

Evaluating Reconstruction from Multiple Perspectives

Introduction

The 10-year period after the Civil War is known as the **Reconstruction Era**. Much of the South lay in ruins with a devastated economy while Radical Republicans and the President battled in Washington, DC over how to readmit the Southern states. For many Southerners, this was a difficult time. However, Reconstruction finally provided opportunities for those freed from slavery, carpetbaggers, and others that had never been possible before.

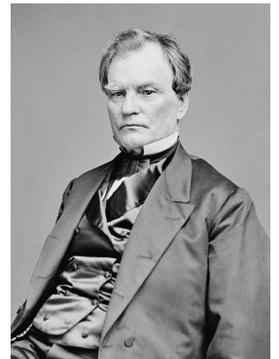
Read the short biography you have been given and think about how this person would feel about Reconstruction. Would he or she benefit from certain parts of it? Would he or she feel anger over anything?

Directions

For each characteristic of Reconstruction listed on your worksheet, check off whether your character would feel positive about it or have negative feelings about it and explain why.

For example, if a woman experienced enslavement, she would feel very positive about the 13th Amendment, which banned slavery in America forever.

When you are done, total up your positives and negatives and think about how this character would feel about Reconstruction overall. Use the characteristics to write a short essay explaining why your character would feel that Reconstruction was a success or a failure.



Formerly Enslaved Woman from Mississippi

This woman spent her entire life enslaved in Mississippi. She finally gained freedom at age 64 when the Union army seized the plantation she was forced to work just before the Civil War came to an end. While freedom was a glorious feeling, with no money, land, or education, she is worried about what the future holds. Her primary concern is finding her three children who were sold years before when the plantation owner was in debt. She hopes that Mississippi will soon be re-admitted to the United States and that the national government will provide some aid and assistance in creating a new life.



Plantation Owner from Virginia

This man was the owner of what was one of the largest plantations in the South before the war. At one time, he enslaved more than 200 men, women, and children and generated immense wealth growing and exporting cotton from a massive plantation in Southern Virginia. Now that the war is over, his future is very uncertain. Upon being re-admitted to the country, he must honor the 13th Amendment which outlawed slavery, and realize that this reality is inevitable. Above all, though, he hopes to maintain a high social and economic status despite the changes to Southern life that may occur following the war.



Poor White Farmer from Georgia

This man has returned home – a small farm – after three years of serving in the Army of Northern Virginia. He fought under the command of Robert E. Lee, hoping that he could preserve the Confederacy. Now that the war is over, he finds that the livestock on his farm were slaughtered by the Union army while passing through on Sherman's March – the campaign where the Union army destroyed everything in its path. He has very little money and resources to make a good living now. He will also be competing for limited economic resources in the South with other poor farmers and thousands of formerly enslaved men and women. He is concerned that these African Americans will push for change in traditional Southern society when they begin to vote.



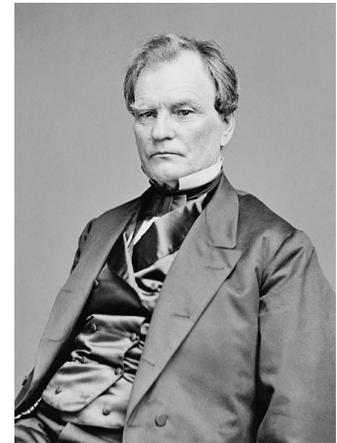
Female Teacher from Massachusetts

This 55-year-old school teacher from Massachusetts has been a teacher her entire adult life. During her career, she has educated both white and African American children. Before the war, she was very involved in reform movements and attended the Seneca Falls Convention where Elizabeth Cady Stanton delivered the first speech demanding women's rights (*The Declaration of Sentiments*). Later, she became involved in the abolitionist movement and even contributed writing to William Lloyd Garrison's anti-slavery newspaper *The Liberator*. Now that the war is over, she is primarily concerned with the treatment of former slaves in the South. She cares deeply about the welfare of those who experienced enslavement and hopes the national government will take an active role in protecting them and helping them adjust to a new life.



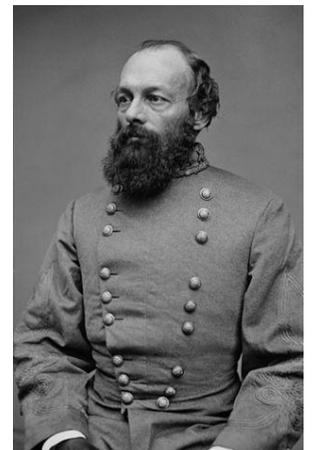
Radical Republican Congressman

This Congressman representing the Union state of Ohio was a supporter of Abraham Lincoln, but believed his plan for Reconstruction was too lenient towards the South. He believes that the South must meet many requirements before being allowed to send their representatives to Congress and rejoin the country. He is primarily concerned with protecting the rights of those freed from slavery and punishing Confederate officers who lead the rebellion against the United States. Also, he believes Congress should have control over creating a plan for Reconstruction, while the President merely sees to it that the plan is carried out.



Former General in the Confederate Army

As a former officer in the Confederate Army, this man is very concerned about his fate. He is unsure of how the national government will treat him once his state is re-admitted to the Union. Will he regain full citizenship despite leading a war against his own country? When he returned home to the South, his plantation was no more. His home had been burned by the Union Army and the two dozen men and women he kept in slavery were still living on the plantation with no other prospects. At the very least, he hopes his state will quickly be allowed to rejoin the country and once again be able to determine its own affairs. He is concerned that if those freed from enslavement are given the right to vote, they might push for changes in traditional Southern society.



Name _____

Evaluating Reconstruction

Directions: For each characteristic of Reconstruction, check whether your character would think it was positive or negative and explain why.

My Character _____

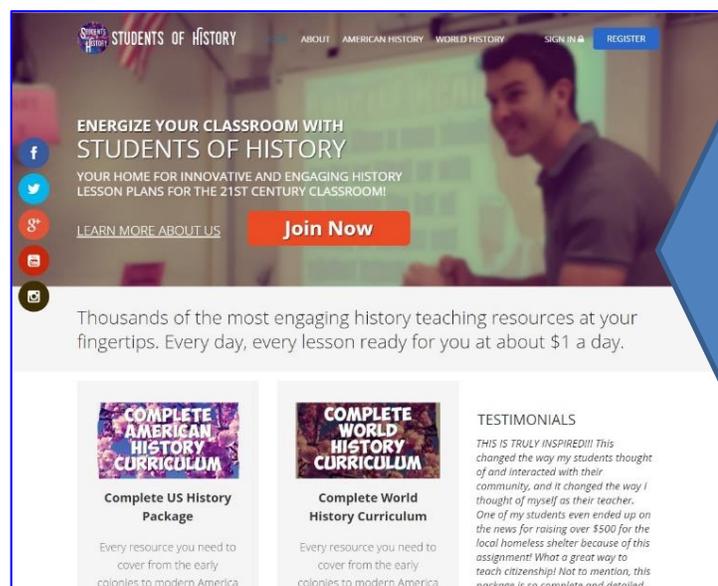
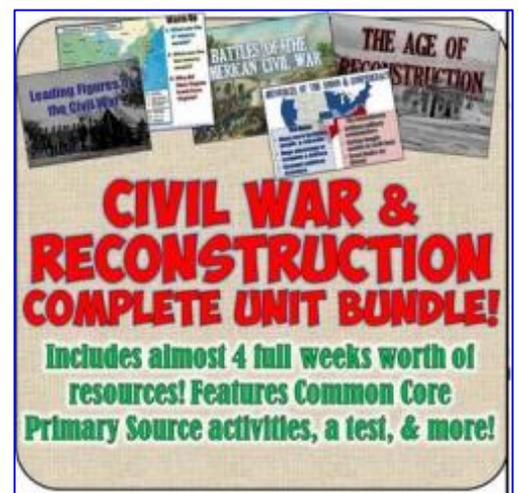
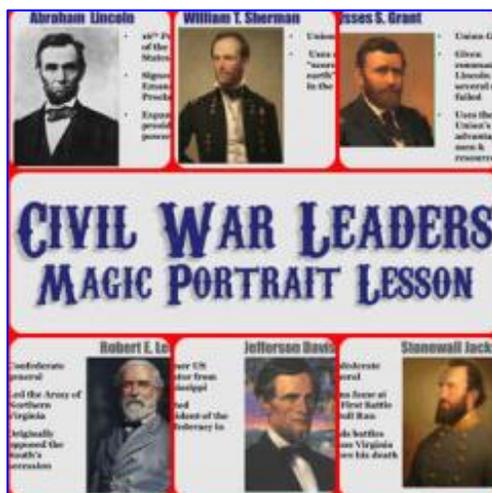
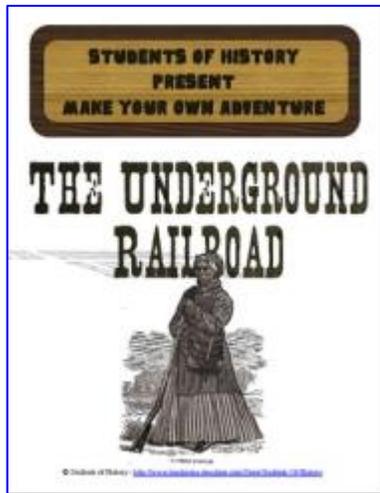
	Positive	Negative	Explanation
13 th Amendment			
14 th Amendment			
15 th Amendment			
Lincoln's 10% Plan			
Lincoln's Assassination			
Military Occupation of the South			
The KKK			
Black Codes			
Carpetbaggers			
Scalawags			
Freedmen's Bureau			
Sharecropping			
Ulysses S. Grant elected president			
The Compromise of 1877			

GOOGLE DRIVE

Are you in a paperless classroom? You can access the [Google Drive Version of this resource here!](#) This link will have you make a copy of the Google Doc, so be sure to be signed in to your Google account.

I feel that this lesson is better with printed out copies, however if you do use the Google version, you can have students select one of the bios to use (this is how it is set up now) or assign them. The Google Doc is entirely editable, so feel free to make adjustments as needed!

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