

Reconstruction Era Objectives



Define and be able to use these terms:

- amnesty
- successor
- martial law
- freedmen
- racism
- corruption
- tenant farming
- sharecropping
- debt
- foreclosure
- politics
- politician
- vagrancy
- lynching
- segregation
- civil rights
- running mate
- moderate
- conservative
- lame duck
- emigration
- immigrant
- steerage
- discrimination
- reservation
- cavalry
- strategy
- market
- omniscient
- legend
- infamy
- negotiate
- electorate
- graft
- administration
- media bias
- unemployment
- diversified
- investor
- illiterate
- caricature

Fully answer the following questions:

1. Explain the goals of Reconstruction and how the U.S. tried to achieve them.
2. Explain what happened to the freed slaves during and after Reconstruction.
3. Explain why Andrew Johnson was impeached and the outcome of that effort.
4. Describe how immigrants and Native Americans fared during Reconstruction.
5. Describe life in the “Wild West” during the Reconstruction Era.
6. Describe the politics of the Reconstruction Era, including some key issues.
7. Explain how Reconstruction finally ended and its impact on the South/

Reconstruction Era Objectives - Suggestions for Answers



Define and be able to use these terms:

Definitions for terms are provided in the lessons in which they are introduced.

Fully answer the following questions:

- The main goal of Reconstruction was to reunite America after the Civil War, however plans for doing so varied widely. Some were simple, requiring only that a percentage of southerners swear an oath of allegiance, but others were more "Radical." The Radicals prevailed, and major changes were brought to the South.

The XIII, XIV, and XV Amendments were added to the Constitution to free the southern slaves and grant them citizenship and the right to vote. The Freedman's Bureau was created to help the newly freed slaves. Also, Radical Republicans, including Black and northerner politicians took control of the South, enforcing new policies with troops.
- Though efforts were made to offer a "new beginning", most freed slaves either stayed on the farms of their former owners or other farmers. While promised "forty acres and a mule," few received them. Most ended up as tenant farmers or sharecroppers, working rented land for part of the profits. However, since profits were few under that system, most fell into a cycle of poverty.

As to the rights given them by the new amendments, slaves were freed and while the U.S. government enforced the changes, African Americans were allowed to vote. Meanwhile, hate groups such as the KKK and the White League used violent means to prevent people from going to the polls. Still, most states did have black lawmakers but when Reconstruction ended, all progress was lost.
- Republicans controlled Congress and Johnson, a southern, "Union" Democrat, vetoed many of the laws passed. When the Radical Republicans gained a 2/3 majority, they simply overrode Johnson's vetoes. Finally, after several clashes over presidential authority, Congress passed Articles of Impeachment. After lengthy hearings, though, he was not removed from office but had little power.
- Many immigrants, including large numbers of Irish and Chinese, came to America through the 1870's (and beyond). Most received a cold reception and difficulties finding jobs. Eventually, the rapidly-expanding railroad became the major employer of both groups, though Chinese still endured discrimination.

During that same period the Native people were moved off their lands, promised new ones by treaties which were signed and then ignored, and settled on reservations. They tried to fight the armies and settlers who were destroying their ways of life and killing the buffalo they depended upon, but failed.
- Cattle was king in the Old West as cowboys rode the range herding the animals in great roundups and driving them along famed trails to markets in cowtowns throughout the region. The cowtowns themselves were places of legends, lawless with gunfights among outlaws or against lawmen, and wild rodeo shows.
- Political corruption was a fact of life during the Reconstruction Era. From the federal government to local towns political machines developed to run the land. Government officials often took bribes from wealthy businessmen or landowners in exchange for political "favors."

Among the issues of the period was the purchase of Alaska. Though seen as ridiculous by many, the deal ended quite well. The election of 1876 was one of the most controversial in history and went on to end Reconstruction.
- In 1876, the Republican Rutherford Hayes BARELY won the election. To appease unhappy Democrats, soldiers were withdrawn from the South, ending Reconstruction. Though the South grew economically, laws were passed to undo the social progress made. African Americans lost rights for a century to come.