

Reconstruction SAC Lesson Plan

Central Historical Question:
Were African Americans free during Reconstruction?

Materials:

- Copies of Reconstruction Timeline
- Copies of Reconstruction Documents A-E
- Copies of Reconstruction Guiding Questions
- Copies of SAC Graphic Organizer

Plan of Instruction:

NOTE: This activity works best if students have an opportunity to read documents and answer guiding questions *before* starting the SAC.

1. Introduction: Review that Reconstruction was the period between 1865 and 1877, when the nation tried to re-build itself after the Civil War. One of the main questions facing Americans during this period was whether the federal government would pass laws and protect the rights of African Americans.

Hand out RECONSTRUCTION TIMELINE and review with students.

The question for today's SAC is *Were African Americans free during Reconstruction?*

2. Divide students into groups of 4, and then divide each group of 4 into Team A and Team B.

Team A argues African Americans were free during Reconstruction.
Team B argues African Americans were not free during Reconstruction.

Teams use graphic organizer to collect data for their side. *[If students haven't answered guiding questions in advance, they should do so before collected evidence for their argument].*

3. Team A presents to Team B, and Team B repeats arguments back to Team A, until Team A is satisfied.
4. Team B presents to Team A, and Team A repeats arguments back to Team B, until Team B is satisfied.
5. Teams try to reach consensus.
6. Share out groups' consensus. Discuss:

- Were African Americans free during Reconstruction? In what ways?
- What does it mean to be free?
- Based on these documents, was Reconstruction a success or failure?

Citations:

Page Smith, *"Trial By Fire, A People's History of the Civil War and Reconstruction".* Mcgraw-Hill, 1982. <http://www.civilwarhome.com/blackcodes.htm>

Senate Report 693, 46th Congress, 2nd Session (1880). Reprinted in Dorothy Sterling, editor, *The Trouble They Seen: The Story of Reconstruction in the Words of African Americans*, New York: Da Capo Press, 1994.

http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/reconstruction/sharecrop/ps_adams.html

Sydney Andrews quoted in the Joint Report on Reconstruction, 1866.
<http://books.google.com/books?id=dUgWAAAAYAAJ> (pg. 174).

Document A: The 13th, 14th and 15th Amendments (Modified)

The 13th, 14th and 15th amendments to the United States Constitution are sometimes called the “Reconstruction Amendments.” They were passed in order to abolish slavery and to establish the rights of former slaves.

13th Amendment: 1865

Section 1. Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime where of the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.

14th Amendment: 1868

Section 1. All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction (laws) 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 (limit) the privileges or immunities (rights) 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.

15th Amendment: 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.

Document B: Black Codes (Modified)

1. "No negro or freedmen shall be allowed to come within the limits of the town of Opelousas without special permission from his employers. Whoever breaks this law will go to jail and work for two days on the public streets, or pay a fine of five dollars."
2. "No negro or freedman shall be permitted to rent or keep a house in town under any circumstances. No negro or freedman shall live within the town who does not work for some white person or former owner."
3. "No public meetings of negroes or freedmen shall be allowed within the town."
4. "No freedman shall be allowed to carry firearms, or any kind of weapons. No freedman shall sell or exchange any article of merchandise within the limits of Opelousas without permission in writing from his employer."
5. "Every negro is to be in the service of (work for) some white person, or former owner."

Source: In the years following the Civil War - throughout the South -state, city, and town governments passed laws to restrict the rights of free African-American men and women. These laws were often called "Black Codes." The example above of "Black Codes" come from laws passed in Opelousas, Louisiana immediately after the Civil War.

Document C: Henry Adams Statement (Modified)

In September I asked the boss to let me go to the city of Shreveport. He said, "All right, when will you come back?" I told him "next week." He said, "You had better carry a pass." I said, "I will see whether I am free by going without a pass."

I met four white men about six miles south of town. One of them asked me who I belonged to. I told him no one. So him and two others struck me with a stick and told me they were going to kill me and every other Negro who told them that they did not belong to anyone. They left me and I then went on to Shreveport. I saw over twelve colored men and women, beat, shot and hung between there and Shreveport.

Sunday I went back home. The boss was not at home. I asked the madame (the boss's wife), "where was the boss?" She said, "You should say 'master'. You all are not free... and you shall call every white lady 'missus' and every white man 'master.'"

During the same week the madame took a stick and beat one of the young colored girls, who was about fifteen years of age. The boss came the next day and whipped the same girl nearly to death...After the whipping a large number of young colored people decided to leave that place for Shreveport. (On our way), out came about forty armed white men and shot at us and took my horse. They said they were going to kill everyone they found leaving their masters.

Source: Former slave Henry Adams made this statement before the U.S. government in 1880 about the early days of his freedom after the Civil War.

Document D: Elected Black Officials during Reconstruction

During Reconstruction, thousands of African-Americans were elected to local and state governments throughout the Southern states. In addition, 17 African-Americans were elected to the United States Congress from Southern states between 1870 and 1877. Here are photographs of 6 of these 17 elected officials.



Blanche Bruce
U.S. Senator
Mississippi
1875-1881



Joseph Rainey
U.S. Congressman
South Carolina
1870-1879



Jefferson Long
U.S. Congressman
Georgia
1870-1871



Benjamin Turner
U.S. Congressman
Alabama
1871-1873



Josiah Walls
U.S. Congressman
Florida
1871-1876



Robert DeLarge
U.S. Congressman
South Carolina
1871-1873

Document E: Education

In 1865 the United States government created the Freedmen's Bureau to help former slaves in Southern states. The Freedmen's Bureau helped people by providing medical supplies, health care and establishing schools.

The creation of schools for former slaves was an important part of Reconstruction. Before the Civil War, Southern states outlawed the teaching of reading and writing to slaves.

Many of the negroes...common plantation negroes, and workers in the towns and villages, were supporting little schools themselves. Everywhere I found them hoping to get their children into schools. I often noticed that workers in stores and men working in warehouses, and cart drivers on the streets, had spelling books with them, and were studying them during the time they were not working. Go outside any large town in the south, and you will see children and in many cases grown negroes, sitting in the sun alongside their cabins studying.

Source: Sydney Andrews quoted in the Joint Report on Reconstruction, 1866. The document above is an excerpt from a report by a Northern white man to the United States government in 1866.

Guiding Questions

Name _____

Document A: 13th, 14th and 15th Amendments

1. When were the 13th, 14th and 15th amendments passed?
2. Why do you think they were passed?
3. What rights did they guarantee for American citizens?

Document B: Black Codes

1. When were these Black Codes written? Who do you think wrote these laws?
2. List three things that freed men and women were NOT allowed to do according to the Black Codes.
3. Think. Why would white Southerners pass laws that controlled the movement of African Americans? What would happen if African Americans left the South in huge numbers?
4. How do these laws help you to understand what life was like in Louisiana and other Southern states after the Civil War?

Document C: Henry Adams's Statement

1. Who wrote this document, when, and why?
2. According to Adams, what was life like for freed men and women after the Civil War?
3. Do you trust the account in this document? Why or why not?

Document D: African American Political Representation

1. What does this information about African American politicians tell you about what life was like for African Americans during Reconstruction?

Document E: Education

1. Why do you think education was important to former slaves during Reconstruction?
2. How does this description of life for freedmen compare to Henry Adams' statement?

Structured Academic Controversy: Reconstruction

Reconstruction was the period between 1865 and 1877, when the nation tried to build itself after the Civil War.

During today's class, you will work in teams to discuss whether or not African Americans were free during Reconstruction. Your goals for today should include looking at all the issues, seeing both sides, and finding common ground.

SAC QUESTION: Were African Americans free during Reconstruction?

Team A will argue: YES, African Americans were free during Reconstruction.

Team B will argue: NO, African Americans were NOT free during Reconstruction.

PROCEDURE

30 minutes With your teammate, read the documents in the Reconstruction document set. Find four pieces of evidence which support your side

10 minutes Team A presents. BOTH PARTNERS MUST PRESENT!!!
Team B writes down Team A's arguments and then repeats them back to Team A.

10 minutes Team B presents. BOTH PARTNERS MUST PRESENT!!!
Team A down arguments of Team B and then repeats them back to Team B.

10 minutes Everyone **CAN ABANDON** their positions. Group of 4 attempts to develop a consensus.

ORGANIZING THE EVIDENCE

Name _____

Use this space to write your main points and the main points made by the other side.

African Americans WERE free during Reconstruction: List the 4 main points/evidence that support this side.

1) From Document _____:

2) From Document _____:

3) From Document _____:

4) From Document _____:

African Americans were NOT free during Reconstruction: List the 4 main points/evidence that support this side.

1) From Document _____:

2) From Document _____:

3) From Document _____:

4) From Document _____:

Coming to Consensus

STARTING NOW, YOU MAY ABANDON YOUR ASSIGNED POSITION AND ARGUE FOR EITHER SIDE.

Use the space below to outline your group's agreement. Your agreement should address evidence and arguments from both sides.