



Eighth Grade Social Studies

8th Grade Social Studies

RECONSTRUCTION: The physical and economic implications of the Civil War.

The period of Reconstruction was the period just after the Civil War. Take a close look at the word Reconstruction.

RE-CONSTRUCTION

- 1. What does the word construction mean? What does it mean to put the prefix “re” on the front of it?**
- 2. Why did the South have to be “reconstructed” following the Civil War?**

Towards the end of the Civil War, the South wanted to negotiate surrender. Banking on what Lincoln said in his first inaugural address, they wanted to do it while slavery might still be on the table...even though the Emancipation Proclamation had been passed. Lincoln actually stalled a bit, wanting the 13th Amendment to be approved in Congress before any such discussion could occur.

On January 31, 1865 the 13th Amendment was approved by Congress opening the way up for the Civil War to end. Why was Lincoln interested in getting the 13th Amendment passed before the end of the war? If slavery led to war once, it would do it again unless it was just gone. “A House Divided....” right?

The slaves in all of the states were officially freed December 6, 1865. The next step was to ensure their rights of citizenship, another point of debate before the war. Should they be citizens? Lincoln is dead by now. But the 14th Amendment was approved on June 13, 1866 – although it took over two more years for the states to ratify it. This amendment in theory set everyone equal under the law, and part of that implied power was voting. But laws were already in place in the South that restricted African Americans from voting. Sooo...

On February 26, 1869 the 15th Amendment was passed and ratified about a year later stating you could not restrict a citizen’s right to vote based on their skin color or ethnic background. Finally, the newly freed slaves were allowed to vote. Although new laws will be passed to still try to stop this from happening.

- 3. Briefly explain what the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendment did and why this was important for African Americans in US history.**
 - a. 13th Amendment**
 - b. 14th Amendment**
 - c. 15th Amendment**

The Physical Impact of the Civil War on the South

The Civil War left the South in absolute ruins. During Sherman's March to the Sea, the Union Army burnt down everything in its path. Other than Gettysburg no major battles were fought in the North, so the physical devastation of the war primarily centered on the South.

4. Look at each of the following pictures. Explain how each one demonstrates the physical destruction of the South.



5. If you were from the North, would you want to help the South rebuild or not? Explain your answer. This will be an important question as the United States goes forward.

The Economic Impact of the Civil War on the South

6. What is the definition of economics? Look it up if you need to. What economic decisions needed to be made following the Civil War?

7. Fill-in-the-blank: For each of the terms in the word bank, find its definition and write in the line provided. Each of these terms described a condition of the Southern economy following the Civil War.

inflation	goods	services	needs	wants	depression
credit	debt	industry	agriculture	cash crop	shortage

- _____ An increase in price and a decrease in the value of money
- _____ Items that a person buys such as food, clothing, etc.
- _____ An action that a person does for someone else
- _____ Goods or services that are required, including food and water
- _____ Goods or services that are not necessary but that we desire, including designer clothes
- _____ A long-term downturn in economic activity
- _____ The ability of a customer to obtain goods or services before payment, based on the trust that the payment will be made in the future
- _____ Something, typically money, owed or due
- _____ The manufacturing of goods in factories
- _____ The practice of cultivating soil for the purpose of growing crops and/or rearing of animals
- _____ A crop grown for money
- _____ The demand for a product or service exceeds its supply in the market

In Lesson 7 you will learn more about the plans for Reconstruction which aimed at dealing with the economic problems caused by the Civil War.

One of the core economic questions concerned the newly freed African Americans. While it is a positive that slavery was abolished, there was uncertainty about how former slaves would be a part of the new southern economy.

SHARECROPPING

Some of the freed people immediately went back to work for their former masters as wage laborers. Why do you think they would do this?

Hiring former slaves as wage workers is simple enough, but former slaves wanted a sense of ownership with their work. This introduces the idea of sharecropping. It works much like feudalism if you remember your 7th grade history. Here is the basics for how it works.

- A. Let a former slave grow on part of your land and then split the crop with them (why it's called sharecropping)
- B. But you'll have to loan them money so they may buy equipment and whatever else they need
- C. Then charge such a high interest rate that they can NEVER, EVER pay you back – so essentially that former slave owner still controls them!

8. Why did some slaves go back to work for their former owners?

9. How does sharecropping work? If it's going to be a bigger benefit to the landowner than the sharecropper, what did people agree to be sharecroppers?

Freedmen's Bureau, (1865–72), during the Reconstruction period after the American Civil War, popular name for the U.S. Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, established by Congress to provide practical aid to 4,000,000 newly freed African Americans in their transition from slavery to freedom.

Despite handicaps of inadequate funds and poorly trained personnel, the bureau built hospitals for, and gave direct medical assistance to, more than 1,000,000 freedmen. More than 21,000,000 rations were distributed to impoverished blacks as well as whites.

Its greatest accomplishments were in education: more than 1,000 black schools were built and over \$400,000 spent to establish teacher-training institutions. Among the historically black colleges and universities that received aid from the bureau were Atlanta University (1865; now Clark Atlanta University) and Fisk University (1866; originally the Fisk School), named for Gen. Clinton B. Fisk of the Tennessee Freedmen's Bureau, who gave the school its original facilities in a former Union army barracks. Howard University, founded in 1867 through an act by the U.S. Congress, was named for Maj. Gen. Howard.

10. How did the Freedman's Bureau attempt to help African Americans following the end of slavery? List as many ways as you can that the Freedman's Bureau tried to help the 4,000,000 former slaves.