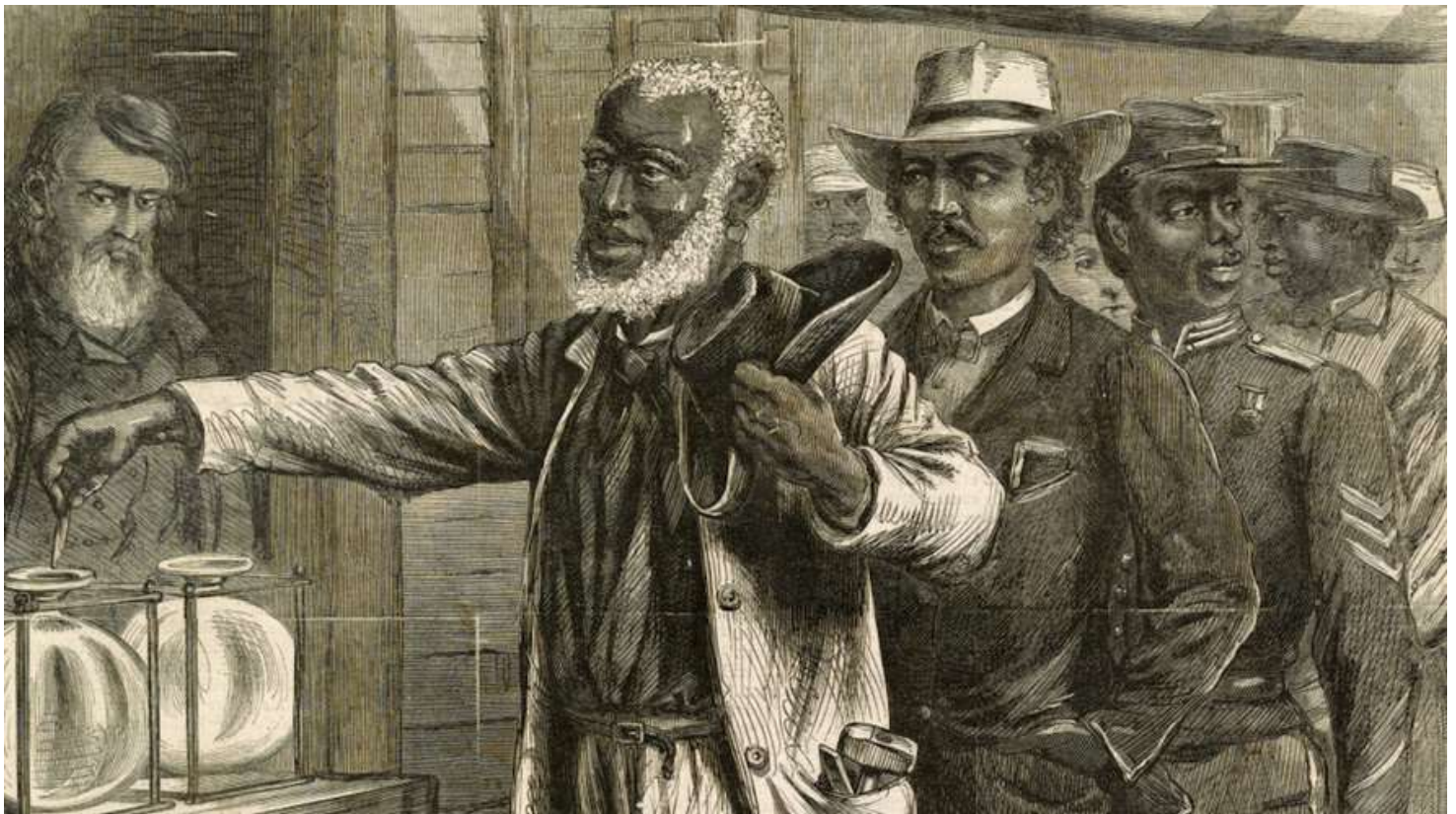


Presidential and Radical Reconstruction after the U.S. Civil War

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With the passage of the 15th Amendment, droves of African-American men went to the polls to exercise their newly recognized right to vote. In this Harper's Weekly print, black men of various occupations wait patiently for their turn as the first voter submits his ballot. Unlike other contemporary images that depicted African-Americans as ignorant, unkempt and lazy, this print shows these black men as active citizens. Alfred R. Waud, "The First Vote," November 1867. Library of Congress.

After the Civil War, the United States needed to be rebuilt. This time is called Reconstruction. It was a painful time for many people in the South.

Although the war had ended, Reconstruction was still a battle. Northerners wanted to punish the South. Southerners desperately wanted to preserve their way of life.

Slavery finally ended when the Civil War ended. Three new changes to the Constitution gave African-Americans more rights. The 13th Amendment got rid of slavery. The 14th Amendment said all male citizens have equal protection under the law, no matter their race. The 15th Amendment gave African-American men the right to vote. States in the South did not always go along with these laws.

Many in the North were angry that leaders who had fought for the South would return to power. They were upset by Southern laws that were unfair to black people. Freed blacks did not feel the postwar South was very different from the prewar South.

Presidential Reconstruction

In 1864, Abraham Lincoln chose Andrew Johnson from Tennessee as his vice president. Lincoln was looking for Southern support. He thought Southerners would like Johnson.

The vice president rarely matters too much, unless something happens to the president. Then Lincoln was assassinated in 1865. Now, Johnson's opinions mattered a great deal. He was now president. The period of Presidential Reconstruction lasted from 1865 to 1867.

Johnson believed the Southern states should decide what was best for them. He also felt that African-Americans were not capable of managing their own lives. He certainly did not think that African-Americans deserved to vote. He once told a group of blacks visiting the White House that they should move to another country.

Johnson was very forgiving toward Southern white leaders. Very few Southern leaders went to court for what happened in the Civil War. African-Americans were beaten regularly. Whites controlled freed slaves with harsh laws. These laws were called the Black Codes.

In South Carolina, African-Americans had to pay a tax if they were not farmers or servants. They were not even allowed to hunt or fish in some areas. Blacks were not allowed to own guns. They even had to pay a tax if they owned dogs. African-Americans were not allowed in parks, schools and other public places. Because of these rules, blacks often had to work on plantations.

At first, Andrew Johnson's laws were supported by most Northerners. But one group of lawmakers wanted blacks to have the same rights as everyone else. They were called the Radical Republicans.

Radical Reconstruction

The Radical Republicans believed blacks should have the same rights as whites. They also felt Southern leaders should be punished for what they did in the Civil War.

The Radicals felt laws to protect blacks were necessary. In 1866, Congress began work on a civil rights law.

President Johnson was against it. He voted against the civil rights law. He did not believe blacks have the "same rights of property and person" as whites.

Other Republicans were disgusted by Johnson's racism. They joined with the Radicals to make sure Johnson could not stop the Civil Rights Act. They had enough votes to stop Johnson.

In 1867, Congress approved the 14th Amendment. It said states cannot limit the freedom of any men. It didn't mention women or their rights.

Republicans then passed a law called the Reconstruction Act of 1867. This law said people who fought for the South in the Civil War could not vote or be political leaders. Now, Southerners who supported the North during the war became the new leaders in the South.

Southern states rewrote their laws to agree with the 14th Amendment and give blacks more rights. Congress was gaining power. One thing still stood in the way. It was President Johnson. Radical leaders used a part of the Constitution to get rid of him: impeachment. In the spring of 1868, Andrew Johnson became the first president to be impeached. But, he was not removed from the White House. He finished his term as president but didn't run again.

Quiz

- 1 Which sentence from the article BEST shows that President Johnson did not believe Southern leaders should be punished for the Civil War?
- (A) Johnson believed the Southern states should decide what was best for them.
 - (B) Very few Southern leaders went to court for what happened in the Civil War.
 - (C) This law said people who fought for the South in the Civil War could not vote or be political leaders.
 - (D) Now, Southerners who supported the North during the war became the new leaders in the South.

- 2 Which paragraph from the introduction [paragraphs 1-4] explains how laws were changed to give African-Americans more rights after the Civil War?

- 3 Read the first two paragraphs of the section "Presidential Reconstruction."

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The vice president rarely matters too much, unless something happens to the president. Then Lincoln was assassinated in 1865. Now, Johnson's opinions mattered a great deal. He was now president. The period of Presidential Reconstruction lasted from 1865 to 1867.

Which answer choice BEST describes the structure of these paragraphs?

- (A) compare and contrast
 - (B) descriptive detail
 - (C) problem and solution
 - (D) chronological order
- 4 Which information MOST contributes to the organization of the section "Radical Reconstruction"?
- (A) the description of new laws that were passed during the Reconstruction period
 - (B) the dates that show when new laws were passed during the Reconstruction period
 - (C) the explanation of how Andrew Johnson was the first president to be impeached
 - (D) the opinions of President Johnson on civil rights for African-Americans