

# Summary: Rebuilding Florida

## Reconstruction (1865-1877)

The federal government began Reconstruction after the Civil War. Reconstruction was the government's plan to rebuild the South. The plan also protected the rights of freed slaves, called freedmen. Now all freedmen were citizens with the right of suffrage. But, they often had no money, land, or tools to earn a living.

Some made money by sharecropping on land owned by whites. But landowners often treated sharecroppers unfairly. As a result, many sharecroppers fell into debt.

The federal government gave some freed men and women land. It started the Freedmen's Bureau. This group protected, fed, and educated African Americans. It helped them to find jobs. Carpetbaggers also helped freed African Americans.

## Reconstruction Ends

During Reconstruction, African Americans had new rights. Some, like Jonathan Gibbs and Robert Meacham, had important jobs in the Florida government.

Many whites supported the rights of African Americans. Harriet Beecher Stowe lived in Jacksonville. She wrote about the need to treat African Americans fairly.

But many southern states passed laws that allowed discrimination against African Americans. Some whites used violence to keep them from voting, running for office, and getting an education. To avoid discrimination, some African Americans built all-black communities, such as Eatonville. Soon, African Americans lost their freedoms.

## A New Era of Growth

When the war ended, Florida had less damage to its buildings and businesses than other southern states. Florida's economy was able to recover quickly from the war.

Florida's natural resources were also important to the economy. The mild climate brought many visitors. The South Florida Railroad improved transportation so Florida could keep growing.



### Before You Read

Find and underline each vocabulary word.

**Reconstruction** *noun*, the federal government's plan to rebuild, or reconstruct, the South

**suffrage** *noun*, the right to vote

**sharecropping** *noun*, a system in which landowners provided land and supplies in return for a share of the farmer's crops

**carpetbaggers** *noun*, people who came from the North to the South after the war

**discrimination** *noun*, the unequal treatment of people



### After You Read

**REVIEW** What did the federal government do to help freed men and women? Highlight four sentences that tell the answer.

**REVIEW** What made it so difficult for freed African Americans to keep the rights they gained during Reconstruction? Draw a box around the paragraph that describes Reconstruction.

**REVIEW** Why did Florida's economy begin growing again faster than other southern states? Underline two sentences that tell the answer.