

Rebuilding Rights

Evaluate how Reconstruction laws changed the South, and where they fell short.

8.9.A "evaluate legislative reform programs of the Radical Reconstruction Congress and reconstructed state governments;"

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline each legislative program. Circle evidence that shows a result or a limit, then number three pieces of evidence you could use to judge how effective the reforms were.

Laws, Rights, and Results

- ① In 1866 and 1867, the Radical Reconstruction Congress tried to rebuild the former Confederate states on new legal terms. The Civil Rights Act of 1866 declared that people born in the United States were citizens and had equal civil rights. The Fourteenth Amendment strengthened this idea by requiring states to provide equal protection. The Reconstruction Acts placed much of the South under military oversight. To return to Congress, states had to write new constitutions, ratify the Fourteenth Amendment, and allow Black men to vote.
- ② The Fifteenth Amendment, ratified in 1870, barred governments from denying a citizen's vote because of race. These laws helped create biracial political participation, including Black voters and officeholders. Congress also passed Enforcement Acts to protect voting from violence and intimidation. Still, written laws did not automatically make rights safe. White supremacist groups attacked voters and leaders, while some officials failed to enforce federal protections. Later court decisions narrowed parts of federal civil-rights power, weakening the reforms' reach.
- ③ Reconstructed state governments added reforms of their own. Many created their first statewide public school systems, funded by taxes, and expanded services such as hospitals or orphan care. New state constitutions recognized Black men's political rights and, in some places, made public accommodations more equal. These programs mattered because they built institutions that could serve more residents. Yet unequal school funding, racial segregation, high costs, and political violence limited results. In 1877, federal troops stopped supporting the last Republican state governments, completing white Democratic control of the South and weakening protection of Reconstruction gains.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 Which congressional measure gave citizenship and equal-protection constitutional support? Explain why this made reform stronger than an ordinary law.

2 Evaluate the Reconstruction Acts. Name one requirement that pushed political change and one reason that putting reforms into practice remained difficult.

3 Which state program had a potential benefit beyond elections? Use evidence from the passage to explain what it could do.

4 Based on the passage, was the lack of laws or the failure to enforce laws a greater threat to Reconstruction reforms? Support your judgment with two details.

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Write a four-sentence evaluation of whether congressional or state reform programs were more effective during Reconstruction. Name one congressional program and one state program, use two details from the passage, and explain one limit that affects your judgment.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline each legislative program. Circle evidence that shows a result or a limit, then number three pieces of evidence you could use to judge how effective the reforms were. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Which congressional measure gave citizenship and equal-protection constitutional support? Explain why this made reform stronger than an ordinary law.	The Fourteenth Amendment. It put citizenship and equal protection in the Constitution and required states to provide equal protection.
2	Evaluate the Reconstruction Acts. Name one requirement that pushed political change and one reason that putting reforms into practice remained difficult.	The acts required former Confederate states to write new constitutions, ratify the Fourteenth Amendment, and allow Black men to vote. Violence, intimidation, and failures to enforce federal protections made implementation difficult.
3	Which state program had a potential benefit beyond elections? Use evidence from the passage to explain what it could do.	Statewide public school systems had a benefit beyond elections because they built institutions that could serve more residents.
4	Based on the passage, was the lack of laws or the failure to enforce laws a greater threat to Reconstruction reforms? Support your judgment with two details.	Failure to enforce laws was the greater threat. Congress passed voting protections, but white supremacist groups used violence and some officials failed to enforce federal protections. Later court decisions also weakened federal civil-rights power.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Congress's Reconstruction Acts were more effective because they required former Confederate states to create new constitutions and permit Black men to vote. State governments also made an important change by creating statewide public school systems. However, white supremacist violence kept many people from safely using their rights. Because enforcement failed and reforms were later rolled back, both levels achieved real but incomplete change.

Accept supported evaluations that identify a specific congressional and state program and accurately explain results and limits. Students may reasonably judge either level as more effective if they use accurate passage evidence.