**Reconstruction 6.2**

**SSUSH10 Identify legal, political, and social dimensions of Reconstruction.**

**a. Compare and contrast Presidential Reconstruction with Congressional Reconstruction, including the significance of Lincoln’s assassination and Johnson’s impeachment.**

**Second Inaugural Address**

The discontent that many in the North felt towards the war meant that Lincoln was in danger of losing the 1864 election. In an effort to defeat Lincoln and negotiate an end to the war, the Democrats nominated former Union general, George McClellan, for president. However, Sherman's capture of Atlanta two months before the election signaled to everyone that Union victory was within reach, and Lincoln was elected to a second term. During his **second inaugural address**, in March 1865, Lincoln expressed both his conviction that slavery was evil and his hope of reuniting the nation once the war was over. Rather than basking in the glory of what everyone knew would soon be a Union victory and the end of the Confederacy, Lincoln expressed his sorrow that so many on both sides had suffered and communicated a vision for rebuilding the South rather than punishing it.

**Presidential Reconstruction and Lincoln's Assassination**

Now that the Union had been preserved, Lincoln introduced a plan for Reconstruction (rebuilding) of the South rather than punishing the South. Sadly, however, Lincoln would not live to see the nation healed. On April 14, 1865, just five days after the surrender at Appomattox Courthouse, a Confederate sympathizer named**John Wilkes Booth** assassinated the president as he attended a play at Ford's Theater. With Lincoln's death, the presidency now fell to **Andrew Johnson**. Johnson was a southerner and one-time slave owner who had remained loyal to the Union. He proved sympathetic to the South and pursued his own plan of Presidential Reconstruction. Under **Presidential Reconstruction**:

1. Southerners who swore allegiance to the Union were pardoned (forgiven of any crimes against the US).
2. Former Confederate states could hold constitutional conventions to set up state governments.
3. States had to void (cancel) secession and ratify the **Thirteenth Amendment** to the Constitution.
4. Once the Thirteenth Amendment was ratified, states could then hold elections and be part of the Union.

Johnson initially enacted his brand of reconstruction while Congress was not in session. Under its provisions, many of the same southerners who led the Confederacy held on to their positions of influence in the southern states. Southern states also enacted **black codes** (laws that limited the rights of freed blacks so much that they basically kept them living like slaves). For instance, blacks had curfews which made it illegal for them to gather after sunset, could be whipped or sold into forced labor (slavery) if they were convicted of vagrancy (not working), had to agree to work for at least a year for whites, and were often restricted to renting land only in rural areas. Such restrictions
allowed whites to continue to control and profit from the labor of African Americans even though slavery did not technically exist.

**Congressional Reconstruction**

Conflict quickly arose between Johnson and the Congressional Republicans. The Congressional Republicans were members of the Republican Party who favored a much tougher stance with the former Confederate states. They believed that Johnson's approach did not do enough because it failed to offer African Americans full citizenship rights. They also believed that Congress, not the president, should oversee Reconstruction and that the majority of each state's voting population should have to pledge allegiance to the United States before a state could be readmitted to the Union. The Congressional Republicans ultimately pushed the Reconstruction Act through Congress in 1867. The law established much stricter guidelines on the South that came to be known as Congressional Reconstruction. Under **Congressional Reconstruction**:

1. The southern states were put under military rule.
2. Southern states had to hold new constitutional conventions.
3. Southern states had to ratify the 13th Amendment
4. Southern states had to ratify the 14th Amendment
5. Southern states had to ratify the 15th Amendment

**Andrew Johnson’s Impeachment**

The battle between Congress and President Johnson came to a head in 1868. Johnson tried to fire Secretary of War Edwin Stanton because he was closely tied to the Congressional Republicans. However, such a move violated the **Tenure in Office Act**, which limited the president's power to hire and fire government officials. Johnson was also under attach politically from Congressional Republicans for his Reconstruction Plan. Led by a fiery Congressional Republican congressman named Thaddeus Stevens, Congress voted to **impeach** (charge with wrongdoing in order to remove from office) the president of the United States. On May 16, 1868, the Senate voted to acquit (innocent or cleared) Johnson's presidency by just one vote.

**b. Investigate the efforts of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands (the Freedmen’s Bureau) to support poor whites, former slaves, and American Indians.**

**The Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands (the Freedmen’s Bureau)**

The Thirteenth Amendment freed the slaves. Now, African Americans in the South had to adjust to life after slavery. Although they had their freedom, they had no land or money. In order to survive, many turned to sharecropping. Under this practice, a family farmed a portion of a white landowner's land in return for housing and a share of the crop. Many sharecroppers, unfortunately, fell victim to dishonest landowners who subjected them to what amounted to slavery. Sharecroppers who were fortunate enough to have an honest landowner and good crops sometimes advanced to tenant farming. Tenant farmers paid rent to farm the land and owned the crops they grew. Although tenant farmers were less at the mercy of white landowners than sharecroppers, both lived under systems designed to keep African Americans working white-owned land. In an effort to help freed slaves, poor whites and American Indians Congress created the **Freedmen's Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands** (the Freedmen's Bureau). As the first federal relief agency in US history, the Freedmen's Bureau provided clothes, medical attention, food, education, and even land to African Americans coming out of slavery. Lacking support, it eventually ended in 1869. However, during its brief time, it helped many slaves transition to freedom throughout the South.

**Education and the Church**

The desire for freedom and the need for community among enslaved African Americans led to the rise of African American churches. As one of the few institutions truly owned and controlled by African Americans, black churches became the centers for African American social and political life. Within these churches, African Americans could discuss issues relevant to the black community and organize strategies to meet the needs of freed. As a result, African American ministers came to be seen not only as spiritual shepherds, but as political/social leaders as well. Blacks also sought education. Often with the help of the Freedmen's Bureau and/or the churches, the southern African American community established the first black schools. Teachers were often African American soldiers who had acquired some education while in the service. Students included both children and adults. There were also efforts to provide blacks with advanced education. In 1867, a group of ministers joined forces to help found a school to train African American men to be ministers and/or teachers. The school eventually became Atlanta Baptist Seminary and, later, Atlanta Baptist College. Finally, in 1913, during the tenure of its first African American president, John Hope, the institution changed its name to **Morehouse College**. Morehouse has traditionally been one of the most prestigious African American colleges in the nation and has even been called the "Black Harvard." Its establishment helped pave the way for higher education among blacks in the years following emancipation.

**c. Describe the significance of the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth amendments.**

**Reconstruction Amendments**

Prior to Lincoln's death, Congress passed the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution. Unlike the Emancipation Proclamation which only outlawed slavery in the Confederacy, the **Thirteenth Amendment** ended slavery throughout the United States. The following year, Congress passed the Civil Rights Act of 1866 with the intent of giving citizenship rights to freed slaves. President Johnson opposed the measure, but Congress was able to override his veto. Then, concerned that the courts might strike down the new law as unconstitutional, Congress passed a new amendment to the US Constitution. The **Fourteenth Amendment** guaranteed that no person (regardless of race) would be deprived of life, liberty, or property without due process of law. Finally, the last major piece of Reconstruction legislation was the **Fifteenth Amendment** to the Constitution. Ratified during the presidency of Ulysses S. Grant, it guaranteed that no citizen may be denied the right to vote "by the United States or any state on the account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude." The amendment had great impact in the South by guaranteeing African Americans the right to vote in elections. The 14th and the 15th amendments had a greater impact on States' Rights by strengthening the power of the federal government over state governments.

**d. Explain Black Codes, the Ku Klux Klan, and other forms of resistance to racial equality during Reconstruction.**

**Document Analysis 1**

**No negro or freedmen shall be allowed to come within the limits of the town of Opelousas without special permission from his employers…. Whoever breaks this law will go to jail and work for two days on the public streets, or pay a fine of five dollars. No negro or freedman shall be permitted to rent or keep a house in town under any circumstances. No negro or freedman shall live within the town who does not work for some white person or former owner. No public meetings of negroes or freedmen shall be allowed within the town. No freedman shall be allowed to carry firearms, or any kind of weapons. No freedman shall sell or exchange any article of merchandise within the limits of Opelousas without permission in writing from his employer.**

**Example of “Black Codes” from laws passed in Opelousas, Louisiana immediately after the Civil War**

**States Resist Racial Equality**

After the Radical Republicans passed the Reconstruction Act, the black codes passed under Presidential Reconstruction lost much of their power. Many southern whites, however, continued to resist giving African Americans equal rights. Some even advocated violence against freed blacks. Perhaps the most notorious group to use such tactics was the **Ku Klux Klan**. A secretive organization whose members often dressed in hooded white robes; the Klan used violence, murder, and threats to intimidate blacks and those who favored giving African Americans equal rights. The Klan practiced lynching (mob initiated murders in which the victim is kidnapped and murdered) and other acts of violence against blacks throughout the remainder of the nineteenth and much of the twentieth century. Although some of their goals and tactics have changed over time, the Ku Klux Klan continues to exist today. As Reconstruction continued, many in the South continued to grow bitter towards the Union and those who profited from Reconstruction. Among those whom southerners resented were carpetbaggers. These were northerners who came to the South to do business. Many of them were former Union officers, but others were teachers, ministers, lawyers, and so forth, southerners despised them because they saw them as people taking advantage of southern suffering to make money. They were called "carpetbaggers" because it was said that they had "stuffed some clothes into a carpet bag" and rushed south to get rich. Scalawags were another hated group. These were southern Republicans who supported Reconstruction. Southern newspapers often published their names to make sure that they suffered persecution at the hands of southern citizens and groups like the Ku Klux Klan.

**e. Analyze how the Presidential Election of 1876 marked the end of Reconstruction.**

**Presidential Election of 1876**

Immediately after the **presidential election of 1876** (between **Rutherford B. Hayes** and **Samuel Tilden),** it became clear that the outcome of the race hinged largely on disputed returns from Florida, Louisiana and South Carolina–the only three states in the South with Reconstruction-era Republican governments still in power. As a bipartisan congressional commission debated over the outcome early in 1877, allies of the Republican Party candidate Rutherford Hayes met in secret with moderate southern Democrats in order to negotiate acceptance of Hayes’ election. The Southerners agreed to help Hayes become president if Northerner withdraw all federal troops from the South, thus consolidating Democratic control over the region. Unofficially **Compromise of 1877** (or the Great Betrayal) ends Reconstruction and makes many people wonder why the Civil War was fought.