound money, and termination of special attention to the rights of African Americans. Grant was reelected, but the Democrats regained control of the House of Representatives in the 1874 elections. Republican control of Reconstruction governments in the South was ending.

The Disputed Election of 1876

In 1876, both the Republicans and the Democrats nominated presidential candidates who were unblemished by corruption. The election results were confused when Electoral College votes in three southern states and Oregon were disputed. Congress created a special electoral commission to assign the disputed votes. The commission gave all the disputed votes to the Republican candidate, Rutherford B. Hayes. Outraged Democrats threatened to prevent his inauguration.

The Compromise of 1877

Compromise-minded southern Democrats indicated they were willing to accept Hayes if he would end Reconstruction. After his inauguration, Hayes withdrew all occupying federal troops from the South and appointed a former Confederate general to his cabinet. This “Compromise of 1877” ended Reconstruction. But this new sectional harmony came at the expense of former slaves, now condemned to lives of poverty, indignity, and near hopelessness.
Define the following:

- pocket veto
- amnesty
- impeachment
- sharecropping
- crop-lien system

Describe the following:

- Ten Percent Plan
- Wade-Davis bill
- Thirteenth Amendment
- Black Codes
- Freedmen’s Bureau
Civil Rights Act

“swing around the circle”

Fourteenth Amendment

Reconstruction Acts

Tenure of Office Act

Fifteenth Amendment

Force Acts

Compromise of 1877

*Identify the following:*

Thaddeus Stevens

Charles Sumner

Andrew Johnson
SELF-TEST

Multiple-Choice Questions

1. On the complex question of bringing the defeated Confederate states back into the Union,
   A. southerners believed that they had legally seceded and would have to be formally readmitted back into the Union.
   B. Radical Republicans believed that secession was illegal and that former Confederate states needed no formal readmission to the Union.
   C. President Lincoln believed secession was illegal, but that southern states still needed to be formally readmitted to the Union.
   D. Charles Sumner believed that the Confederate states had ceased to exist as states and must be treated as conquered territory.
2. President Lincoln’s Ten Percent Plan for Reconstruction did NOT require southern states to
   A. adopt a republican form of government.
   B. accept the fact of slavery’s abolition.
   C. provide schooling for former slaves.
   D. guarantee African Americans the right to vote.

3. Congress’ Wade-Davis bill required southern states to
   A. guarantee African American equality.
   B. guarantee universal manhood suffrage.
   C. repudiate the Confederate debt.
   D. gradually abolish slavery.

4. Andrew Johnson was made President Lincoln’s running mate in 1864 primarily for the
   political benefits that would result from his
   A. being a Radical Republican leader.
   B. patient and compromising manner.
   C. being a Democrat from a border slave state.
   D. having been a southern slaveowner.

5. President Johnson’s Reconstruction proposal would NOT have
   A. allowed former Confederates to hold public office.
   B. increased the number of southerners in Congress.
   C. required full civil and political equality for African Americans.
   D. allowed southern states to use special legal codes to control former slaves.

6. President Andrew Johnson did NOT veto the
   A. Civil Rights Act.
   B. Freedmen’s Bureau bill.
   C. Wade-Davis bill.
   D. Reconstruction Act.

7. The Fourteenth Amendment guaranteed
   A. U.S. citizenship to former slaves.
   B. land ownership for former slaves.
   C. freedom to slaves.
   D. former slaves the right to vote.

8. The Fourteenth Amendment did NOT
   A. require former Confederate states to pay their war debts.
   B. prohibit former Confederate officials from voting.
   C. guarantee former slaves due process of law.
   D. guarantee all citizens equal protection of the law.

9. The Fourteenth Amendment
   A. specifically outlawed racial segregation.
   B. specifically prevented any state from denying African Americans the right to vote.
   C. altered the power relationship between the federal and state governments.
   D. established legal Black Codes to protect the rights of the former slaves.
10. The South was divided into five military districts under the provisions of the
   A. Tenure of Office Act.
   B. Civil Rights Act.
   C. Reconstruction Act.
   D. Confiscation Act.

11. Congress’ decision to bring impeachment charges against President Johnson was most immediately provoked by his
   A. highly partisan “swing around the circle” in 1866.
   B. readmission of former Confederate states.
   C. dismissal of Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton.
   D. advice to southern states not to ratify the Fourteenth Amendment.

12. The Fifteenth Amendment was an attempt to gain _____ for African Americans.
   A. land ownership
   B. the right to vote
   C. an education
   D. citizenship

13. The _____ were LEAST likely to hold powerful positions in Radical Reconstruction governments in the South.
   A. scalawags
   B. carpetbaggers
   C. former slaves
   D. Republicans

14. Radical Reconstruction governments in the South did NOT
   A. clean up government corruption.
   B. raise taxes.
   C. fund public schooling.
   D. finance railroad construction

15. After the Civil War,
   A. the South’s general economic condition declined.
   B. the planter elite no longer controlled land ownership.
   C. the sharecropping system of labor management declined.
   D. most former slaves became small landowners.

16. All of the following are true of the southern economy during Reconstruction EXCEPT
   A. former slaves disliked working for wages.
   B. money was scarce.
   C. cotton production declined.
   D. the South’s percent of national manufacturing output increased.
17. The Liberal Republican party in 1872 did NOT demand
   A. lower tariffs.
   B. sound money.
   C. civil liberties for African Americans.
   D. honest government.

18. The disputed votes in the 1876 presidential election were assigned to candidates by
   A. the Joint Committee on Reconstruction.
   B. a special Electoral Commission.
   C. the Supreme Court.
   D. the Electoral College.

19. After his inauguration in 1877, President Hayes
   A. demanded that all southern states ratify the Fifteenth Amendment.
   B. became the first Democrat in the presidency since 1856.
   C. withdrew all federal occupying troops from the South.
   D. pardoned former president Grant for his involvement in political corruption.

20. Arrange the following events in their proper time order:  (A) Wade-Davis bill, (B) Reconstruction Act, (C) Fifteenth Amendment, (D) Compromise of 1877
   A. A, B, D, C
   B. A, B, C, D
   C. C, D, B, A
   D. B, A, C, D

Essay Questions

1. Compare and contrast the provisions of the Ten Percent Plan, Wade-Davis bill, Johnson’s Amnesty plan, and the Radical Republicans’ plan for Reconstruction. Explain why the Radicals’ plan came to be the one adopted.

2. Define the problems faced by Radical Reconstruction governments in the postwar South. List the major accomplishments of these governments.

3. Define “sharecropping” and the “crop-lien system” and explain why these came to dominate the landowner-merchant-labor relationship in the post-Civil War southern economy.

4. Explain why Radical Reconstruction failed to accomplish all it set out to do.

5. State the provisions of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth amendments and describe the historical context in which they were proposed and ratified.
CRITICAL THINKING EXERCISE

Facts, Inferences, and Judgments

Search the text excerpt below for statements of fact, inference, and judgment. For each of the numbered statements in the excerpt, circle F for fact, I for inference, or J for judgment on the answer grid that follows.

(1) The real rulers of the “black Republican” governments were white: the “scalawags” . . . and the “carpetbaggers” . . . . (2) The scalawags were by far the more numerous. (3) A few were prewar politicians or well-to-do planters . . . . (4) But most were people who had supported the Whig party before the secession crisis . . . .
(5) That blacks should fail to dominate southern governments is certainly understandable. (6) They lacked experience in politics and were mostly poor and uneducated. . . . (7) Not all black legislators and administrators were paragons of virtue. (8) In South Carolina, despite their control of the legislature, they broke up into factions repeatedly and failed to press for laws that would improve the lot of poor black farm workers. . . . (9) One Arkansas black took $9,000 from the state for repairing a bridge that had cost only $500 to build. . . .
(10) However, the corruption must be seen in perspective. . . . (11) [G]raft and callous disregard of the public interest characterized government in every section and at every level during the decade after Appomattox. . . . (12) The New York City Tweed Rig probably made off with more money than all the southern thieves, black and white, combined. (13) While the evidence does not justify the southern corruption, (14) it suggests that the unique features of Reconstruction politics . . . do not explain it. . . .
(15) In fact, the Radical southern governments accomplished a great deal. . . . (16) Tax rates zoomed, but the money financed the repair and expansion of the South’s dilapidated railroad network, rebuilt crumbling levees, and expanded social services. . . .

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