Votes and Withdrawal

Tracing how a disputed election changed Reconstruction

8.C.13.4.C "Explain the effects of the presidential election of 1876 and the Compromise of 1877 on Reconstruction."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the election dispute, circle the actions that settled it, and number two effects on Reconstruction. Use your marks to trace how one event led to another.

An Election That Changed Reconstruction

1 On election night in 1876, Democrat Samuel J. Tilden appeared to have won the popular vote against Republican Rutherford B. Hayes. But the presidency depended on electoral votes, and the returns from Florida, Louisiana, and South Carolina were disputed. One Oregon elector's eligibility was also challenged. Together, 20 electoral votes were in question, enough to decide the winner. Both parties claimed victory in key states, and the nation faced a problem: who could take office in March when the official result was still unsettled?

2 Congress created a special commission to review the contested electoral votes. Its decisions gave all 20 votes to Hayes, who won the Electoral College 185 to 184. Many Democrats protested the decisions, delaying the final count in Congress. In talks connected to the crisis, southern Democrats stopped blocking Hayes's presidency, while Republicans indicated that federal troops would leave the last two states where they supported Republican governments. Historians call this informal political settlement the Compromise of 1877. Its exact promises were not written in a single, official agreement.

3 After Hayes took office, federal troops left their positions supporting Republican state governments in Louisiana and South Carolina. Democrats gained control of those state governments, ending the last Reconstruction governments in the South. Without the same federal backing, efforts to protect Black voting and other civil rights became much harder to enforce. The Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments remained in the Constitution, but southern leaders increasingly limited Black citizens' rights through violence and discriminatory laws. The disputed election did not erase those amendments; the settlement changed how strongly the federal government defended them.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did the dispute over electoral votes help lead to the Compromise of 1877?

2. How did the settlement affect the last two Reconstruction state governments?

3. Why did the troop withdrawal make it harder to protect Black citizens' rights?

4. Why would it be inaccurate to say that the settlement erased every gain of Reconstruction?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a four-sentence historical summary for a student who thinks the 1876 election had no effect on Reconstruction. Link the election dispute to the settlement, explain two different effects on Reconstruction, and identify what did not change in federal law.

ANSWER KEY

Votes and Withdrawal

GRADE 8 · 8.C.13.4.C

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the election dispute, circle the actions that settled it, and number two effects on Reconstruction. Use your marks to trace how one event led to another. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did the dispute over electoral votes help lead to the Compromise of 1877?	**The disputed votes could decide the presidency. After a commission awarded them to Hayes, Democrats protested and delayed the final count, leading to talks about accepting his presidency and withdrawing troops.**
2	How did the settlement affect the last two Reconstruction state governments?	**Federal troops stopped supporting the Republican governments in Louisiana and South Carolina. Democrats gained control, ending the last Reconstruction governments.**
3	Why did the troop withdrawal make it harder to protect Black citizens' rights?	**Without the same federal backing in the South, efforts to enforce Black voting and other civil rights became more difficult.**
4	Why would it be inaccurate to say that the settlement erased every gain of Reconstruction?	**The Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments remained in the Constitution, even though their protections became harder to enforce.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The disputed votes in the 1876 election left the choice of president uncertain, so Congress formed a commission that awarded Hayes the contested votes. As southern Democrats stopped blocking his presidency, Republicans indicated that troops would leave Louisiana and South Carolina. Without that military support, Democrats took over the remaining Reconstruction state governments, and federal enforcement of Black citizens' rights weakened. The Reconstruction amendments still stood, but keeping their promises became far more difficult.

Accept responses that connect the disputed election and political settlement to troop withdrawal and its effects on Reconstruction. Students should distinguish weaker enforcement from repeal of the Reconstruction amendments.