

Summary: Reconstruction

Plans for Reconstruction

After the war, the country had to be reunited. This period was called Reconstruction. Some northerners wanted to punish the South. Lincoln asked people to forget their anger. He wanted the defeated states to set up state governments and rejoin the Union quickly. Radical Republicans in Congress wanted to change the South and protect the rights of African Americans. Lincoln was shot on April 14, 1865 by John Wilkes Booth. His assassination shocked the country.

Reconstruction

Vice President Andrew Johnson became president. He put Lincoln's plan into action. Southern states had to abolish slavery. Most passed Black Codes to limit the rights of African Americans. Congress set up the Freedmen's Bureau to provide support for poor blacks and whites. In 1867, Congress put the South under military rule. Soldiers forced states to obey Congress and pass laws letting all men vote. In 1868, Congress impeached Johnson. They said he broke laws. Some southerners supported Congress. They were called scalawags. Some northerners went to the South just to make money. They were called carpetbaggers.

The Constitution Changes

During Reconstruction, Congress created three amendments to the Constitution. They gave the national government more power over the states. The Thirteenth Amendment ended slavery. Black Codes still limited the rights of African Americans. To protect those rights Congress passed the Fourteenth Amendment. It gave blacks full citizenship. Southern states had to ratify this amendment to rejoin the Union. The Fifteenth Amendment recognized the right of African American men to vote. But African Americans faced a long struggle for equality.

Before You Read

Find and underline each vocabulary word.

Reconstruction *noun*, period when the South rejoined the Union

assassination *noun*, the murder of an important leader

Freedmen's Bureau *noun*, an agency set up to provide food, clothing, medical care, and legal advice to poor blacks and whites

impeach *verb*, to charge a government official with a crime

After You Read

REVIEW What was Lincoln's plan for Reconstruction? Underline the sentence that tells you the answer.

REVIEW Why were soldiers sent to the South? Circle the sentence that tells the answer.

REVIEW Why did Congress pass the Fourteenth Amendment? Highlight the sentences that tell you the answer.