

Curriculum Unit Introduction:

Title of Unit: Reconstruction and the Freeing of the Slaves

Vital Theme of the Unit: Problems and Daily Life Facing the Ex-Slaves

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Grade Level: Secondary (High School)

Number of Lessons in the Unit: 2

Time Needed to Complete Unit: 2-3 Days

Curriculum Standards Addressed—List:

African American Studies Course State Standards

- 4.9 Analyzes the 13th, 14th and 15th amendments and their impact on society.
- 4.10 Investigates the impact of Black Codes and Civil Rights Acts of Reconstruction.

Technology Used: None

This unit will cover the problems and daily life of the newly freed slaves during the reconstruction period. Student mastery would be an understanding of the 13th, 14th and 15th amendments. Mastery would also consist of the student being able to explain the daily lives of ex-slaves and the problems that were faced. The student will learn through lecture and presentation about the 13th, 14th, and 15th amendments. The lecture will pertain to what life was like for the newly freed slaves. This will include the rise of hatred toward ex-slaves and northerners from secret organizations like the Ku Klux Klan. The starting on the second day of the unit the students will start an activity of analyzing political cartoons from the era that pertain to African Americans during the reconstruction era. This activity will draw on student's prior knowledge of cartoon interpretation. This will help students to develop better critical thinking skills. The students will be able to work on writing skills as they analyze the cartoons in written form.

The enslaved African Americans had often dreamed of the day that freedom would come. There were examples of this in the songs that were sung in the fields of the plantations, as well as in the sermons the black ministers preached during secret church meetings. The war was barely over and multiple problems faced the tattered nation. How would the states be readmitted, who would pay for the damages, how would all that was torn down be reconstructed? The bonds of slavery had been unshackled, and African Americans, for the first time, were going to be able to taste the freedom of which they had so often dreamed. However, life was not filled with all happiness and joy. The newly freed Africans found that hardships were around every corner and that the ex-slave owners would try to keep their daily lives as close to slavery as possible.

The United States Civil War ended and the slaves that were not already freed by the Emancipation Proclamation were now set free with the ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution. The newly freed African Americans found that the slave owners did not want to grant this new freedom. The occupying force of Union soldiers lacked the ability to make sure that every plantation had allowed their slaves the freedom that was so rightly earned. Louis Hughes, a slave on a plantation in Mississippi, abandoned his wife and child to seek help in securing their freedom later. Hughes traveled to Memphis and spoke with the “Superintendent of Freedmen in the District of Memphis.”(Ash, 2002, p. 132) The Union army in the South had large areas to administer with fewer and fewer soldiers to cover them. Louis found that the Superintendent could not offer protection for him and his friend to return to the plantation and retrieve their families. Louis gained his family’s freedom by paying twenty dollars and a bottle of whiskey to some lower ranking Union soldiers. (Ash, 2002) Ex -slaves

never expected to face problems of this nature. They were unprepared and had very little if any money to purchase necessary items or freedom for their loved ones. The problems that Louis and his friend faced of having to buy protection for his family would never have occurred if the Union army had an adequate force to offer protection to this newly freed race of people.

Freedom did come to some ex-slaves as emancipation spread throughout the South. These ex-slaves did not have to find a way to escape the plantation or to free their families. Instead, these ex slaves had to find a way to provide for their families once freedom was proclaimed. Theft sometimes was the only way these poor uneducated workers could survive. Eva Jones wrote a family member where she described Negroes and Union troops stealing all of the meat that the family had saved at the time (Myers, 1984). The freedmen looked at their ex slave masters as employers at this time. Some of the ex slaves sued their owners for wages, while others haggled with their ex masters on the price they would be paid to work the same fields they once worked for free. Mrs. Mary Jones recalled to her son the difficulties she now faced in hiring the people who at one time were her property. Mary stated, "The lateness of the season makes it very difficult if not impossible to hire them. Jack is the only one I have been able to hire as of yet- for twenty five dollars per month." (Myers, 1984, p. 546) Mrs. Jones had taken twelve servants with her, but only one servant received payment at the time for his services.

The uneducated ex slaves found themselves many times having to make a living toiling daily on the farms. Wade Hampton wrote, "Blacks were only fit to labor especially where malaria was present." (Athens Post, December 10, 1869, p. 1) The 1870

census report for McMinn County Tennessee showed that a large percentage of black people lived on the farms of whites and worked as farm laborers. The census report also showed that older blacks would live in the home of the wealthier whites and would work as domestic servants to the family. Only a few African American families actually owned their own property and had possessions. This showed that five years into the reconstructing of the war torn nation ex-slaves were still working for the white man.

Some ex-slaves decided to seek freedom in the larger cities of the South. Freedmen left the farms and entered the cities looking for jobs and a new life. Memphis and Nashville were two cities in Tennessee that had large black populations during the reconstruction years. A fourth of the population of Memphis was black. The problem blacks found in Memphis was a lack of jobs. The lack of education and training proved to be a problem for the freedmen. Blacks had to compete with Irish immigrants for the unskilled jobs that were available in the cities. This proved at times to be a hostile situation between the ex-slaves and the Irish immigrants. The freedmen of Memphis congregated in certain neighborhoods and an all black community sprang up in South Memphis. This community offered an oasis for the ex-slaves; however, many blacks spent their time in South Memphis drinking and gambling. Furthermore, stealing, begging and prostitution became a way of life for many of the ex-slaves. (Ash, 2002) Nashville had its own all black community away from the white citizens. Hells Half Acre was the name of the black community in Nashville. It was overcrowded and ridden with disease and crime much the same as South Memphis. (Bergeron, Ash, & Keith, 1999) The ex- slaves sought refuge and relief in their own communities within the cities of the South. The freedmen still faced problems in the cities, such as disease, and a lack

of jobs. The worst problem of all was hatred and it could not be escaped no matter where they lived.

Hatred followed the newly freed slaves no matter where they lived. White people who lived in the South were not ready to allow this inferior race of people to be treated as equals. White citizens of the South despised the blacks and did many things to intimidate and show their hatred toward the freedmen. A secret organization started in Pulaski Tennessee in late 1865. This “social fraternity” used hatred and violence to threaten and intimidate blacks that lived near Pulaski. (Bergeron, Ash, Keith, 1999, p. 173) The Ku Klux Klan grew in numbers and spread to other areas of the South. A black man, living about 40 miles from Nashville, made it known that if any of the Klan showed up on his property he would “shoot them down.” The Klan whipped the man and a small race war started after someone fired a weapon at the Klansmen. (Athens Post, June 26, 1868, p.1) Negroes faced small problems such as social banishment and verbal abuse on a daily basis. However, when threats and verbal abuse failed matters escalated. Arson was committed against black churches and schools,;between the year 1867 and 1869 over 60 black schools burnt in Tennessee alone. (Bergeron, Ash, Keith, 1999) No matter where the freedmen chose to live hatred and violence were present.

The Reconstruction era in the South saw changes in the treatment of blacks. For the first time in the history of the United States the black race as a whole had gained its freedom. This freedom did not come without hardships and everyday life was not simple for the freedmen. Problems were faced in the Deep South with securing freedom for blacks even after the Thirteenth Amendment had been ratified. Plantation owners knew that the Union Army was spread thin and they wanted to hold onto the slaves for as long

as they could. Slaves that did see their freedom come rather easily still faced problems, such as what type of work they would do now that freedom had been reached. The ex-slaves were mostly uneducated and left the plantations with very little property or training which would allow them to get good paying jobs. A large percentage of these freedmen found themselves still bound to the land and working the same jobs as they were prior to the end of slavery. The larger cities of the South saw a rise in the population of blacks and a development of all black communities within these cities. These segregated communities faced large problems with disease, crime, and overcrowdedness. The largest problem that the newly freed slaves faced was hatred and violence. White southerners in general despised the black race and saw them as inferior. Hate groups such as the Ku Klux Klan were born and a reign of terror on the freedmen was launched. Churches and schools were burnt, along with blacks being intimidated, whipped, and even executed. The end of reconstruction in the South did not end the problems faced by the black race. The government passed several laws to put the black race on equal footing and people decided that the "Law has done all that it can for the negroes, and the sooner they set about securing their future for themselves, the better it will be for them and their descendants." (Athens Post, December 26 1873) The problem was that even with all the laws that were in place, blacks were not treated equal, and were still considered second-class citizens. It took over one hundred years after the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment for blacks to receive the fair and equal treatment that they deserved.

Bibliography

Ash, Steven, V. 1865: A Year in the South. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. 2002

Bergeron, Paul, Ash, Steven, & Keith, Jeanette. Tennesseans and Their History. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press. 1999.

Myers, Robert. The Children of Pride. New Haven: Yale University Press. 1984.

Athens Post Newspaper (June 26, 1868, December 10, 1869, and December 26 1873)

Census Records State of Tennessee for McMinn County 1870.

Lesson Plan Outline

Unit: Reconstruction and Freeing of the Slaves

Lesson Title: Political Cartoons of the Period

Grade Level: 11th

Essential Question Related to Vital Theme: All the slaves had been freed with the ratification of the 13th amendment. What was life like for these newly freed African Americans. How did political cartoonist of the time period feel about what was going on with the newly freed blacks.

Lesson Time: 1 Class Period (55 Minutes)

Curriculum Standards---list:

4.10 Investigates the impact of Black Codes and Civil Rights Acts of Reconstruction

Technology used and how: The internet will need to be used to access the political cartoons. A PowerPoint projector could be used to display the cartoons. This would aid in not having to copy the cartoons and pass them out.

Materials:

http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/reconstruction/nast/sf_nast.html

Activity description(s) and overview of instructional strategies: This lesson will be used to look at primary source political cartoons from Thomas Nast and his publications in *Harpers Weekly*. Nast was a Northerner who supported what President Lincoln was doing. The Website listed above, in materials, has nine political cartoons drawn by Mr. Nast. Accompanying this lesson is a work sheet for the students to look at 4 of the 9 cartoons. The date of the cartoon and the hyperlink to the cartoons website will be included with the worksheet. This worksheet is developed to have the students look and think critically at what is going on in each of these cartoons. The cartoons that Nast drew were not the easiest to interpret but this should be good practice for the students TCAP and EOC exams. This will also be good in helping the student to develop higher order thinking skills.

Supporting Assignments/Homework:

Reconstruction Era Political Cartoon Work Sheet

Thomas Nast Cartoons

Website for Cartoons:

http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/reconstruction/nast/sf_nast.html

#1

This is cartoon #4 September 2, 1876

http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/reconstruction/nast/sf_nast.html

Questions:

1. Who is the main character in this cartoon?
2. What is the action that has occurred?
3. Is there text in the cartoon?
4. If there is text does it help you understand the cartoon? How does it help?
5. What is your interpretation of the cartoon?

#2

This is cartoon #2 March 23, 1867

http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/reconstruction/nast/sf_nast_02.html

Questions:

1. Who are the main characters?
2. What action has occurred?
3. From the dress and action what time period is this cartoon?
4. What are the minor characters doing?
5. What is your interpretation of this cartoon?

#3

This is cartoon #5 No date but named "One Less Vote"

http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/reconstruction/nast/sf_nast_05.html

Questions:

1. Who is the main character?
2. What has happened to this person?
3. Is there text? If so what does the text say?
4. Does the text help you to understand the cartoon? How does it help you?
5. What is your interpretation of this cartoon?

#4

This is cartoon #7 October 4, 1874

http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/reconstruction/nast/sf_nast_07.html

Questions:

1. Who are the main characters?
2. What groups do they represent?
3. Is there text? If so what does the text say? What does it mean?
4. What action that is depicted on the shield is worse than slavery?
5. What does the handshake represent?
6. What is your interpretation of this cartoon?

Assessment: The final assessment for this lesson is to have the student prepare from their knowledge on the subject a political cartoon. This cartoon should be about the struggles blacks faced during reconstruction. The student should show that they have a good grasp on the problems that faced African Americans during this time period.

Lesson Plan Outline

Unit: Reconstruction and Freeing of the Slaves

Lesson Title: Rights of Blacks Given during reconstruction

Grade Level: 11th

Essential Question Related to Vital Theme: All the slaves had been freed with the ratification of the 13th amendment. What was life like for these newly freed African Americans.

Lesson Time: 1 Class Period (55 Minutes)

Curriculum Standards---list:

4.9 Analyzes the 13th, 14th and 15th amendments and their impact on society.

4.10 Investigates the impact of Black Codes and Civil Rights Acts of Reconstruction.

Technology used and how: PowerPoint

Materials: None

Activity description(s) and overview of instructional strategies:

This lesson will be a lecture on the 13th – 15th Amendments. The lecture will cover how the south reacted to this and the adaptation of the black codes. The lecture will also include a discussion on the Civil Rights Acts that occurred during reconstruction. This should be a brief overview of these topics.

Supporting Assignments/Homework: None

Assessment:

Quiz

African Americans in Reconstruction South

True/False

_____ 1. The 14th Amendment passed in 1866 gave blacks the right to vote?

_____ 2. The black codes included laws that protected the civil rights of African Americans?

_____ 3. The 13th Amendment freed all slaves that had not already been freed by the Emancipation Proclamation?

- _____ 4. The Freedmans Bureau Act helped with relief and education of the newly freed slaves?
- _____ 5. The Civil Rights Act of 1875 was eventually declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court?
- _____ 6. The passing of the black codes helped congress to get the Civil Rights Act of 1866 passed?
- _____ 7. Southern state legislatures took the old slave codes and turned them into the black codes?
- _____ 8. Southern Homestead Act gave blacks free land out in California?
- _____ 9. The 14th Amendment prohibited states from violating the rights of its citizens?
- _____ 10. Whites in the South were very open and accepting of blacks during the reconstruction period?

Reconstruction South for African Americans

3 Constitutional Amendments

- 13th Amendment
 - Amendment failed in congress during the election year of 1864.
 - After the election passed congress and was ratified and became part of the US Constitution in 1865.
 - This called for the emancipation of slaves and the outlawing of slavery everywhere in the United States.
 - Emancipation Proclamation had freed slaves in the states that were in active rebellion against the US earlier.
- 14th Amendment
 - Passed in June 1866
 - This was passed to give some strength to the Civil Rights Act of 1866.
 - This amendment Prohibited states from violating the rights of their citizens.
 - The significance was that it strengthened the Civil Rights Act of 1866 and it guaranteed all citizens equality before the law.
- 15th Amendment
 - Passed in February 1869
 - This amendment was passed in response to growing concern about voter fraud and violence against ex slaves.
 - The 15th Amendment guaranteed the right of American men to vote regardless of race

Legislation to Protect Freedmen

- **Freedman's Bureau Act of 1865**
 - Gave oversight of resettlement, relief, education, and labor for former slaves.
 - Significance this involved the federal government directly in assisting in the transition from slavery to freedom.
- **Southern Homestead Act (1866)**
 - Provided blacks preferential access to public lands in five southern states.
- **Civil Rights Act of 1866**
 - Defined rights of national citizenship
 - Significance showed a change in federal-state relationships.
 - It also showed that the national government was going to gain more power.
- **Civil Rights Act of 1875**
 - Prohibited racial discrimination in jury selection, public transportation, and public accommodations.
 - This was rarely enforced
 - Supreme court declared unconstitutional in 1883

Black Codes

- 1865 legislatures in the south turned the old slave codes into new black codes.
- Local officials could arrest blacks that could not document employment or residence and who were disorderly.
 - They could sentence them to forced labor on farms or road crews.
- Blacks were restricted to certain jobs.
- They were barred from jury duty.
- Blacks could not own a firearm
- Judges could take away black children if they deemed the parents could not take care of them.
- The black codes left blacks with very little freedom
- The passing of the black codes helped congress to get the support to pass the Civil Rights Act of 1866.