

**Subject:** Reconstruction

**Grade Level:** 6-8

### Standards:

#### Civics and Government

6.C.7 Define and compare citizenship and the citizen's role throughout history in Europe and the Americas

#### Foundations of Government

6.C.2 Identify and explain essential ideas of constitutional government which include limited government; rule of law; due process of law; separated and shared powers; checks and balances; federalism; popular sovereignty; republicanism; representative government; and individual rights to life, liberty, and property; and freedom of conscience and religion.

6.C.7 Examine ways that state and national government affects the everyday lives of people in the United States.

#### Roles of Citizens

6.C.15 Use a variety of informational resources to identify and evaluate contemporary issues that involve civic responsibility, individual rights, and the common good.

6.C.16 Recognize and explain the relationship between the rights and responsibilities of citizenship in the United States.

### Materials Needed:

Students will need access to:

- Computer, laptop, or tablet
- Paper and pencil/pen may be needed

### Introduction/Anticipatory Set:

The Civil War was over. Getting back to “normal” was not an easy process. The southern states had to be readmitted to the Union. Laws were passed to give Black Americans new legal rights. But the path was not smooth.

### Body of Lesson:

Watch the Video: Simple Civics – Reconstruction

## LESSON PLAN – Reconstruction

The Reconstruction era was from 1865-1877. The southern states had to be readmitted into the Union. 4 million newly freed former slaves had to be absorbed into the nation and the economy.

The Emancipation Proclamation was presented by President Abraham Lincoln on September 22, 1862. This document stated that all enslaved people in the Confederate states “shall be then thenceforward and forever free” as of January 1, 1863.

After the Civil War and after President Lincoln’s assassination, Andrew Johnson became President. Johnson was a strong proponent of states’ rights to govern. Johnson pardoned the southern states and allowed them to set up their own governments and laws again.

The Federal Congress established the Freedmen’s Bureau in 1865 to help former slaves and poor whites in the South after the war. The organization provided food, housing, medical care, and education. Congress also approved the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment in 1865. This amendment states that slavery and involuntary servitude are prohibited except as punishment for a crime.

During 1865-1866, many laws were passed in southern states that were known as “black codes”. These laws put restrictions on the freedoms and activities of free Blacks. In 1866, President Johnson vetoed the Freedmen’s Bureau and Civil Rights bills. The Freedmen’s Bureau bill was to extend the life of the organization. The Civil Rights bill stated that anyone born in the United States would be a citizen with an equal standing before the law. Congress overrode the veto of the Civil Rights bill and it became law. Because of his actions, President Johnson eventually was impeached in 1868.

Tensions increased over the next several years. In 1867 Congress passed the Reconstruction Act of 1867. This act divided the south into military areas and troops were sent to maintain order. The 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment was passed which gave equal protection to all citizens. In 1869 the 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment was passed that guaranteed the right of all citizens to vote.

Blacks from southern states were elected to positions in state and federal government. The Southern Republican Party was dominated by Blacks in 1870. The first public school systems funded by states were set up in southern states. Anti-discrimination laws were passed.

After 1867, violence in the south became more common. Some white supremacist organizations formed. The Ku Klux Klan was the most well known organization. They used violence and intimidation to interfere with the rights of Blacks and whites who supported Blacks.

## LESSON PLAN – Reconstruction

An economic depression occurred in 1874. This had a strong impact in the south and led to an increase in poverty in the region. This increase in poverty led to political change and upheaval. The Compromise of 1877 was passed. This ended the military districts and moved control of southern states back to the individual state governments. Federal troops withdrew. This was the end of the Reconstruction period. Over the years, Jim Crow laws were passed which restricted the rights and freedoms of Black Americans.

### Class Activity:

After watching the video and reading the lesson, students can complete one or more of the following activities:

1. Group discussion on the impact of the Emancipation Proclamation
2. Group discussion on the impact of President Johnson on the rights and freedoms of Black Americans
3. Write a short paper on how these laws have had an impact on Black citizens today.
4. Group discussion on how these laws have had an impact on Black citizens today.

## Summary/Closure

Black Americans continue to struggle for equal treatment today. Progress has been made. Recently some states have sought to roll back some of the progress. Being an informed citizen and following news events is an important role for all citizens.

## Extension Activities

These websites offer additional information on Jim Crow laws.

<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/freedom-riders-jim-crow-laws/>

<https://www.history.com/topics/early-20th-century-us/jim-crow-laws>

## PBS Learning Media

New to PBS Learning Media? Click here to learn more and sign up today:

<https://indiana.pbslearningmedia.org/signup/>