

Reconstruction Rights

Trace how three amendments changed freedom, citizenship, and voting.

SS8H6.a "Explain the roles of the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments in Reconstruction."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline words or phrases about the Thirteenth Amendment, circle words or phrases about the Fourteenth Amendment, and write 15 beside words or phrases about the Fifteenth Amendment. Use your marks to distinguish the different role each amendment played during Reconstruction.

Three Steps Toward Rights

- ① In 1865, as the Civil War ended, the Thirteenth Amendment became part of the Constitution. It abolished slavery and involuntary servitude, except as punishment for a crime after conviction. This change ended the legal system that had treated millions of African Americans as property. During Reconstruction, freedom was a necessary first step, but freedom alone did not guarantee safety, equal treatment, or a voice in government. The nation still had to decide how to protect the rights of formerly enslaved people.
- ② In 1868, the Fourteenth Amendment addressed citizenship and equal protection. It said that people born or naturalized in the United States were citizens, overturning the earlier Dred Scott decision's denial of citizenship to African Americans. It also required states to give people due process and equal protection of the laws. During Reconstruction, this amendment gave the federal government a constitutional basis for challenging state actions that denied African Americans the rights of citizenship. Its focus was legal status and fair treatment under the law.
- ③ In 1870, the Fifteenth Amendment focused on voting. It prohibited the federal government and states from denying or abridging a citizen's right to vote because of race, color, or previous condition of servitude. This amendment was meant to protect Black men's voting rights during Reconstruction, since women generally could not vote at that time. Its promise was often weakened later by discriminatory state practices, including literacy tests and poll taxes. Together, the three amendments moved Reconstruction from emancipation to citizenship and voting protection.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 What did the Thirteenth Amendment end, and what exception did it include?

2 How did the Fourteenth Amendment change the legal status of African Americans?

3 According to the passage, what kind of voting denial did the Fifteenth Amendment prohibit?

4 Explain how the three amendments addressed three different needs during Reconstruction.

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

A state official says that Reconstruction's work was complete as soon as slavery ended. Write 3 or 4 sentences responding to the official. Use each amendment to explain why freedom, citizenship, and voting protection were all needed.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline words or phrases about the Thirteenth Amendment, circle words or phrases about the Fourteenth Amendment, and write 15 beside words or phrases about the Fifteenth Amendment. Use your marks to distinguish the different role each amendment played during Reconstruction. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What did the Thirteenth Amendment end, and what exception did it include?	It abolished slavery and involuntary servitude, except as punishment for a crime after conviction.
2	How did the Fourteenth Amendment change the legal status of African Americans?	It established that people born or naturalized in the United States were citizens, overturning the Dred Scott decision's denial of citizenship to African Americans.
3	According to the passage, what kind of voting denial did the Fifteenth Amendment prohibit?	It prohibited the federal government and states from denying or abridging a citizen's right to vote because of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.
4	Explain how the three amendments addressed three different needs during Reconstruction.	The Thirteenth Amendment ended slavery, the Fourteenth Amendment protected citizenship and equal treatment under the law, and the Fifteenth Amendment protected voting rights from racial denial.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Ending slavery was necessary, but it did not by itself make formerly enslaved people citizens or protect their voting rights. The Thirteenth Amendment abolished slavery, the Fourteenth Amendment established citizenship and equal protection, and the Fifteenth Amendment protected citizens from racial denial of the vote. Reconstruction needed all three because freedom, legal rights, and voting protection addressed different barriers.

Accept equivalent wording that accurately distinguishes abolition of slavery, citizenship and equal protection, and protection against racial denial of voting rights. For the open response, require a correct role for all three amendments and an explanation of why ending slavery alone was not enough.