

Impeachment of Andrew Johnson

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Impeachment of Andrew Johnson

Andrew Johnson was born on December 29, 1808 in Raleigh, North Carolina. Johnson's family could not afford to send him to school. Instead he was apprenticed to a tailor, but ran away. Johnson moved to Greeneville, TN in 1826 where he opened a tailor shop and married. His wife, Eliza McCardle Johnson, tutored him in math, reading and writing. Johnson was eventually successful enough to purchase property and enslaved persons who worked as servants in the Johnson home.¹

Johnson began his political career in 1829 as an alderman. In the 1830s Johnson was elected to the Tennessee legislature where he served several terms. Johnson was elected to the House of Representatives in 1843. As a politician, Johnson always favored the poor over the rich and wanted to give federal lands in the west to settlers. However, Johnson also believed that the Constitution guaranteed the right to own enslaved people. Johnson became governor of Tennessee in 1853 and left the governorship in 1857 to become a Senator.²

When the secession crisis broke out in 1860, Johnson traveled across the state urging Tennesseans to remain loyal to the Union. Even after Tennessee seceded in June 1861, Johnson refused to give up his seat in the Senate. He was the only Southern Democrat who did not resign. In 1862 Lincoln appointed Johnson military governor of Tennessee. As governor, Johnson tried to restore federal authority in Tennessee.³

In 1864 Lincoln selected Johnson as his vice-president because he was both a Southerner and a Unionist. Following Lincoln's assassination on April 15, 1865, Johnson was sworn in as the nation's 17th president. Johnson faced the difficult task of reconstructing the

¹ "Andrew Johnson," History Channel. <https://www.history.com/topics/us-presidents/andrew-johnson> Accessed 10 July 2018.

² Ibid.

³ Paul H. Bergeron, "Andrew Johnson." Tennessee Encyclopedia. 2018. <https://tennesseeencyclopedia.net/entries/andrew-johnson/> Accessed 10 July 2018.

nation in the wake of the Civil War and he soon clashed with Congress over control of Reconstruction.⁴

Radical Republicans wanted to punish the Confederate states for the act of treason that had plunged the nation into a bloody four year war. They believed that Johnson was too lenient towards Confederates, in too much of a hurry to bring the former Confederates back into the Union, and too unwilling to give civil rights to Blacks. When Johnson vetoed the Freedmen's Bureau and the Civil Rights bill, Congress overrode his vetoes. To further limit the president's power, Congress passed the Tenure of Office act which prohibited the president from removing government officials.⁵ When Johnson removed Secretary of War Edwin Stanton from office in violation of the Tenure of Office Act, the House voted to impeach Johnson in February 1868.⁶ Johnson was the first U.S. President to be impeached; however, he was acquitted and his presidency spared by a single vote in the Senate. Several of the more moderate Republicans voted not guilty because they did not think a president should be impeached for political disagreements with Congress. Johnson served out the remainder of his term, but was not nominated for re-election in 1870.

Following his one-term as president, Johnson returned to Greeneville. In 1874, he became the first former President of the United States to win a seat in the United States Senate. However, four months after taking his seat in the Senate, Johnson suffered a stroke and died on July 31, 1875. He was buried in Greeneville wrapped in an American flag with his head resting on a copy of the Constitution.⁷

⁴ Joyce Appleby et al., *The American Journey*. (Columbus, Ohio: Glencoe McGraw Hill, 2003), 503.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 507.

⁶ Bergeron, "Andrew Johnson."

⁷ *Ibid.*

Impeachment of Andrew Johnson Student Activity

Create a timeline of 10 key events leading up to and including the impeachment of Andrew Johnson

<i>Event 1</i>	
<i>Event 2</i>	
<i>Event 3</i>	
<i>Event 4</i>	
<i>Event 5</i>	
<i>Event 6</i>	
<i>Event 7</i>	
<i>Event 8</i>	
<i>Event 9</i>	
<i>Event 10</i>	