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## Turning Points of the Civil War

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**Getting the Idea**

Both sides in the Civil War were ill prepared, and both thought the war would be short. In reality, the Civil War was long and bloody. There were 600,000 casualties, with more than one-third of the soldiers killed, wounded, or captured. Black troops suffered even more than whites. Improved military technology caused many of the deaths. For example, rifles had more power and could be fired accurately from a greater distance.

**Resistance to the War**

Some Northern members of the Democratic Party, called **copperheads**, wanted to compromise with the Confederate states to end the war. But Lincoln had no intention of letting the Southern states secede, and he acted against people he thought might threaten the war effort. Using his *executive powers*, Lincoln suspended the **writ of habeas corpus**, or the right to challenge the legality of being jailed. This allowed him to lock up antiwar Democrats and draft resisters. The Supreme Court declared Lincoln's action unconstitutional, but he ignored the decision.

**Military Strategies**

The South and the North developed their war plans. General Winfield Scott devised the "**Anaconda Plan**" for Northern victory. The Union forces would apply pressure on the Confederacy from all sides. Central to the Confederacy's strategy was expected *support from the British or French*, which never came. The *First Battle of Bull Run*, or the *First Manassas*, was the war's opening battle. Union troops encountered the Confederate forces outside Washington, D.C. The five-hour battle began with a Confederate retreat. But Southern soldiers under *General Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson* stood their ground until reinforcements arrived. The combined Confederate force easily beat back the Union army. General Jackson's determined defense gave him his nickname. The victory encouraged the South and caused the North to make a greater effort. Neither side took victory for granted any longer.

**Turning Points of the War**

The Confederacy was winning during the first year of the war. Just eighteen days after a Confederate victory at the Second Battle of Manassas in 1862, *General Robert E. Lee*, commander of the Confederate army, invaded the North. His army was intercepted at *Antietam* in Maryland by a larger Union force commanded by *General George McClellan*. Over 7,000 soldiers died that day or later from their wounds. The Union victory at Antietam turned the war in favor of the North.

With the war going in favor of the Union, on January 1, 1863, President Lincoln issued the **Emancipation Proclamation**. It declared that all slaves in the Confederate states were free. The proclamation boosted the morale of the Union soldiers and gave the army more soldiers



because free blacks joined the fight. Antislavery sentiment in France and Britain grew. The Confederacy could no longer hope for either country's intervention.

## African-American Participation

Slaves produced much of the food that sustained the Confederate army. Some slaves stayed loyal to the South. Freed slaves and free blacks served in the Union army. Large numbers of slaves volunteered to fight for their freedom and that of their fellow slaves. The Union army officers were instructed to not return fugitive slaves.

## The Final Turning Points

*Ulysses S. Grant*, commander of the Union army, and General Sherman captured the Southern stronghold at *Vicksburg*, Mississippi, in 1863. This vital victory gave the North control of the Mississippi River. Union troops could pass through the Confederacy and dominate the South. Another decisive battle took place at *Gettysburg*, Pennsylvania. This three-day battle was the bloodiest in American history—over 50,000 soldiers died. Confederate troops led by General Lee at first drove back Union forces, who then took a strong defensive position. After two days of fighting, Lee was still unable to break the Union line. He ordered a charge at the center of the Union defenses. Most of these Confederate soldiers were killed. The Confederate Army retreated to Virginia, weakened by death, desertion, and hunger. Later that year, President Lincoln gave his famous **Gettysburg Address** to honor those who died in this decisive battle. With the war still raging, the Union held the presidential *election of 1864*. The steady string of Northern victories assured Lincoln's victory over McClellan.

*General William Sherman's march* cut through Georgia to the Atlantic coast. Union soldiers, spread across sixty miles, destroyed everything in their path, including the city of Atlanta. Sherman's troops reached the sea, where they could be resupplied. General Lee knew that the Confederate army could not go on and surrendered at the *Appomattox Court House* on April 9, 1865. Only five days later, *John Wilkes Booth*, a Confederate supporter, shot President Lincoln while shouting, "The South is avenged." President Lincoln died the next day.

The surrender at the Appomattox Court House





# Reconstruction

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## Getting the Idea

After the Civil War, the country needed to be reunited, or reconstructed. Through *Reconstruction*, the federal government tried to transform the South and turn freed slaves into citizens. Most white Southerners resented Reconstruction; they felt oppressed and mistreated. Black Southerners remember it as a brief time of opportunity between slavery and a new struggle for full freedom. Northerners came to see Reconstruction as a frustrating failure.

## Limits on Congressional and Presidential Power

After Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, most people thought a Union victory would free all slaves. But since the proclamation was issued during wartime, it might be declared invalid after the war. The *Thirteenth Amendment* to the Constitution became law in 1865. It officially abolished slavery.

By the end of the war, the extent of President Lincoln's power alarmed many people, even the Republicans. Congress resolved not to grant such power to any president after the war ended. Lincoln's assassination left the country without a definite plan for reconstruction. The stage was set for a battle between the legislative and executive branches over **reconstruction plans** for the South.

President Andrew Johnson's plan called for voters in each Southern state to take an oath of loyalty to the Union. Each state also had to ratify the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution. In this plan, Johnson, not Congress, would decide when the states could fully participate. **Radical Republicans** in Congress, such as **Thaddeus Stevens**, were outraged that those responsible for the Civil War were now going to be making the nation's laws.

Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist with the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.

—*The Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution*



The Radical Republicans were a powerful minority within the Republican Party. Most had been abolitionists. They wanted to see stricter rules for reconstruction for the South. President Johnson consistently disappointed the Radical Republicans.

Even more troubling to the Radical Republicans and abolitionists were the **black codes** the Southern states adopted. The black codes limited the civil rights of African Americans and held them back economically. Some codes segregated schools and courts. Other codes segregated blacks into the rural areas where they were forced to become farmers.

## Radical Republican Reconstruction

Congress introduced legislation to extend the **Freedmen's Bureau**. Originally established in 1865, the Bureau assisted Southern freed slaves and poor whites. It provided food, medical assistance, and legal aid. The Bureau also established schools, supervised labor issues, and protected blacks from violence. Johnson vetoed the legislation.

Congress overrode the veto and extended assistance to the South. **The Civil Rights Act of 1866**, granting full civil rights to blacks, became law over Johnson's veto. Congress passed the **Tenure of Office Act** to prevent the president from interfering with congressional reconstruction plans. This law prohibited the president from removing federal office holders without agreement from the Senate. To gain even more power over the executive branch, the Radical Republicans tried to remove President Johnson from office. Charges of violating the Office of Tenure Act and trying to weaken Congress were brought against him. The effort failed by one vote in Congress.

*Thaddeus Stevens* favored strict federal control of the South in order to democratize it before it was allowed back into the Union. He advocated the full *enfranchisement*, or full voting rights, of the liberated slaves. Ratified in 1868, the *Fourteenth Amendment* to the U.S. Constitution guaranteed to all men full political and civil rights—the freedoms and rights government is meant to protect.

## Military Occupation

The Radical Republican reconstruction program next divided the South into five districts governed by military law. Elections were held in each state, with freed male slaves being allowed to vote. The army enforced order and supervised voter registration. Once the states became reconstructed, they could elect a legislature, a governor, and members of Congress. Military occupation had a positive effect on Reconstruction. As a result, all of the states had returned to the Union by 1870. In the same year, the Republican Ulysses S. Grant won the presidential election, principally because of the black vote. Republicans proposed the *Fifteenth Amendment*. It stated that male citizens could not be denied the right to vote, or enfranchisement, based on race, color, or previous status as a slave. It became law in 1870.

## Reorganizing the South

The **carpetbaggers** were Northerners who came to the South during Reconstruction. The name suggested that Northerners could stuff everything they owned into a small bag. Some carpetbaggers represented the Freedmen's Bureau. Many gained political power with the support of newly emancipated slaves. They were known for being corrupt. But many were able to increase black voting, improve education, and help restore Southern cities and roads.

Carpetbaggers generally cooperated with Southern Republicans known as *scalawags*, who often were rich. Most white Southerners resented both the carpetbaggers and the scalawags.



## Resistance and Decline

Reconstruction was not working as intended. Most of the moderate Republicans had shifted their views toward those held by the Radicals. Although the new governments of the South had ended restrictions against blacks and extended social services, many white Southerners refused to accept the changes. Violent Southern organizations like the **Ku Klux Klan**, or KKK, terrorized African Americans to keep them from attending school, prospering economically, or voting. Supporters of the Union wondered if the Civil War had accomplished anything at all.

## A New Labor System

Once back in office, Southern Democrats made many changes that the Republicans opposed. They rewrote state constitutions, cut social programs, and lowered taxes. They also limited the rights of **sharecroppers** and **tenant farmers**, who were often black workers, in order to make them powerless.

During Reconstruction, blacks and poor whites often became sharecroppers. They farmed small plots of land owned by wealthier white men, and turned over a portion of their harvest as rent. At the end of a season, a sharecropper was lucky to break even, and was kept in a cycle of debt. Sharecropping was like slavery in the way that it kept the workers dependent on the landowners. Some blacks became tenant farmers who owned their own tools and rented land from plantation owners. Tenant farmers sometimes paid very high prices for their tools because landowners could charge whatever they wanted. In the end, the tenant and sharecropping systems did not work well for either farmers or landowners. Farmers did not actually own the land, and landowners eventually lost parts of their land.

## The North Moves Ahead

After the Civil War, the South was deeply in debt. The region formerly printed their own money and also borrowed heavily from others. Because the South lost the war, their money was suddenly worthless, and they had a difficult time trying to borrow money from the federal government.

Unlike the North, a large portion of the South's land, cities, and railroads was ruined or destroyed during the Civil War. Because the South's economy was largely agricultural, it was far behind the North in terms of industry.

The North was economically stronger mostly due to the growth of Northern railroads, steel and iron industries, and the rise of mass production of goods. The North was responsible for most of the nation's manufacturing. The South lagged behind economically, which made Reconstruction a very difficult time for them.

"No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens . . . nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without the due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws."

—*Excerpt from Section 1 of the Fourteenth Amendment*



The growth of Northern railroads, steel and iron industries, and the rise of mass production of goods contributed to the North's economic growth. The South lagged behind economically. For most Southerners, Reconstruction was an economically difficult time.

## The End of Reconstruction

Reconstruction effectively ended when Northern troops withdrew from the South. In addition, scandal was beginning to trouble the Republicans. During Grant's presidency, Republicans were involved in a scandal known as the **Whiskey Ring**. Politicians and whiskey distillers raised the tax on whiskey; the distillers kept the money, and the politicians benefited politically. This scandal, along with other claims of abuse of power committed by the Republican Party, contributed to the people of the nation growing tired of Reconstruction. The scandal combined with the presidential *election of 1876*, made certain that Reconstruction would come to an end.

The election of 1876 made matters worse for the Republicans. The Republican presidential nominee had to be replaced due to a financial scandal. The election this year was unusual: both Democrats and Republicans claimed victory. A special commission had to be appointed by Congress, which gave the election to the Republican candidate, Rutherford Hayes, by one electoral vote. There was much bargaining and debating surrounding this election, which resulted in the **Compromise of 1877**. The Republicans agreed to let go of some of their power in the South and to stop protecting black rights if the Democrats promised to support Hayes.

## After Reconstruction

The last remaining federal troops left the South, and the era of Reconstruction ended. The dominance of the Republicans in the South ended and the Democratic Party quickly claimed itself as the party of the *Solid South*, an area that consistently voted the same way. Democrats made major changes that opposed Reconstruction's goals and accomplishments. They wanted to reverse black advances made during Reconstruction. "Jim Crow" was named after a minstrel show character from the 1830s who was an old, crippled, black slave who symbolized the negative stereotypes of blacks. To that end, the Democrats passed antiblack local and state laws, known as the **Jim Crow laws** to keep African Americans in their "place." For example, these laws segregated the races and prevented blacks from voting.

Places such as hospitals, schools, waiting rooms, restaurants, and even public parks were segregated until after World War II.

