



Rebuilding the Nation

Objectives

1. Describe the postwar challenges that faced the nation.
2. Compare and contrast President Lincoln's plan for Reconstruction with the plan proposed by Congress.
3. Identify the goals of the Freedmen's Bureau.
4. Describe the immediate impact of Lincoln's assassination.

Main Idea

President Lincoln and Congress did not agree about how to bring the Union back together.

Prepare to Read

Reading Skill

Identify Proposals In turbulent times, such as after the Civil War, people may have many different ideas about how to move forward. They identify goals to achieve and propose solutions to problems. For example, each proposal made by a government leader was intended to achieve a specific goal. As you read Section 1, identify these proposals and goals.

Vocabulary Builder

High-Use Words

voluntary, p. 547

resolve, p. 548

Key Terms and People

Abraham Lincoln, p. 546

amnesty, p. 547

freedman, p. 548

John Wilkes Booth, p. 549

Background Knowledge After four years of bitter war, the Union finally had won the Civil War. Even though the fighting had ended, the nation remained divided. In this section, you will read of early plans for rebuilding national unity after the war.

Preparing for Reunion

As the Civil War ended, enormous problems faced the nation, especially the South. Vast stretches of the South lay in ruins. What provisions would be made for people who had been freed from slavery? Homeless refugees—both African American and white—needed food, shelter, and work. (For more on conditions in the South after the Civil War, see the Life at the Time feature at the end of this section.)

Somehow, though, Americans had to master their hard feelings and bring the North and the South together again. This process, known as Reconstruction, would occupy the nation for years to come.

Lincoln's Ten Percent Plan Abraham Lincoln wanted to make it easy for the southern states to rejoin the Union. His goal was to bind up the wounds of war as quickly as possible.

In December 1863, Lincoln introduced what was called the Ten Percent Plan. As soon as ten percent of a state's voters swore an oath of loyalty to the United States, the voters could organize a new state government. That government would have to declare an end to slavery. Then, the state could send members to Congress and take part in the national government again.

Lincoln's plan included amnesty for former Confederates who took the loyalty oath. An amnesty is a group pardon. The offer of amnesty did not apply to Confederate government leaders and top military officers.

The Wade-Davis Bill Six months later, Congress passed a much stricter plan for Reconstruction called the Wade-Davis Bill. Under that bill, 50 percent of voters would have to sign a loyalty oath before a state could return to the Union. Moreover, anyone who had voluntarily fought for the Confederacy would be barred from voting for delegates to a convention to write a new state constitution. The bill did not give them a right to vote. Lincoln would not sign the Wade-Davis Bill, so it never became law.

Lincoln and his fellow Republicans hoped to see a strong Republican Party in the new South. Lincoln thought that his "soft," or lenient, Reconstruction policy would win support from influential southerners. Supporters of a strict policy toward the South, known as Radical Republicans, disagreed. They argued that only a strict plan would keep the people who had led the South into secession from regaining power and weakening the control of the Radical Republicans.

Checkpoint How did Lincoln's plan for Reconstruction differ from that of the Radical Republicans in Congress?



Identify Proposals

What did Lincoln propose in his Ten Percent Plan?

Vocabulary Builder

voluntary (VAHL ahn tair ee) *adj.*
not forced; done of one's own free will

Destruction in the South

Parts of Richmond, capital of the Confederacy, lay in ruins at war's end. **Critical Thinking:**

Interpret Photographs *What do you think would be the most urgent need of the people of Richmond?*



Main Idea

The Freedmen's Bureau provided education and economic help to freed slaves and poor whites.

The Freedmen's Bureau

It was urgent to deal with the needs of freedmen, consisting of people who had been freed by the war, as well as other war refugees. Congress created the Freedmen's Bureau in March 1865. The bureau's first duty was to provide emergency relief to people displaced by the war.

Education The Freedmen's Bureau set up schools to teach freedmen to read and write. So great was the hunger for education that many African American communities started schools on their own. To pay a teacher, people pooled their pennies and dollars.

Many teachers were northern white women, but a large number were northern African American women. Edmonia Highgate, the daughter of freed slaves, taught at a Freedmen's Bureau school in Louisiana. "The majority of my pupils come from plantations, three, four and even eight miles distant," she wrote. "So anxious are they to learn that they walk these distances so early in the morning."

Most southern states had lacked systems of public education before the war. Now, public schools began to educate both blacks and whites. The Freedmen's Bureau helped to start schools at which African Americans could extend their education. These schools gave rise to such present-day institutions as Fisk University in Tennessee and Hampton University in Virginia.

Defending Freedmen The Freedmen's Bureau helped freedmen find jobs and resolved disputes between whites and blacks. Some people tried to cheat the freedmen. The Freedmen's Bureau set up its own courts to deal with such disputes.

Vocabulary Builder

resolve (ree SAHLV) v. to decide; to solve

Checkpoint What was the Freedmen's Bureau?



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Assassinated!

Lincoln's assassination set off an intense hunt for the killer, John Wilkes Booth. **Critical Thinking:** **Make Predictions** What effect do you think the assassination of Lincoln would have on the nation?



Lincoln Is Murdered

As the war drew to a close, President Lincoln hoped for a peaceful Reconstruction. But Lincoln had no chance to put his plans into practice. He was shot dead on April 14, 1865, five days after Lee's surrender.

A Confederate sympathizer, John Wilkes Booth, slipped up behind Lincoln while he and his wife were attending a play at the Ford's Theatre in Washington. Booth fired a single pistol shot into the President's head. Lincoln died a few hours later.

Booth was shot dead two weeks later after pursuers trapped him in a barn and set it on fire. Eight people were convicted and four were hanged for their parts in the plot to kill Lincoln.

News of Lincoln's death shocked the nation. A special funeral train carried Lincoln's body back to Illinois for burial. In town after town, vast crowds paid their last respects.

Lincoln's successor was Vice President Andrew Johnson of Tennessee. Johnson was a southern Democrat who had remained loyal to the Union. Because Johnson had expressed bitterness toward the Confederates, many expected him to take a strict approach to Reconstruction.

Main Idea

Abraham Lincoln's assassination ended the chance of a lenient Reconstruction.

✓ Checkpoint Why did many people expect Johnson to take a hard line on Reconstruction?

Looking Back and Ahead Many people feared the effect of Lincoln's assassination on the process of Reconstruction. In the next section, you will learn how Reconstruction was affected by tensions between Lincoln's successor and members of Congress.

Section 1 | Check Your Progress

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Comprehension and Critical Thinking

(a) **Recall** How did the Civil War affect the North? How did the war affect the South?

(b) **Contrast** Why did the South have greater difficulty than the North in recovering from the Civil War?

(a) **Recall** How did Lincoln's plan for Reconstruction differ from the Wade-Davis Bill?

(b) **Explain Problems** What problems do you see for reunifying the nation in each plan?

Reading Skill

3. **Identify Proposals** Reread the paragraphs under the heading "The Freedmen's Bureau." What did the bureau propose to do to help the freedmen?

Vocabulary Builder

Answer the following questions in complete sentences that show your understanding of the key terms.

4. What did former Confederates have to do to get **amnesty** under Lincoln's plan to rebuild the Union?

5. Who were the **freedmen**?

Writing

6. Choose the best sentence to end a research paper about Abraham Lincoln. Explain your choice.

Sentences:

(a) Abraham Lincoln was humbly born on February 12, 1809, but he went on to be one of our greatest Presidents.

(b) Because Abraham Lincoln did not win a majority of the votes cast, his presidency turned out to be the nation's most turbulent period.

(c) His trials as President changed Lincoln into the steady leader who saved the Union in its darkest hour.