Radical Reconstruction Lesson Plan

Central Historical Question:
Why was the Radical Republican plan for Reconstruction considered “radical?”

Materials:
• Reconstruction PPT
• Copies of Thaddeus Stevens and Andrew Johnson Documents
• Copies of Radical Reconstruction Guiding Questions

Plan of Instruction:

1. Focus Activity: Show students first slide of the PPT: The ruins of Richmond, Virginia.

   Students answer accompanying questions in their notebooks:
   • Describe this photograph.
   • When and where do you think this photograph was taken?
   • What were 3 things you think people living in this setting did in the years following the photograph?

   Debrief: Explain that this is photograph taken after the Civil War in Richmond, Virginia, the capital of the Confederate States, and that today students are going to be learning about some of the major challenges that the United States faced after the Civil War.

2. Interactive Slide Lecture: The purpose of this interactive slide lecture is to briefly review the Civil War and to then highlight the major issues of Reconstruction. *Feel free to pause and lead a discussion on any of the questions in the PPT.*

   Slide 2: The Civil War:
   • Briefly explains the Civil War.
   Slide 3: Reconstruction
   • Introduces the major questions facing the nation after the Civil War.
   Slide 4: Rebuilding the South
   Slide 5: How to bring former Confederate States back into the United States.
   Slide 6: Freedmen
   • This series of slides further elaborates on questions facing the nation after the Civil War and poses questions directly to students. Students may either respond to questions in their
notebooks, orally in pairs, or together as a group in a discussion format.

• Explain to students that Reconstruction refers to the period following the Civil War between 1865-1877.
• Inform students that Lincoln was assassinated and the person who became president was Andrew Johnson, a Southerner who sympathized with the South.
• Tell students that many people in Congress opposed Johnson—they were called Radical Republicans. “Radical” means extreme, and “radicals” typically want to see extreme changes in society. In the 1860s the Radical Republicans wanted to punish the South for the Civil War and they wanted freedmen to have equal rights.
• Today, we’re going to investigate: Why was the Radical Republican plan for Reconstruction considered “radical?”

3. Hand out Thaddeus Stevens and Andrew Johnson Documents. Have students answer Guiding Questions (Sourcing questions should be answered before reading the document).

4. Review student responses. Be sure to ask students to point to evidence in the text to support their claims.

5. Discussion questions:

• What are the major differences between the Radical Republicans and Andrew Johnson?
• Which plan do you think would be more likely to unite the country after the Civil War?
• Why do you think the Radical Republican plan was considered “radical?”
• What do you predict actually happened during Reconstruction?

Citations:


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Thaddeus Stevens
Radical Republican, 1867

(Modified)

The North has the right to confiscate the land of the Southern rebels.

The cause of the war was slavery. We have freed the slaves. It is our responsibility to protect them, and help them until they are able to provide for themselves. Freed slaves should have the right to vote, but owning land is even more important.

I propose that each freed slave who is a male adult, or the head of a family, will receive forty acres of land, (with $100 to build a house).

Four million people have just been freed from slavery. They have no education, have never worked for money, and don’t know about their rights. Unless they become independent, they will have to once again become the servants of their old masters.

We must make the freed slaves independent so that their old masters can’t force them to work unfairly. This can only be done by giving them a small plot of land to farm.

Source: This speech was delivered to the United States Congress on March 19, 1867.
Before the Civil War there were 4,000,000 black people held as slaves by about 340,000 people living in the South. That is, 340,000 slave owners paid all the living expenses of the slaves. Then, the war began and the slaves were freed.

Now we come to the [Radical Republicans]. And what do they want? To spend $12,000,000 a year to build schools and find jobs for these freed slaves. We have already spent $3,000,000,000 to set them free and give them a fair chance to take care of themselves - then these [Radical Republicans] ask for $12,000,000 to help them.

Source: This campaign speech was delivered on September 3, 1866 in Cleveland, Ohio.

The Radical Republicans also want to force the South to give blacks the right to vote. The blacks have not asked for the right to vote; most of them have no idea what it means. The Southern states should not be forced to do anything they don’t want to do. To force the right to vote out of the hands of the white people and into the hands of the blacks is against the law.

Source: This speech was delivered to the United States Congress on March 2, 1867 by Andrew Johnson after he rejected a plan by the Radical Republicans that would have given freedmen the right to vote.
Guiding Questions

Thaddeus Stevens

1. (Sourcing) Thaddeus Stevens was a Radical Republican. What did Radical Republicans stand for?

2. (Close reading) Based on this document, what were three policies that the Radical Republicans proposed for Reconstruction?

3. (Context) Why might Democrats have opposed these plans?

Andrew Johnson

1. (Context) Why did Andrew Johnson oppose spending money on helping the freed slaves?

2. (Close reading) What were two reasons why Andrew Johnson opposed giving African Americans the right to vote?

On the back of this sheet or in your notebooks, write one paragraph in response to the following questions: Why was the Radical Republican plan for Reconstruction considered “radical?” Do you think it was “radical?”