

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The period of Reconstruction (1865-1877) was one of the most politically contentious and violent eras in American history. Reuniting the country, completing the [transition from slavery to freedom](#), and rebuilding the economically devastated South were enormous challenges that continued long after the end of the period.

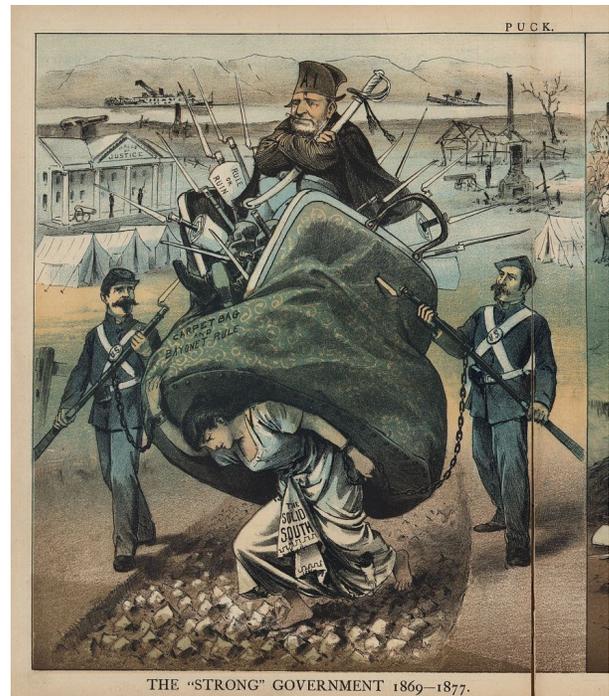
President Abraham Lincoln had begun the process of “reconstructing” the seceded states—or bringing them back into the United States—during the Civil War in Union-occupied areas of the Confederacy, including Tennessee. His ideas on Reconstruction were still evolving when he was assassinated in April 1865. His successor, Andrew Johnson of Tennessee, did not have the political skills to work with Congress to resolve the daunting trials facing the nation. Despite his strong wartime Unionism, Johnson allowed former Confederates to regain control over southern state governments and quickly became embroiled in a [bitter struggle with Congressional Republicans](#), who did not want to lose the peace.

To try to protect [African Americans’ rights](#) in the face of efforts by southern states to curtail those rights through the passage of Black Codes, Congress passed a series of laws over Johnson’s veto, including the Civil Rights Act of 1866 and the Reconstruction Acts of 1867, which set up state governments under U.S. military oversight in most of the former Confederate states. The resulting biracial governments succeeded in many ways, including the establishment of public school systems, but were denounced by many former Confederates, who resorted to violence through the creation of organizations like the Ku Klux Klan. Congress also sent to the states for ratification the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments to the Constitution. These “Reconstruction amendments” are easily the most far-reaching achievements of the period.

Ongoing violence in the South, along with increasing conservatism in the North, resulted in the Compromise of 1877, usually viewed as the end of Reconstruction and a prelude to [Jim Crow](#). Republican leaders agreed to end military oversight of the former Confederate states and Democrats agreed to give the closely contested presidential election of 1876 to Republican [Rutherford B. Hayes](#).

## ADDITIONAL LINKS

- [Library of Congress: Reconstruction and its Aftermath](#)
- [Tennessee4me: Civil War and Reconstruction](#)
- [Nashville Public Television: Reconstruction](#)
- [PBS: Reconstruction](#)
- [The History Channel: Reconstruction](#)
- [Digital History: Overview of Reconstruction](#)



[The "Strong" government 1869-1877--The "weak" government 1877-1881 / J.A. Wales. \[1880\]](#)

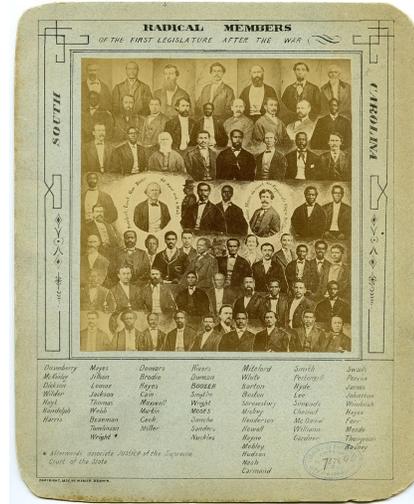
## SUGGESTIONS FOR TEACHERS

One of the challenges to understanding this period is the variety of experiences depending on the community or region you are studying. To help your students understand these differences and to build their critical thinking skills, try developing a compare/contrast activity. Begin by choosing two or three different communities. Have your students examine how events unfolded there and how local communities responded. To structure this type of activity, select a nationally significant event, such as the passage of the Reconstruction amendments or when the state was admitted back into the union. Have your students look at primary and secondary sources to understand the basics of your topic ([historic newspapers](#) are a great tool here). Then give them a couple of primary sources from your chosen communities, and have them chart the similarities and differences of experience there. Then discuss why these experiences were different.

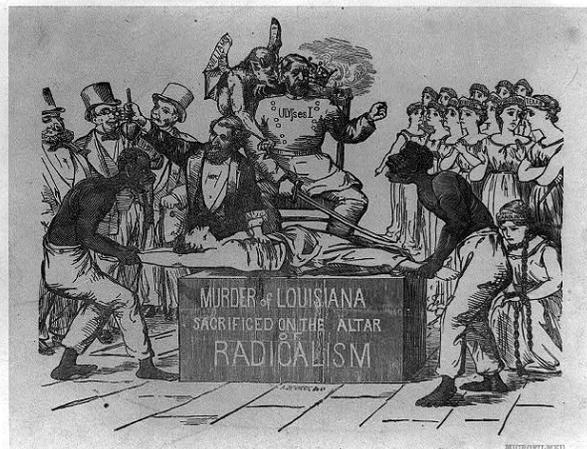
# RECONSTRUCTION (1865-1877)



[Reconstruction of the South](#) [1857]



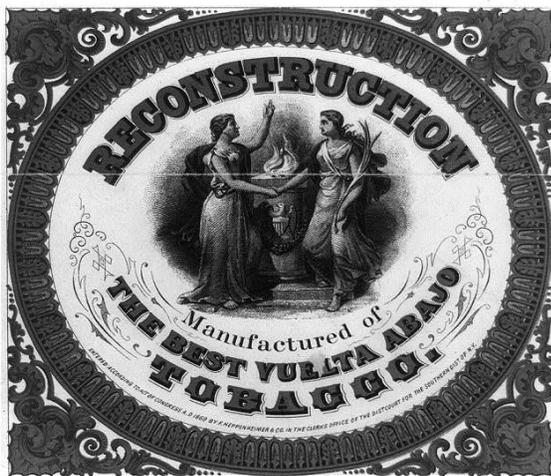
[Radical members of the first legislature after the war, South Carolina](#) [ca. 1876]



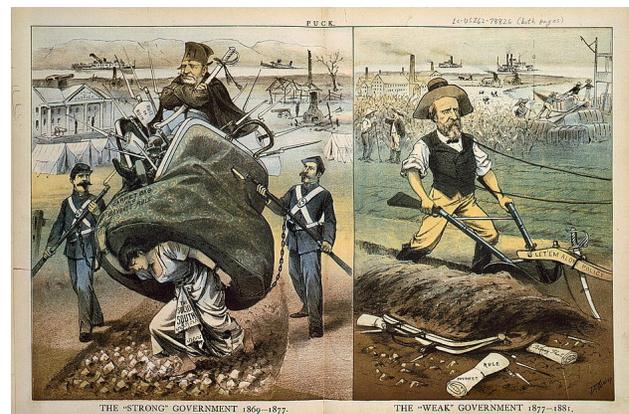
[Murder of Louisiana sacrificed on the altar of radicalism](#) [1871]



[Reconstruction / eng. by J.L. Giles, N.Y. ; printed by Francis Ratellier, 171 Broadway, N.Y.](#) [ca. 1867]



[Reconstruction, manufactured of the best vuelta abajo tobacco](#) [ca. 1868]



[The "Strong" government 1869-1877--The "weak" government 1877-1881 / J.A. Wales.](#) [1880]



30. 1879.

### THE NEGRO HEGIRA.

Several Thousand Colored Emigrants on the Banks of the Lower Mississippi Awaiting Transportation to the Land of Promise—Jay Gould's Offer.

Chicago Contributions to Aid the Movement—Pap Singleton, the Negro Moses, Formerly a Resident of Nashville—He Claims to be Inspired in the Colonization Scheme.

St. Louis, April 29.—The Colored people national board of immigration, of this city, of which Rev. Moses Dickson is president, has received information that several thousand negroes are now at different places along the bank of the Mississippi river below Memphis, either ready to start north as soon as transportation can be procured, or are preparing to leave their homes for St. Louis and beyond. One party of nearly one hundred are now at Lake Port landing, Chicot county, Arkansas, almost destitute. It is said that the steamers refused to take them on board, and that the whites in the vicinity refuse to sell them provisions. The committee here will endeavor to make arrangements for their removal. About two hundred refugees have been sent west since Saturday last, and it is understood that Jay Gould has offered free transportation for them west of Kansas City, and they will probably go right on to Lawrence, Kansas.

[Memphis daily appeal., April 30, 1879, Image 1](#) [1879] (Pap Singleton) See the lesson idea for the Exodus from Tennessee.



[Yellow Jack Monster](#) [1873]

A COUPLE OF ILLINOIS urchins recently broke up a dancing party by sprinkling cayenne pepper on the floor of the hall, which little eccentricity cost them \$50 apiece.

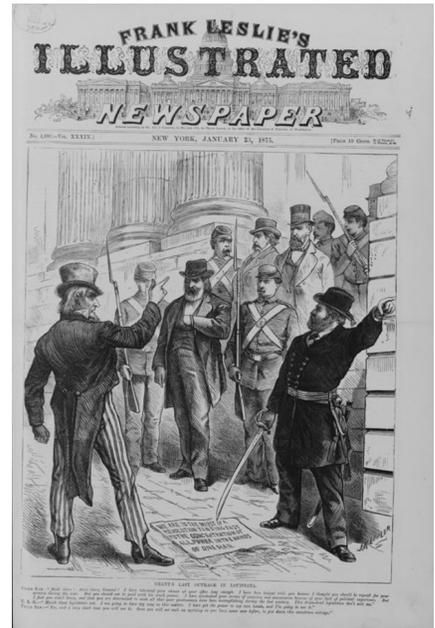
THE Fisk University at Nashville, "an institution for the education of colored persons designing to become teachers, or to prepare for professional life," was opened a few days ago.

Out of the sixty workmen engaged in

[The national Republican., October 10, 1867, Image 1](#) [1867]



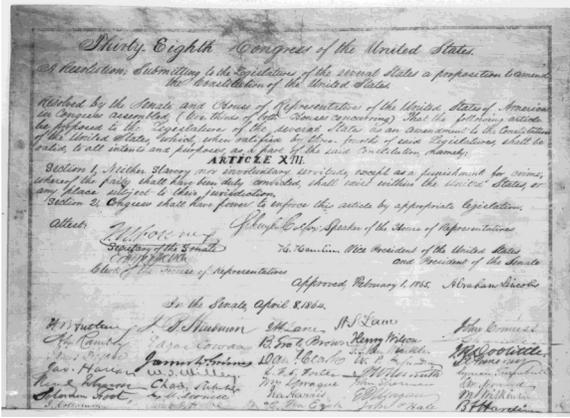
[Swing low, sweet chariot by Fisk University Jubilee Quartet](#) [1909]



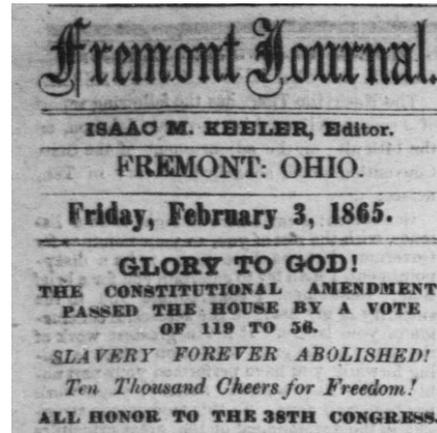
[Grant's last outrage in Louisiana / J. Keppler.](#) [1875]



[Jubilee Singers, Fisk University, Nashville, Tenn.](#) [ca. 1870-1880]



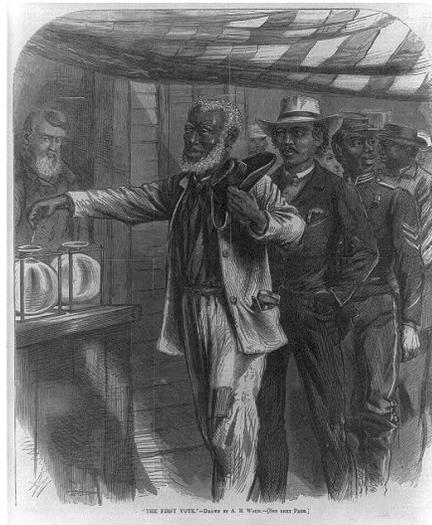
[Joint Resolution Submitting 13th Amendment to the States; signed by Abraham Lincoln and Congress - Transcription](#) [1865]. See the lesson plan for [The Emancipation Proclamation and the Thirteenth Amendment](#).



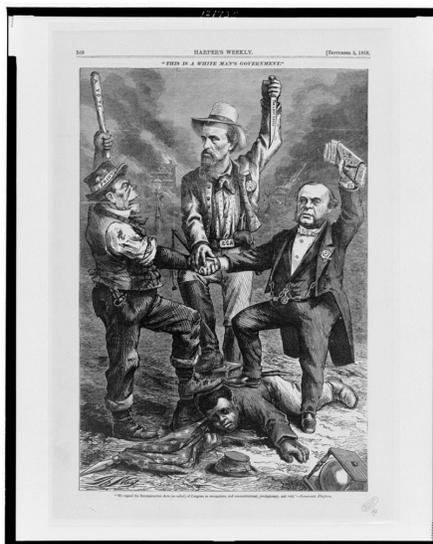
["Glory to God! The Constitutional Amendment Passed the House by a Vote of 119 to 56," Fremont Journal. \(Fremont, OH\), February 3, 1865.](#) [1865]

**TEXTS**

- [A Century of Lawmaking for a New Nation: U.S. Congressional Documents and Debates \(Fourteenth Amendment\)](#) [1866]
- [A Century of Lawmaking for a New Nation: U.S. Congressional Documents and Debates \(Fifteenth Amendment\)](#) [1869]
- ["The Fifteenth Amendment: Message of the President in Full," The Charleston Daily News. \(Charleston, S.C.\), April 2, 1870.](#) [1870]



["The first vote" / AW \[monogram\] ; drawn by A.R. Waud.](#) [1867]

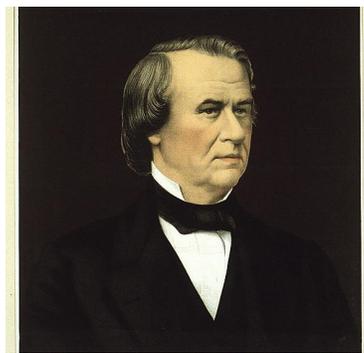


["This is a white man's government" "We regard the Reconstruction Acts \(so called\) of Congress as usurpations, and unconstitutional, revolutionary, and void" - Democratic Platform /](#) [1868]



[A federal bayonette and saber Lodge porcupine](#) [1892]

**PRESIDENT ANDREW JOHNSON AND RECONSTRUCTION IN TENNESSEE**



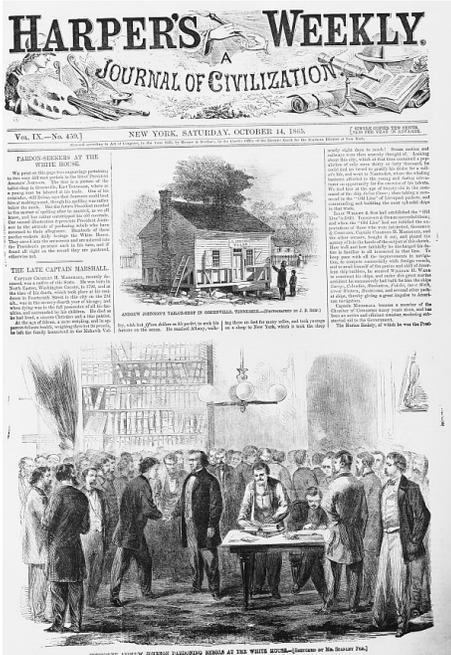
[Andrew Johnson, Prest. U.S.](#)  
[ca. 1866]



[The Senate as a court of impeachment for the trial of Andrew Johnson](#) [1868]



[Parson Brownlow](#) [between 1860 and 1875].



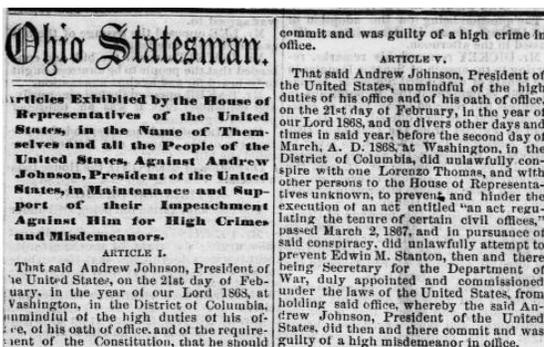
[President Andrew Johnson pardoning Rebels at the White House](#) [1865]



[The Athens post., October 19, 1874. "Southern Troubles and the Prospects of Reconstruction."](#) [1874]

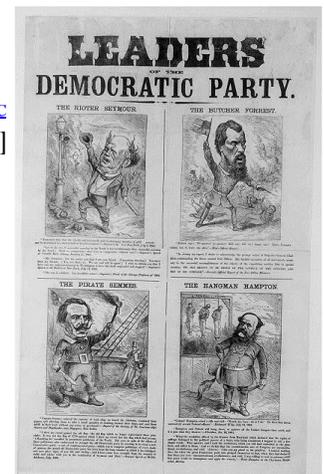


[Scenes in Memphis, Tennessee, during the riot](#) [1866]



[Daily Ohio statesman., May 16, 1868, Image 1](#) [1868] (Impeachment Article)

[Leaders of the Democratic Party](#) [1868]





## CITATIONS: Reconstruction

*Teachers: Providing these primary source replicas without source clues may enhance the inquiry experience for students. This list of citations is supplied for reference purposes to you and your students. We have followed the Chicago Manual of Style format, one of the formats recommended by the Library of Congress, for each entry below, minus the access date. The access date for each of these entries is 4/17/15.*

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### **Reconstruction (1865-1877)**

"Reconstruction of the South." Print. 1857: Eastern District of Pennsylvania. From Library of Congress, *Popular Graphic Arts*. <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2004669124/>

"Radical members of the first legislature after the war, South Carolina." Albumen print. Ca. 1876. From Library of Congress. *Miscellaneous Items in High Demand*. <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/97504690/>

"Murder of Louisiana sacrificed on the altar of radicalism." Wood engraving. 1871. From Library of Congress. *Cartoon Prints, American*. <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2008661710/>

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"Reconstruction, manufactured of the best vuelta abajo tobacco." Engraving. Ca. 1868. From Library of Congress. *Miscellaneous Items in High Demand*. <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/96515985/>

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"Shall we call home our troops? 'We intend to beat the negro in the battle of life & defeat means one thing--EXTERMINATION' - Birmingham (Alabama) News." Engraving. 1875. From Library of Congress. *Miscellaneous Items in High Demand*. <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2002737343/>

"Mississippi Ku-Klux in the disguises in which they were captured." Engraving. 1872. From Library of Congress. *Miscellaneous Items in High Demand*. <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2006687376/>

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"Jubilee Singers, Fisk University, Nashville, Tenn." Photograph. Ca. 1870-1880. From Library of Congress. *Gladstone Collection of African American Photographs*. <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2010647805/>

"13th Amendment to the States; signed by Abraham Lincoln and Congress." *Series 3. General Correspondence. 1837-1897*. February 1, 1865. From Library of Congress. *American Memory: The Abraham Lincoln Papers at the Library of Congress*. <http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=mal&fileName=mal3/436/4361100/malpage.db&recNum=0>

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"Counting the electoral vote—David Dudley Field objects to the vote of Florida." Engraving. 1877. From Library of Congress *Miscellaneous Items in High Demand*. <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2002711432/>

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