



Reconstruction

Grade: 8 (Adaptable for 8-12)

Overview

Adopted from: "[Reconstruction and the Formerly Enslaved](#)" from [National Humanities Center](#)

The aftermath of the Civil War was a crucial period in U.S. history. During this time, the United States began to reconstruct itself by giving slaves freedom, rebuilding public transportation and buildings, and working to unify a divided country. Using the Historic Oregon Newspapers website, students will work with primary and secondary sources that provide a historical walkthrough of the series of events during the Reconstruction.

Oregon Common Core State Standards

Language Arts Standards: See below for a full list of applicable standards.

- CCSS.ELA.RH.6-8.2 Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.
- CCSS.ELA.RH.6-8.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary specific to domains related to history/social studies.
- CCSS.ELA.SL.6-8.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade-level topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.
- CCSS.ELA.WHST.6-8.2 Write informative/explanatory texts, including the narration of historical events, scientific procedures/ experiments, or technical processes.
- CCSS.ELA.WHST.6-8.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
- CCSS.ELA.WHST.6-8.8 Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, using search terms effectively; assess the credibility and accuracy of each source; and quote or paraphrase the data and conclusions of others while avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.
- CCSS.ELA.WHST.6-8.10 Write routinely over extended timeframes (time for reflection and revision) and shorter timeframes (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.

Social Studies Standards: See below for a full list of applicable standards.

- Historical Knowledge 8.1. Evaluate continuity and change over the course of U.S. history by analyzing examples of conflict, cooperation, and interdependence among groups, societies, or nations.

- Historical Knowledge 8.2. Evaluate continuity and change over the course of U.S. history, by analyzing key people, the Constitutional Convention, the age of Jefferson, the Industrial Revolution, Westward Expansion, and the Civil War.
- Historical Thinking 8.6. Use and interpret documents and other relevant primary and secondary sources pertaining to U.S. history from multiple perspectives.
- Historical Thinking 8.8. Evaluate information from a variety of sources and perspectives.

Materials

- [Historic Oregon Newspapers](#) website
- Access to the Internet
- K-W-L chart (optional)
- Historical Walkthrough activity sheet (optional)
- Big Question activity sheet (optional)
- Timeline material (optional)

Lesson

- *Introduction:* Engage students' prior knowledge. You may wish to use a K-W-L chart (one is provided below).
- *Transition:* Establish the setting of the historical walkthrough.
 - It is 1865. The United States is a divided country. President Abraham Lincoln was assassinated in April. The capture of Confederate president Jefferson Davis in May marks a major turning point. The topic of slavery is on everyone's mind. The accumulation of events up to this point raises some big questions.
 - Big questions:
 - Who is an American?
 - What rights should all Americans enjoy?
 - What rights would only some Americans possess?
 - On what terms will the nation be reunited?
 - What is the status of formerly Confederate states?
 - How should citizenship be defined?
 - When and how will former Confederates regain their citizenship?
 - What form of labor will replace slavery?
 - *There is an activity sheet provided below for student responses.*
- *Lesson activity:* Hand out historical walkthrough activity sheet.
 - The activity sheet's objective is to lead students through a walkthrough of the Reconstruction period. A lot of information is presented, so make sure to discuss thoughts and initial reactions on what has been read.
 - This activity may be done as a whole class or in small groups.
 - As students walk through historical accounts of Reconstruction, write down important dates on a timeline that is available to students as reference for later activities.

- Additionally, encourage students to take notes and note initial responses.
- *Debrief:* Bring students together to discuss their thoughts and reactions to Reconstruction.
 - Revisit the big questions.
- Some debrief questions to consider:
 - Do you think Reconstruction rebuilt our country?
 - Do you disagree or agree with all the amendments that were passed?
 - What are your initial reactions to what we have just read?
 - What was the most interesting thing you read?
 - What are some notes that you have written during our walkthrough?

Extension Activity Ideas

- *Letter:* Have students write a letter expressing their views on Jim Crow laws.
 - Do you agree or disagree?
 - What changes would you make to the laws?
 - Create a poster to describe the changes.
- *Reconstruct Reconstruction:* Have students design their own form of Reconstruction. What improvements would they make, and what bills would they pass to make these changes?
 - Students may wish to present their amendments to the class.
 - Students may vote on which amendments most interest them.
- *Essay prompt:* After the debrief session, assign students an essay prompt in which they can write a reflection on what they have learned, insights, initial reactions, etc. Or assign the question, “What would you do differently during the Reconstruction period?”
 - Assign the essay after the class has had time to debrief and discuss their findings.
 - Give students the opportunity to present their essays.

RECONSTRUCTION



K

What do I already know?

W

What do I want to learn?

L

What did I learn?

Big question activity sheet

Big Question Activity Sheet

1. Read and think about the question.
2. Provide a brief, well-thought-out response.
3. After the historical walkthrough, write down your thoughts and reactions in the reflection section.

Question	Response
Who was an American?	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
What rights should all Americans enjoy?	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
What rights would only some Americans possess?	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
On what terms would the nation be reunited?	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

What was the status of the former Confederate states?	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
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How would citizenship be defined?	
Were the former slaves American citizens?	
When and how would former Confederates regain their citizenship?	
What form of labor would replace slavery?	

Reflection
<p>Reflect on the historical walkthrough. What did you think about the Reconstruction period? Do you disagree or agree? Did any of your earlier responses change? How?</p>

Historical Walkthrough Activity Sheet

Date	Event	Notes and Initial Reactions
May 1857	<p>“Washington, March 6. The opinion of the Supreme Court in the <i>Dred Scott</i> case ... negroes, whether slaves or free, that is, men of the African race, are not citizens of the United States by the Constitution.” Oregon Argus, May 2, 1857</p>	
December 1863	<p>President Lincoln had set the groundwork for Reconstruction prior to his assassination and the end of the Civil War. He had made the proclamation that any rebellious state could rejoin the Union with full pardon by submitting oaths of loyalty from 10 percent of registered voters, and individuals in any rebellious state would receive full pardons.</p> <p><i>“Therefore, I, Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States, do proclaim, declare, and make known to all persons who have directly or by implication participated in the existing rebellion, except as hereinafter excepted, that a full pardon is granted to them, and each of them. With restoration of all rights. If third parties shall have intervened, and upon condition that such parties shall take and subscribe an oath inviolate, and which oath shall be registered for preservation, and shall be of the tenor and effect following, to-wit...”</i> Oregon Sentinel, December 19, 1863</p>	
July 1864	<p>Congress thought 10 percent was not enough and in July 1864 presented the president with a bill requiring 50 percent of the Confederate state’s white males to take the loyalty oath.</p>	
March 1865	<p>There was the increasingly pressing question of what to do about the newly freed slaves. In March 1865, an act to establish the Bureau for the Relief of Freedmen and Refugees helped distribute food, supplies, and land to the new population of freed slaves. See: Daily National Republican, March 29, 1865</p>	
April 1865	<p>End of the Civil War, and President Abraham Lincoln is assassinated.</p>	

<p>May 1865</p>	<p>Davis’s capture marked the end of the Civil War and the beginning of the reconstruction, or rebuilding, of the United States.</p> <p><i>“The intelligence was received yesterday afternoon, by telegraph from the East, that Jeff. Davis had been captured in Georgia, disguised in women’s clothing.” Oregon Sentinel, May 27, 1865</i></p>	
	<p>During Congress’s recess, Andrew Johnson—Lincoln’s vice president who became president after the assassination—granted restoration under Lincoln’s 10 percent plan. Johnson also allowed the former Confederate states to write new state constitutions, and he granted full pardons and returned confiscated lands. (In December 1865, Johnson declared the nation reconstructed.)</p>	
<p>October 1865</p>	<p>“The President yesterday granted pardons under the amnesty proclamation to eighty persons ... Six thousand acres of land ... restored to its original owner.” Baltimore Daily Commercial, October 20, 1865</p>	
<p>March 1866</p>	<p>The “Swing Around the Circle” tour did not bring President Johnson the support he sought. “The offensive speech ... by Mr. Johnson.” White Cloud Kansas chief, March 22, 1866</p>	
<p>April 1866</p>	<p>Although the Freedmen’s Bureau Act was renewed and the Civil Rights Act of 1866 passed in both houses of Congress, tension continued between Congress and President Johnson, who vetoed both pieces of legislation. Despite this opposition, including resistance from the highest levels of government, the Civil Rights Bill was ultimately passed in April 1866, granting emancipated blacks more rights. “A salute of 100 guns was fired at Union Square this morning, in honor of the passage of the civil rights bill.” Daily Mountaineer, April 13, 1866</p>	

<p>June 1866</p>	<p>“RECONSTRUCTION. Final Report of the Congressional Committee.” Cleveland Daily Leader, June 13, 1866</p>	
<p>January 1867</p>	<p>President Johnson’s popularity continued to sink. In 1867, he gained the distinction of being the first U.S. president to ever be impeached. “I do impeach Andrew Johnson, Vice President and acting President of the United States, for high crimes and misdemeanors. I charge him with the usurpation of power and violation of law, in that he has corruptly disposed of the public property of the United States.” Oregon City Enterprise, January 12, 1867</p>	
<p>February 1867</p>	<p>“... if constitutional lawyers will look at section five of the military law, they will observe that it provides in each State for the election of delegates ‘by the male citizens of said State, twenty-one years old and upward, of whatever race, color, or previous condition,’ &c., &c. By reference to the Constitutional Amendment, which the radicals claim has or will become constitutional law, there is a direct conflict.” National Republican, February 28, 1867</p>	
<p>March 1867</p>	<p>“The fifth section of the bill provides that when the people of any one of the ‘said rebel states’ shall have formed a constitutional government conformed to the constitution of the United States, and given the franchise to make citizens without distinction of race, except such as are disfranchised for ex-bellion or felony, and shall have adopted the amendment to the United States Constitution known as Article 14.” The Vermont transcript, March 1, 1867</p>	
<p>April 1867</p>	<p>White supremacy groups soon emerged, none more prominent than the Ku Klux Klan (KKK). “The members of the ‘Klan,’ having become so numerous, our former place of holding meetings will have to be abandoned.” Pulaski Citizen, April 26, 1867</p>	

<p>February 1868</p>	<p>The move to impeach President Johnson began in 1867. In February 1868, the House of Representatives impeached the president. In May, the Senate followed suit, voting on the article of impeachment. Congress also worked toward the passage of a military reconstruction bill.</p>	
<p>November 1868</p>	<p>Ulysses S. Grant was elected president in 1868. <i>National Republican, November 4, 1868.</i> Two years after Grant's election to the presidency of the United States, the 15th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution was ratified, thus granting all men, regardless of race, the right to vote.</p>	
<p>January 1870</p>	<p>"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 conditions of servitude." <i>Weekly Enterprise, January 1, 1870</i></p>	
<p>February 1870</p>	<p>"Sherman presented Ohio's ratification of the fifteenth amendment." <i>Anderson Intelligencer, February 3, 1870</i></p>	

Continued list of applicable Language Arts standards

Grades 9-10

- CCSS.ELA.RH.9-10.2 Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.
- CCSS.ELA.RH.9-10.3 Analyze in detail a series of events described in a text; determine whether earlier events caused later ones or simply preceded them.
- CCSS.ELA.RH.9-10.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary describing political, social, or economic aspects of history/social science.
- CCSS.ELA.SL.9-10.1 Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9-10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
- CCSS.ELA.WHST.9-10.2 Write informative/explanatory texts, including the narration of historical events, scientific procedures/experiments, or technical processes.
- CCSS.ELA.WHST.9-10.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
- CCSS.ELA.WHST.9-10.8 Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the usefulness of each source in answering the research question; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.
- CCSS.ELA.WHST.9-10.10 Write routinely over extended timeframes (time for reflection and revision) and shorter timeframes (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.

Grades 11-12

- CCSS.ELA.RH.11-12.2 Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.
- CCSS.ELA.RH.11-12.3 Evaluate various explanations for actions or events, and determine which explanation best accounts with textual evidence, acknowledging where the text leaves matters uncertain.
- CCSS.ELA.RH.11-12.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including analyzing how an author uses and refines the meaning of a key term over the course of a text (e.g., how Madison defines *faction* in *Federalist* No. 10).
- CCSS.ELA.SL.11-12.1 Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 11-12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively
- CCSS.ELA.WHST.11-12.2 Write informative/explanatory texts, including the narration of historical events, scientific procedures/experiments, or technical processes.
- CCSS.ELA.WHST.11-12.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
- CCSS.ELA.WHST.11-12.8 Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the strengths and limitations of each source in terms of the specific task, purpose, and audience; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and overreliance on any one source and following a standard format for citation.
- CCSS.ELA.WHST.11-12.10 Write routinely over extended time frames (time for reflection and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.

Continued list of applicable Social Studies standards

Grade 8

- Government 8.14. Explain rights and responsibilities of citizens.
- Government 8.17. Examine the development activities of political parties and interest groups and their affect on events, issues, and ideas.
- Government 8.18. Examine and analyze important United States documents, including (but not limited to) the Constitution, Bill of Rights, 13th-15th Amendments.
- Government 8.19. Examine important Supreme Court decisions prior to 1880 and the impact of the decisions on government practices, personal liberties, and property rights.
- Government 8.20. Analyze the changing definition of citizenship and the expansion of rights.
- Social Science Analysis 8.25. Critique data for point of view, historical context, distortion, or propaganda and relevance.

Grades 9-12

- Historical Knowledge HS.5. Examine and evaluate the origins of fundamental political debates and how conflict, compromise, and cooperation have shaped national unity and diversity in world, U.S., and Oregon history.
- Historical Knowledge HS.6. Analyze ideas critical to the understanding of history, including, but not limited to: populism, progressivism, isolationism, imperialism, communism, environmentalism, liberalism, fundamentalism, racism, ageism, classism, conservatism, cultural diversity, feminism, and sustainability.
- Government HS.24. Analyze and critique the impact of constitutional amendments.
- Government HS.32. Examine and evaluate documents and decisions related to the Constitution and Supreme Court decisions (e.g., Federalist Papers, Constitution, *Marbury v. Madison*, Bill of Rights, Constitutional amendments, Declaration of Independence).
- Social Science Analysis HS.57. Define, research, and explain an event, issue, problem, or phenomenon and its significance to society.
- Social Science Analysis HS.60. Analyze an event, issue, problem, or phenomenon from varied or opposing perspectives or points of view.