

Rebuilding the Nation

Evaluate Reconstruction reforms, representation, and unequal outcomes.

8.9 "History. The student understands the effects of Reconstruction on the political, economic, and social life of the nation. The student is expected to: evaluate legislative reform programs of the Radical Reconstruction Congress and..."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline each reform Congress or reconstructed state governments carried out, circle each problem or limit, and draw an arrow from each marked idea to the group it affected.

Promises and Limits of Reconstruction

- ① In 1867, Congress passed the Reconstruction Acts, placing much of the former Confederacy under military districts until states met new requirements. States had to write constitutions that protected voting rights for Black men and ratify the Fourteenth Amendment, which established citizenship and equal protection. Congress had already created the Freedmen's Bureau to aid formerly enslaved people with schools, labor contracts, food, and legal help. These reforms expanded federal power because national officials, not former Confederate leaders alone, shaped the rules for rejoining the Union.
- ② Reconstructed state governments included newly elected Black officeholders and white allies. In 1870, Hiram Rhodes Revels of Mississippi became the first African American U.S. senator. His election showed that African Americans could claim political leadership after slavery, even though violent intimidation and racist beliefs limited many citizens' ability to vote or serve safely. State governments opened public schools and changed laws to protect civil rights. However, these gains faced opposition from groups such as the Ku Klux Klan, which used terror to restore white control.
- ③ Reconstruction brought uneven economic and social change. Many freedpeople sought land, education, and fair pay, but most received no land. Under sharecropping, families rented land and paid owners with part of a crop. High interest charges and poor harvests often created debt, tying families to the land. Former plantation owners lost enslaved labor but retained much of their land and influence. Northern commitment to enforcement weakened over time. In 1877, federal troops stopped supporting the last Republican state governments, completing white Democratic control of the South and weakening protection of Reconstruction reforms.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 How did the Reconstruction Acts increase federal power over the former Confederate states?

2 What did Hiram Rhodes Revels's election to the U.S. Senate show about the political impact of Reconstruction?

3 Explain how sharecropping affected freedpeople differently from former plantation owners.

4 How did ending military support for the last Republican state governments in 1877 weaken Reconstruction protections?

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Write a 75 to 100 word paragraph that evaluates one Reconstruction reform from the passage. Explain how it changed political, economic, or social life for one group, and explain one limit or problem that reduced its effect.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline each reform Congress or reconstructed state governments carried out, circle each problem or limit, and draw an arrow from each marked idea to the group it affected. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did the Reconstruction Acts increase federal power over the former Confederate states?	They put much of the former Confederacy under military districts and required states to meet federal conditions, including new constitutions and ratification of the Fourteenth Amendment, before rejoining the Union.
2	What did Hiram Rhodes Revels's election to the U.S. Senate show about the political impact of Reconstruction?	It showed that African Americans could gain political leadership and hold major national office after slavery.
3	Explain how sharecropping affected freedpeople differently from former plantation owners.	Freedpeople often rented land and could fall into debt because of high interest charges and poor harvests. Former plantation owners lost enslaved labor but kept much of their land and influence.
4	How did ending military support for the last Republican state governments in 1877 weaken Reconstruction protections?	It completed white Democratic control of Southern state governments. With weaker federal enforcement, it was harder to protect Reconstruction reforms.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

State-supported public schools were an important Reconstruction reform because they gave many formerly enslaved children and adults a chance to gain an education. This social change could help Black communities build opportunities after slavery. The reform also showed that reconstructed governments were willing to use public power in new ways. However, violence by the Ku Klux Klan threatened Black citizens and their allies. Later, weaker federal enforcement made it harder to protect Reconstruction gains.

Therefore, the schools were meaningful, but their benefits were limited by resistance and lost political protection.

Accept equivalent explanations that use passage evidence and distinguish effects on different groups. For the paragraph, students should evaluate a reform, name an affected group, and explain a limitation rather than merely list facts.