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Ministere de l'enseignement superieur et de
la recherche scientifique
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Lecture 9: The Reconstruction Era

By: Dr. Djihed Messikh

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Content

1. The Reconstruction Era: Definition

2. The Reconstruction Amendments

A. The Thirteenth Amendment (1865)

B. The Fourteenth Amendment (1867)

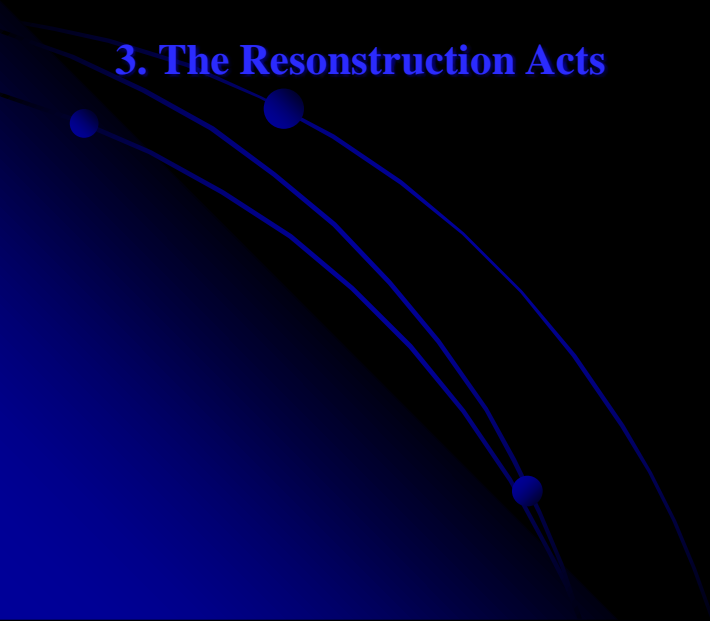
C. The Fifteenth Amendment (1845)

3. The Resonstruction Acts

2. Southern States' Reaction

- Black Codes
- Jim Crow Laws

Exercise

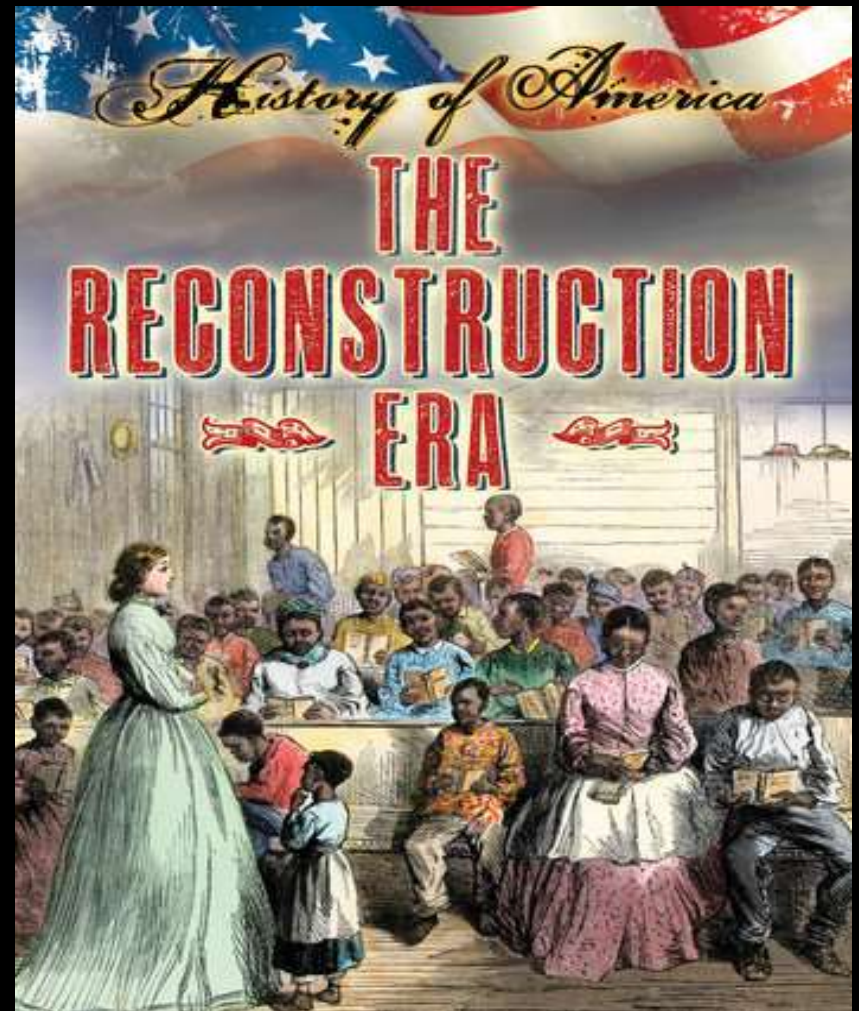




**What is the Reconstruction
Era?**

The Reconstruction Era

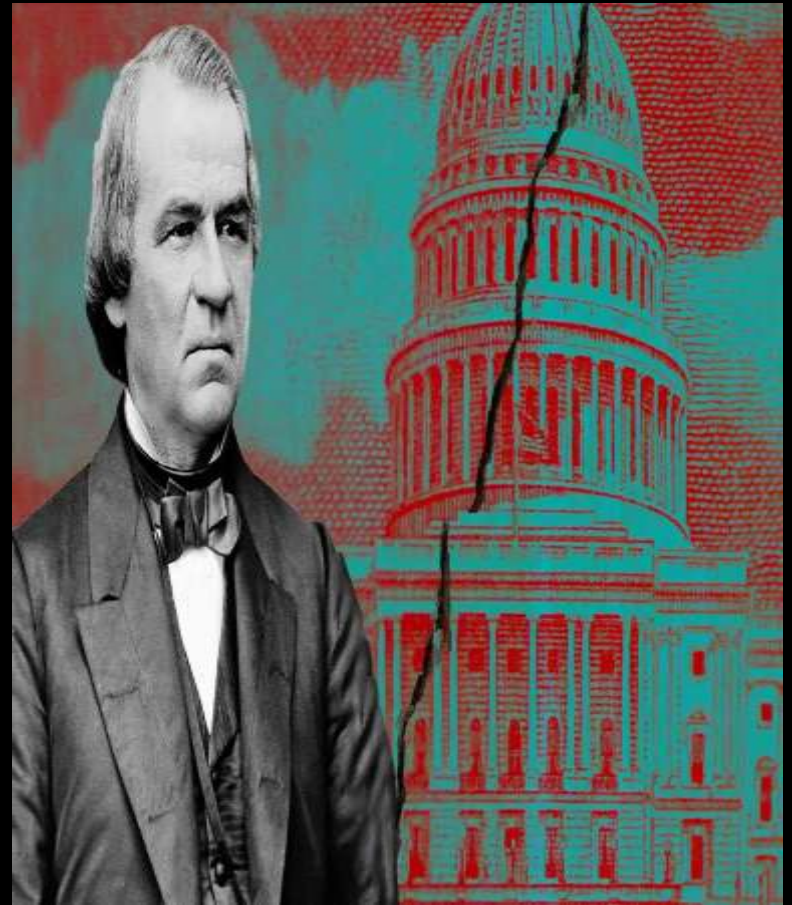
The Reconstruction era (1865—77) refers to the period that followed the American Civil War in which attempts were made to: (1) deal with the inequities of slavery and its political, social, and economic legacy in order to improve the situation of African Americans ; and to (2) address the issue of the readmission to the Union of the 11 states that had seceded during the American Civil War.



President Andrew Johnson

Following the assassination of President Lincoln in April 1865, Vice President Andrew Johnson, a Southern Democrat, assumed the Presidency. The new president adopted the Lincoln Reconstruction initiatives, but he was criticized by the Radical Republicans in Congress for being too lenient on the South.

Andrew Johnson denounced the 14th Amendment as unconstitutional and urged its rejection, while opposing the 15th Amendment, aligning with Democrats against Black male suffrage. He also opposed Reconstruction measures like the Civil Rights Act of 1866 and Reconstruction Acts by vetoing them, prioritizing Southern leniency over Black rights. His impeachment stemmed from violating the Tenure of Office Act in 1868 (acquitted in the Senate by one vote).



Constitutional Amendments: The 13th Constitutional Amendment (1865)

- **Section 1.** Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.
- **Section 2.** Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.

Constitutional Amendments: The 14th Constitutional Amendment (1868)

- **Section 1.** All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside. No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.

Constitutional Amendments: The 15th Constitutional Amendment (1870)

- **Section 1.** The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.
- **Section 2.** The Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.

Reconstruction Acts

The series of laws are also referred to as the Military Reconstruction Acts. The Radical Republicans had gained sufficient power to override any vetoes by President Johnson. The purpose of the four Reconstruction Act statutes, or laws (1867—1868) was to determine the terms to be fulfilled for the former Confederate States of America to be re-admitted to the Union. The main features of these acts can be summarized as the following :

- To divide the seceded states into five military districts.
- To affirm the authority of the military district commanders to remove state officials

from office.

- Each state had to draft a new state constitution, which would have to be approved by

Congress

- Each state had to ratify the 14th Amendment prior to readmission to the Union.

(The 14th Amendment was passed on June 13, 1866 stating that every person born in

the US was a citizen).

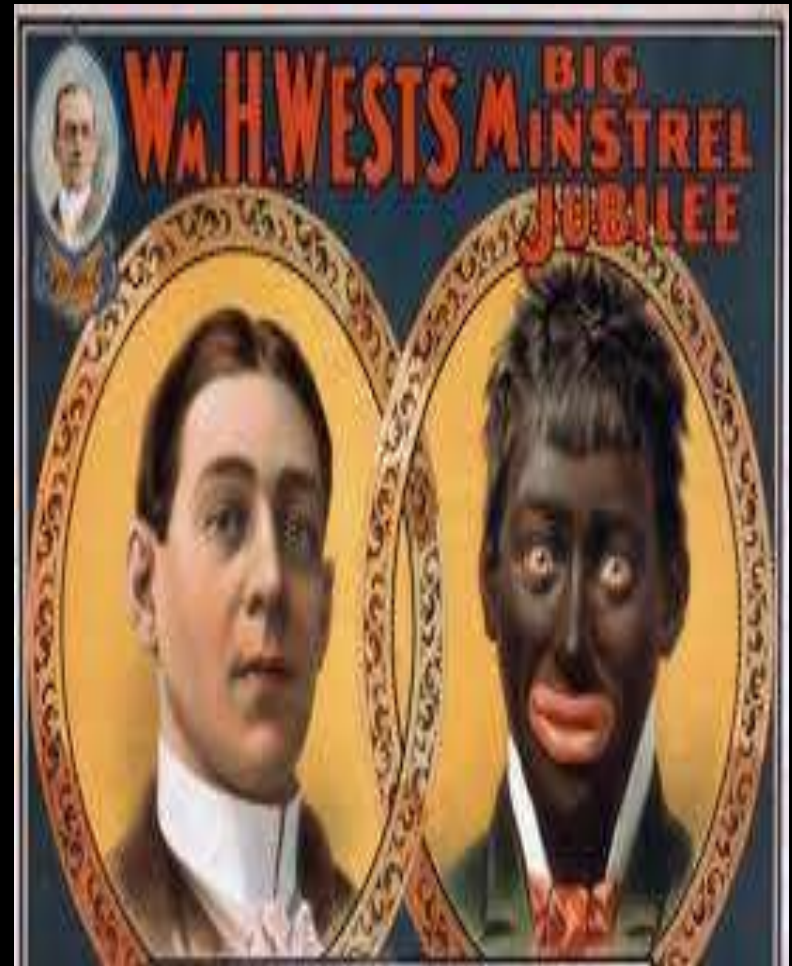
How did southern states react to the Reconstruction measures (constitutional amendments and military acts)?

Southern Response: Introduction of Black Codes

Black Codes were discriminatory laws enacted by Southern state legislatures in late 1865 and 1866 immediately after the Civil War and ratification of the 13th Amendment, designed to restrict the freedoms of newly emancipated African Americans and maintain white economic and social dominance. These codes imposed vagrancy statutes that criminalized unemployment, mandated harsh labor contracts often resembling slavery through sharecropping, barred Blacks from owning firearms or testifying against whites in court, enforced curfews and residency requirements, and prohibited interracial marriages, effectively creating a system of semi-servitude.

Southern Response: Introduction of Jim Crow Laws

- Jim Crow laws enforced racial segregation across the South from the end of Reconstruction in 1877 until the civil rights movement of the 1950s. They mandated separate
- housing, schools, public facilities, and services for Black people, with violators facing arrests, fines, imprisonment, violence, or death—often at the hands of groups like the **Ku Klux Klan**. The KKK spearheaded white Southern opposition to Reconstruction-era Republican policies through terror campaigns targeting Black and white Republican leaders, vandalizing Black schools, and launching nighttime attacks on Black communities.



ku klux klan (kkk)



Racial Segregation



Racial Segregation



Racial Segregation



Racial Segregation



Racial Segregation

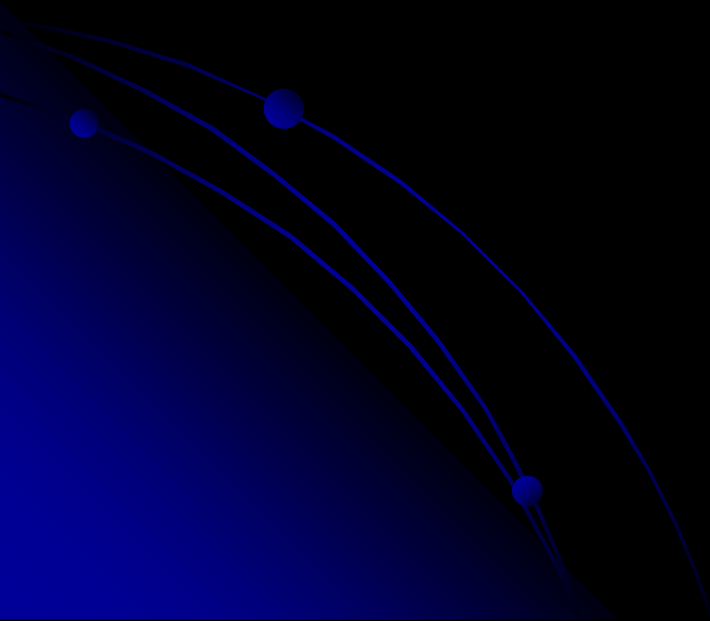


Exercise 1

- Make a presentation about:

1. Jim Crow Laws

2. The Impeachment of President Andrew Johnson



Exercise 2

- Listen to the following teaching video and answer the following questions (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zQYz4BR_vdQ).
- 1. How did the video assess the effectiveness of the Reconstruction measures (success or failure)?
- 2. What were the main arguments used to support this judgement?
- 3. Did sectional animosity between the north and the south persist after the Civil War??
- 4. What was the first initiative taken by Abraham Lincoln?
- 5. What was Lincoln's second part of the plan?
- 6. Was Lincoln for punishing the south too harshly, justify your answer?
- 7. Was Lincoln a Moderate Republican or a Radical Republican?
- 8. What was the main requirement suggested by Wade-Davis bill to re-admit the confederacy?

Thank You

