A#16 Reconstruction – Two View

Objective: To evaluate the successes and failures of Reconstruction after the Civil War. In this lesson, students will independently to marshal evidence in support of one of two positions on the successes and failures of Reconstruction.

Notes: Reconstruction, the period between 1865 and 1877, remains one of the most controversial eras in American history. Reuniting the Union, rehabilitating the devastated Southern economy, and integrating the freedmen into society would have challenged the best of minds. That Radical Republican, carpetbaggers, scalawags, and recently freed slaves failed to accomplish these lofty goals in a short twelve years is hardly surprising.

Historians in the past frequently focused on the failures, graft, and corruption of the period and applied labels such as the "Tragic Era" or "Blackout of Honest Government." More recently, revisionist historians have pointed out positive accomplishments and suggested that important foundations for later success can be found in Reconstruction precedents.

Radical Republicans: The **Radical Republicans** were a loose faction of American politicians within the Republican Party from about 1854 (before the American Civil War) until the end of Reconstruction in 1877. They called themselves "radicals" and were opposed during the war by moderates and after the war by self described "conservatives" (in the South) and "Liberals" (in the North).

During the war, Radical Republicans opposed President Abraham Lincoln's policies in terms of selection of generals and his efforts to bring states back into the Union (they believed he was too lenient); Lincoln vetoed the Radical plan in 1864 and was putting his own policies in effect when he was assassinated in 1865. Radicals pushed for the uncompensated abolition of slavery, and after the war supported Civil Rights for freedmen (the newly freed slaves), such as measures ensuring the right to vote. They initiated the Reconstruction Acts, passed three amendments that dealt with issues of slavery, rights, and the right to vote, and reduced rights for ex-Confederate soldiers (such as a 50% "Iron clad" oath), so that the Freedmen (ex-slaves) would have more political rights than most Southern whites. The Radicals were vigorously opposed by the Democratic Party and usually by moderate and Liberal Republicans as well.

Directions: You will complete the following questions using you knowledge of the era in questions, from both your notes and textbook.

The "Success" or "Failure" of Radical Reconstruction

PART A:

You task is to prepare a sheet supporting or disagreeing with the argument of Erik McKitrick, but first you must gather information and evidence by answering the following questions. Erick McKitrick contends that Radical Reconstruction, which was designed to bring about a social revolution in race relations, failed to help the African American find his of her proper place in American life. He cites three reasons for this failure: confused priorities, oppositions from southern whites, and the federal government's unwillingness to maintain the long-term pressure necessary to accomplish Radical Republican goals.

1. Begin by acknowledging any real accomplishments of Radical Republicans during the years 1865-1877.

2. What are the most important Reconstruction Amendments and what do they do? Why are they significant?

3. Describe the terms and methods of both Presidential and Congressional Reconstruction. What are the similarities and differences between the two? Who was more lenient and who was harsher?

4. What role did the Freedmen's Bureau play in helping freed slaves prepare for life after emancipation? Why was this significant?

5. Describe the terms of the Civil Rights Act of 1866? Was it affective? Did it provide Freedmen with the right to vote?

6. Define the following terms:

    a. Scalawags
    b. Carpetbaggers
    c. Ku Klux Klan

7. How did the above three groups affect Reconstruction in the southern states?

8. What are the enforcement acts and why are they created? What problems were they intended to solve?

9. What are Sharecropping and the crop lien system and how did they affect Reconstruction in the southern states?

10. What are Jim Crow laws? Why did the south implement them and what affect did they have on the freed population in the south?

11. Describe the outcome of the court case *Plessy v. Ferguson*.

PART B:

Directions: Answer the following question in a thesis-paragraph (Thesis statement and paragraph proving your thesis). The paragraph must show evidence and reasoning and must be of sufficient length to answer the question.

Question: Do you believe that the policies/events/people of the Radical Reconstruction accomplish their goals of the successful integration of African-Americans into American society and life in the years immediately after the Civil War?