North or South: Who Killed Reconstruction?

"Is This A Republican Form of Government? Is This Protecting Life, Liberty, or Property?"

Harper's Weekly, September 2, 1876

Overview: The twelve years after the Civil War proved to be a difficult time for America. Called Reconstruction by historians, this era saw an increase of freedom for former slaves. However, there was also great resistance to change. In 1877 attempts to reconstruct the South officially ended, leaving white-only governments in power. This Mini-Q asks you to decide who, North or South, was most responsible for the end of Reconstruction.

The Documents:

Document A: Terrorizing “Carpetbaggers” and “Scalawags”
Document B: Targeting African-American Voters and Government Officials
Document C: Problems and Scandals in the North
Document D: Popular Opinion and Racism in the North

A Mini Document Based Question (Mini-Q)
Mini-Q's in American History
VOLUME 1, UNIT 8

North or South: Who Killed Reconstruction?

MINI-Q™ LESSON PLAN

DAY 1 – 45 minutes

Step One: Hook Refer to the Step One teacher notes in the Mini-Q. Read the directions aloud. The purpose is to get students engaged, talking, and wanting to do the Mini-Q.

Step Two: Background Essay Refer to the Step Two teacher notes in the Mini-Q. Students can write out answers to the BGE questions or the questions can simply be discussed.

Step Three: Understanding the Question and Pre-Bucketing The task of recognizing and defining key words in the question is a crucial habit of mind. The second task of pre-bucketing based on clues in the question and in document titles is a huge categorization skill.

Step Four: Document Analysis Do Document A with the whole class, modeling the kind of detail you expect in student answers to the Document Analysis questions.

   Homework: Analyze the remaining documents and answer the questions that follow.

DAY 2 – 45 minutes

Step Four (continued): Discussion of Documents

   Option One: Working in pairs or threesomes, have students discuss the answers to the first set of Document Analysis questions they did for homework. Using a different colored pen than they used for homework, they may add to their answers. After five minutes open the discussion of that document to the full class. Then proceed to the next document and repeat.

   Option Two: Proceed as above except have a volunteer group lead each of the three or four different document discussions. Students at their desks may add to their notes, again in a different color.

Step Five: Bucketing and Chickenfoot Have students complete the bucketing and chickenfoot workpage. This step will help students clarify their thesis and roadmap.

Step Six: From Thesis to Essay Writing (For Homework) Have students fill out the Outline Guide Sheet or write their multi-paragraph essay.

DAY 3 (Optional)

Step Six (continued): Conduct an in-class Writing Workshop.

MINI-Q LESSON PLAN: CLEAN VERSION OPTION

If students are ready, use the Clean Version of the Mini-Q which requires them to handle more of the analysis on their own. Estimated time to complete is 1-2 class periods.
### The Hook

**Headline A:** “Congress Passes Enforcement Act — Troops Sent South to Put Down the KKK”

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**Headline B:** “Hiram Revels Elected Senator From Mississippi in 1870 — First Black Man to Enter Congress”

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**Headline C:** “Financial Panic of 1873 to Cause Severe Depression and Loss of 3 Million Jobs”

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**Headline D:** “Rutherford B. Hayes Elected President in 1876 — Agrees to Move Federal Soldiers out of Louisiana and South Carolina”

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**Teacher Note:**

The purpose of this hook is two-fold. First, several important dates and events are introduced to the students. Although these are not actual headlines, the events did happen. Knowing that there was a financial panic in 1873, for example, will help students realize why the North may have become distracted with Reconstruction efforts. Also, terms like scalawag, carpetbagger, and Radical Republicans are introduced.

The second purpose is to begin thinking about Reconstruction from different perspectives. Northern and Southern perspectives on Reconstruction differed dramatically. It is important to keep reminding students that the War had just ended and emotions were extremely high. Bitterness on both sides ran deep, and so did fatigue.
Hook Exercise: Reconstruction

Directions: Below are several groups that played a key role in the Reconstruction period. With a partner, read the descriptions of each group, and then read the headlines at the bottom of the page. Under each headline note how happy or sad each group would be about the news. Use a scale of 1-10 with 1 being least happy and 10 being the happiest. Be prepared to defend your answers.

Freedmen (F):
African-Americans who were freed from slavery during and after the Civil War

Radical Republicans (RR):
Northern Republican Congressmen who supported African-American citizenship and punishment for former Confederates

Carpetbaggers (CB):
Northerners who went south after the Civil War to help Freedmen and Reconstruction

Ku Klux Klan (KKK):
A white supremacist group that opposed Reconstruction and rights for Freedmen

Scalawags (S):
Southern whites who supported Carpetbaggers and Freedmen

Headline A: “Congress Passes Enforcement Acts — Troops Sent South to Put Down the KKK”
F: 
CB: 
S: 
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KKK: 

Headline B: “Hiram Revels Elected Senator From Mississippi in 1870 — First Black Man to Enter Congress”
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Headline C: “Financial Panic of 1873 to Cause Severe Depression and Loss of 3 Million Jobs”
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Headline D: “Rutherford B. Hayes Elected President in 1876 — Agrees to Move Federal Soldiers out of Louisiana and South Carolina”
F: 
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S: 
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Establishing the Context

General Instructions

- Review the map in the Background Essay showing military districts.
- Pre-teach the bold-faced vocabulary.
- Have students read, or read aloud to them, the Background Essay.
- Have students answer the Background Essay questions on the next page.

Specific Considerations

The main purpose of the Background Essay is to create a context for the Mini-Q exercise. Its job is to provide a sense of time, place, story, and introduce important vocabulary and concepts. Doing this well gives all students a more equal chance to succeed with the Mini-Q.

**Time:** Make sure to remind students that Reconstruction lasted only 12 short years. It was a period of time shorter than many of their own life spans, and the future of the nation was in the balance. Also, remind students how exhausted and emotional the nation was following the Civil War.

**Place:** Review the inset map showing the five military districts which Congress established in 1867. District 1, Virginia; District 2, North and South Carolina; District 3, Alabama, Georgia, and Florida; District 4, Mississippi and Arkansas; District 5, Louisiana and Texas. (Tennessee was not included because it had formally been readmitted to the Union in 1866.) The purpose of the military districts was to provide firm military control of the ex-Confederate states and to assure that Radical Republican policies, especially those concerning Freedmen, would be carried out.

**Story:** Consider reading the Background Essay aloud. We believe it is good for many students, even good readers, to hear the words as they see them. For many it is important to hear the cadence of the language, to experience pauses and emphasis.

Vocabulary and Concepts

You may want to pre-teach the six bold-faced terms in the essay. Our feeling about vocabulary is that some pre-teaching is good but keep the word list short.
North or South: Who Killed Reconstruction?

...the slave went free; stood a brief moment in the sun; then moved back again toward slavery. W.E.B. DuBois

1876 was an exciting year for America. It was the 100th anniversary of The Declaration of Independence and America was on the move. Homesteaders and ranchers were filling up the land west of the Mississippi River. Railroads were being built at an astounding rate. It seemed the United States was creating enough opportunity that all Americans and millions of immigrants could pursue their hopes for happiness just as Thomas Jefferson had envisioned 100 years earlier.

So it is a great irony of history that the election of 1876 officially crushed the American dream for millions of black Americans. This election saw Rutherford B. Hayes, the Republican candidate and eventual winner, square off against Samuel J. Tilden, the Democratic nominee. Although Tilden won the popular vote by a wide margin, election results in Florida, South Carolina, and Louisiana were so close that a winner could not be determined. If these three states went for Hayes, he would win the Electoral College vote and become President.

Talk of a new Civil War was in the air as the opponents in the disputed states submitted separate sets of electoral ballots. An informal agreement, now called The Compromise of 1877, avoided the crisis by granting Hayes the Presidency. In return, Hayes promised to remove the last Federal soldiers from the South, almost guaranteeing that all-white governments would rise to power. The dream of Reconstruction was officially dead.

For a while, however, it had seemed that the dream of Reconstruction might be realized. The 13th Amendment ended slavery. The 14th Amendment gave black Americans citizenship and civil rights. A Military Reconstruction Act was passed to make sure African-Americans' new rights were protected. Black churches were founded. Public schools were built for black children, and universities like Howard, Fisk, Morehouse, and Hampton were founded for black students seeking higher education. Sixteen African-Americans were elected to Congress and numerous others served at state and local levels. Finally, the 15th Amendment was ratified making it illegal to deny someone the right to vote based on race. Indeed, real progress was made.

However, in the early 1870s, the tide shifted. Southern states began to elect governments dedicated to whites-only rule. Between 1870 and 1876 all but three Southern states turned back Reconstruction efforts. When Rutherford B. Hayes agreed to remove federal soldiers, he was simply putting an end to an already dying effort. But dying or dead, what had gone wrong? Your job is to read the documents that follow and answer the question: North or South: Who killed Reconstruction?
Document A: Terrorizing “Carpetbaggers” and “Scalawags”

Content Notes:

• The image of the Alabama lynching is chilling, especially considering it was drawn as a warning to Republicans in the South. It is a direct threat to Carpetbaggers and Scalawags who sided with the freedmen.

• The KKK formed as a social club in 1866 and quickly evolved into an organization that used violence to intimidate Freedmen and any who sought to support Republican Reconstruction governments.

• The KKK and other groups often targeted individuals in key positions of power including judges and government officials. Since the KKK did not see the Reconstruction governments as legitimate, they felt justified in their attacks. The term “redemption,” which they used to describe their efforts, literally means salvation. The KKK saw themselves as saviors for Southerners who were being enslaved by Reconstruction governments.

• Albion Tourgee is one of the most famous of the so-called Carpetbaggers. He not only was an effective judge in a very violent area of North Carolina, he bravely wrote about his experiences and observations, thus endangering himself even more. He also helped start a school for black students, now known as Bennett College. After Reconstruction he left North Carolina and became an influential writer and editor in Colorado and New York.

• The Donkey is the symbol of the Democratic Party and had been since the Age of Jackson. The image, therefore, is a threat to any who support the Republican efforts at Reconstruction. The donkey clearly links the KKK to the Democratic Party.

Teaching Tips:

• Discuss the Document Analysis questions:

  1. In the image above, what group or groups is the KKK threatening?

    Carpetbaggers and Scalawags.

  2. According to Tourgee, what types of people are being attacked by the KKK? Why would the KKK attack these people?

    The KKK was attacking government officials and judges. Both groups had the power to pass laws hurting the KKK and to try members of the KKK. Thus they were seen as prime threats and targets.

  3. How does the way that John Stephens was killed support the idea the Ku Klux Klan was a terrorist organization?

    Stephens was not simply killed; he was murdered in a way that guaranteed that people would talk about it. The fact that he was killed in a courtroom also suggests that the KKK wanted to threaten everyone involved in the courts, not just in the State Legislature.

  4. How does this document help answer the DBQ question?

    If violence like this existed in a large way in the South (and it did), the only way that Reconstruction could succeed was for the US Government to send soldiers to keep the peace.
Document A


Note: Tourgee was a white, Northern soldier who settled in North Carolina after the War. He served as a judge during Reconstruction and wrote this letter to the North Carolina Republican Senator, Joseph Carter Abbott.

It is my mournful duty to inform you that our friend John W. Stephens, State Senator from Caswell, is dead. He was foully murdered by the Ku-Klux in the Grand Jury room of the Court House on Saturday... He was stabbed five or six times, and then hanged on a hook in the Grand Jury room.... Another brave, honest Republican citizen has met his fate at the hands of these fiends....

... I have very little doubt that I shall be one of the next victims. My steps have been dogged for months, and only a good opportunity has been wanting to secure to me the fate which Stephens has just met.... I say to you plainly that any member of Congress who, especially from the South, does not support, advocate, and urge immediate active and thorough measures to put an end to these outrages ... is a coward, a traitor, or a fool.

Source: Independent Monitor, September 1, 1868. Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama.
Document B: Targeting Black Voters and Government Officials

Content Notes:
- Elections during Reconstruction were times of increased violence in the South. Many Southerners saw the Republicans as conquerors—after all they were the party of Lincoln. Not surprisingly, Freedmen overwhelmingly voted for the Republican ticket. In 1868 President Grant won the popular vote by only 310,000 votes. 500,000 African-American votes in the South were the difference.
- Harper's Weekly was a very influential Northern magazine. This 1876 image was a scathing attack on Southerners' use of violence to intimidate the black vote. These scare tactics were used well into the 20th century, and it wasn't until the 1960s that many black Southerners felt safe enough to cast a vote.
- It was well known in the North and in Congress that voter intimidation was rampant in most Southern states. Colby's testimony was part of an effort to expose the cruel and illegal nature of the Klan's activities. Congress did authorize President Grant to use troops to suppress KKK activities. One of Grant's greatest efforts led to the arrest of 600 Klansman in South Carolina. Even though the celebrated event led to only 9 of the 600 men standing trial, much of the Klan's energies were limited as its leaders went into hiding or fled. However, as Grant and Congress began to take less forceful measures after 1872, the ideals of Radical Reconstruction were doomed to fail. Soon White Leagues and the KKK remerged in full force.

Teaching Tips:
- Discuss the Document Analysis questions:
  1. Why did the KKK attack Abram Colby?
     Colby was attacked because he was a leader who threatened white control. He was also brave and clearly would not be intimidated.
  2. According to Colby, what types of people make up the KKK?
     According to Colby, the KKK was made up of different classes of whites, including a lawyer, a doctor, and farmers.
  3. What seems to be the ultimate goal of the KKK?
     The Klan wants all Republican Reconstruction governments to be overthrown. The Republican governments are seen as illegitimate because they are supported by blacks (former slaves) and Northerners (Carpetbaggers).
  4. What is the main idea of the cartoon?
     The cartoon is a graphic depiction and powerful attack against the intimidation tactics of white supremacist groups. It shows how powerless the Freedmen were without forceful government protection. It also is a Northern view of what is happening in the South, and was widely criticized by many Southerners as being an exaggeration.
Document B

Source: Abram Colby, testimony to a joint House and Senate Committee in 1872.

Note: Colby was a former slave who was elected to the Georgia State Legislature during Reconstruction.

Colby: On the 29th of October 1869, [the Klansmen] broke my door open, took me out of bed, took me to the woods and whipped me three hours or more and left me for dead. They said to me, "Do you think you will ever vote another damned Radical ticket?" I said, "If there was an election tomorrow, I would vote the Radical ticket." They set in and whipped me a thousand licks more, with sticks and straps that had buckles on the ends of them.

Question: What is the character of those men who were engaged in whipping you?

Colby: Some are first-class men in our town. One is a lawyer, one a doctor, and some are farmers.... They said I had voted for Grant and had carried the Negroes against them. About two days before they whipped me they offered me $5,000 to go with them and said they would pay me $2,500 in cash if I would let another man go to the legislature in my place. I told them that I would not do it if they would give me all the county was worth.... No man can make a free speech in my county. I do not believe it can be done anywhere in Georgia.

Source: Harper's Weekly, October 21, 1876.

Caption: "Of course he wants to vote the Democratic ticket"
Content Notes:

- It is generally accepted that Ulysses S. Grant was not personally corrupt. However, the amount of high-level scandals that took place during his presidency is staggering. Many of the most corrupt officials were friends of Grant whom he personally appointed.

- The Credit Mobilier Affair involved leading Republicans, including Grant’s Vice-President, who accepted bribes, mostly in the form of stock from the dummy Credit Mobilier Company. This company illegally overpaid itself with contracts awarded for building a section of the transcontinental railroad—a project funded in large part from Congressional land grants.

- The Whiskey Ring involved government tax collectors who accepted bribes to help whiskey distillers avoid paying taxes. This cost the government millions of dollars. Grant’s close friend and private secretary, Orville Babcock, was clearly involved in the scheme, but Grant refused to believe it and protected his friend from convictions.

- The Belknap Affair, also called the Indian Ring, involved Grant’s Secretary of War, William Belknap. Belknap accepted bribes from merchants who wanted to trade with Indians in the territories.

- In 1872, a reform-minded group of liberal Republicans led by Horace Greeley broke away from the Radical Republicans and President Grant. Their primary issue was government corruption, and they believed that it was the main problem facing the nation—not Reconstruction. In fact, they saw Southern Reconstruction state governments as corrupt and unworthy of support. Greeley openly stated that Reconstruction had achieved its goals and the black man had to stand on his own two feet. Democrats, seeing a chance to get rid of Grant, nominated Greeley for President—which is ironic since Greeley once called the Democrats in the South “murderers...drunkards, cowards, liars, thieves.” Greeley lost, but Republican unity was shattered, making it nearly impossible to continue an aggressive campaign of Reconstruction in the South.

Teaching Tips:

- Discuss the Document Analysis questions:
  
  1. Explain the phrases “weary of the ‘Negro Question’” and “sick of carpet-bag government.”
     Northern were getting tired of trying to solve the race problems of the South. They were also suspicious of what they were beginning to see as corrupt governments in the South run by Northern Carpetbaggers and Freedmen.

  2. What is President Grant trying to find in the barrel?
     He is looking for corruption and scandals in his administration.

  3. If President Grant was busy with scandals, what is likely to happen to his focus on Reconstruction efforts in the South?
     Grant was distracted by all the problems his administration faced, and Reconstruction became just one of the problems. His focus was split.

  4. Why might increased anger about corruption in government lead to less interest in government attempts to reconstruct the South?
     If there is corruption in government, then maybe the problems in the South are not as important as they once seemed. Also voters get tired of the problems that are further away from their own homes, and might not care as much about issues in other parts of the country.
"...in the 1870s, Northern voters grew indifferent to events in the South. Weary of the ‘Negro Question’ and ‘sick of carpet-bag’ government, many Northern voters shifted their attention to such national concerns as the Panic of 1873 and corruption in Grant’s administration.... Although political violence continued in the South ... the tide of public opinion in the North began to turn against Reconstruction policies."

Source: Gerald Danzer et al., The Americans, McDougal Littell, 1998.

Caption: "U.S. 'In For It.' I hope I shall get to the bottom soon."

Note: U.S. are initials of President Ulysses S. Grant.

Source: Harper's Weekly, 1876
Content Notes:

- The only way that Reconstruction was going to succeed was if Northerners wanted it to do so. Resistance was strong in the South as documents A and B show. The crusade of the Civil War left many Northerners willing to continue the aggressive Radical Reconstruction policies for a while. But eventually, fatigue, money, and the death of the most important radicals, left many in the North exhausted and frustrated.

- One reason Northerners tired of Reconstruction has been traced to the racism that existed in the North. As blacks were being brutalized in the South, many Northerners turned a blind eye to the problem, and even began seeing blacks as the cause of their own problems. In her 2001 book, *The Death of Reconstruction: Race, Labor and Politics in the Post-Civil War North, 1865-1901*, Heather Richardson makes a convincing case that Northern public opinion changed in the early 1870s. Newspapers and cartoonist, who had originally portrayed the slave as a hard working, freedom-seeking American, began to show blacks as lazy and corrupt and of low character in general. Richardson argues that the Freedmen was in part the victim of the Northern middle class becoming increasingly fearful of immigrants and labor unions, many of whom advocated socialist-like ideas. This shift in attitude toward Southern blacks is not surprising given that many Northern states had tight restrictions on black suffrage until the 15th Amendment was passed.

- If Northern racism was the reason the Federal Government became less interested in Reconstruction, then who was really responsible for bringing Reconstruction to an end – Northerners who were unwilling to force change, or Southerners who used violence and terrorism to resist change?

Teaching Tips:

- Discuss the Document Analysis questions:

  1. According to the letter from the *Boston Evening Transcript*, why did some people believe blacks were unfit to be government officials?

    Blacks had been in slavery so long they had not learned the skills of citizenship and self-rule required for democracy.

  2. How does the letter from the *Boston Evening Transcript* show that racism existed in the North?

    This letter is suggesting that blacks were not yet ready to rule themselves or others. This is a form of racism and of seeing one group as inferior to another. It justifies denying equal rights and protection under the law.

  3. How do this cartoon and letter help explain why Northerners lost interest in Reconstruction?

    The artist portrays black politicians as corrupt, buffoon-like, and fat. The fat-cat look was a popular way to portray corrupt officials who stuffed themselves full of money while the little man suffered. These images reinforced an existing racist stereotype of the lazy, dishonest black man who was a threat to society.

  4. How does the image above depict black politicians in the South?

    As Northern attitudes began to harden against black participation in government, the entire enterprise of Reconstruction was threatened. Northerners were not going to send their sons south to protect what they saw as corrupt, incompetent and possibly inferior people – especially if there were problems at home. (See Document C)
In the fall of 1873, even the staunchly (firmly) pro-Grant and pro-freedman Boston Evening Transcript ran a letter ... arguing that “the blacks, as a people, are unfitted for the proper exercise of political duties.... The rising generation of ... blacks needed a period of probation and instruction; a period ... long enough for the black to have forgotten something of his condition as a slave and learned much of the true method of gaining honorable subsistence and of performing the duties of any position to which he might aspire.”