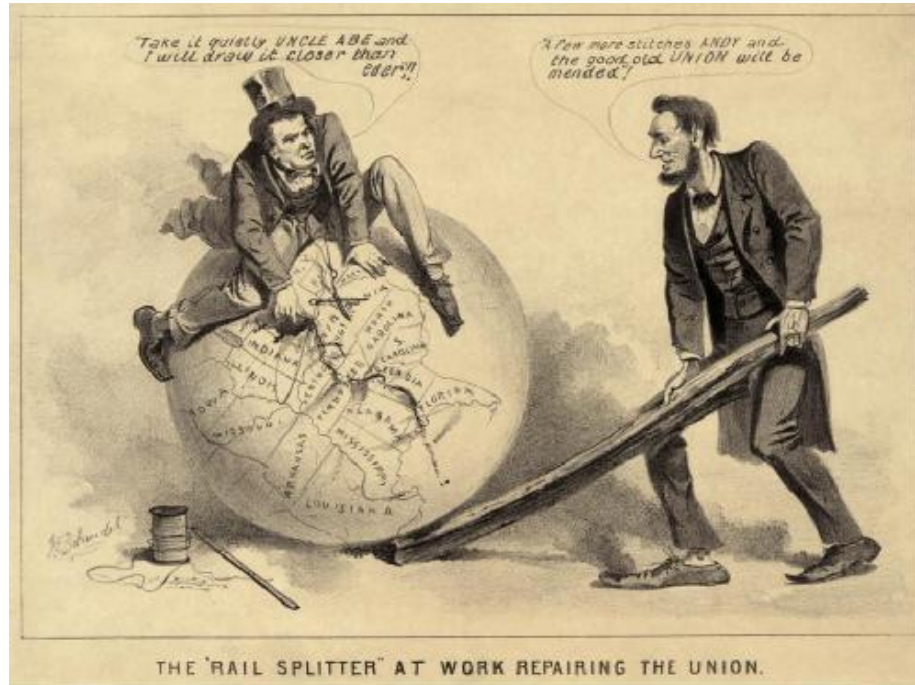


Make Your Own Reconstruction Plan!



"With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation's wounds; to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow and his orphan - to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace, among ourselves, and with all nations."

Abraham Lincoln

Source: March 4, 1865 - Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address

The Scenario

It is April 15th, 1865. The Civil War is over with 620,000 Americans dead. The South is in shambles. The economy is in disarray. President Lincoln has just been assassinated at Ford's Theater by John Wilkes Booth. Vice president Andrew Johnson, a Southern Democrat, is inaugurated. YOU and your group are members of Congress. You need to propose a **Reconstruction plan** - that is, you will need to decide how to proceed in reuniting the nation after this catastrophic civil war.

1. First of all, let's discuss the **South's secession**.

SITUATION: Some Northerners say that the Southern states never actually left the Union, so these states should be allowed back into the United States immediately. After all, didn't Lincoln wage the war based on the belief that secession was illegal? **Others say this is ridiculous, the Southern states would just re-elect the rich racists who led the country to Civil War**—the Southern states left the Union and organized a separate country, with a new constitution and president. **The 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution ended slavery forever.** However, if the South is allowed to re-enter the Union without any changes, what would stop them from passing laws that would bring back slavery under a different name? Here are some possibilities you might consider: Southern states can rejoin the Union after they ratify (approve) the 13th amendment abolishing slavery. Others say this isn't enough, that the Southern states need to create new state governments that are democratically elected by the people, including now-freed Black people. Others say that this is not the business of the federal (U.S.) government, that it's up to each state to decide who gets to vote or not. Some Northerners say that the South should be ruled as conquered territory for several more years. It's too early to even raise the question of allowing the former Confederate states back into the Union. What do you think?

A. Did secession actually make the South another country entirely (Confederate States of America), or were the states always part of the US even in rebellion? If so, **how harshly should the South be punished? What will the punishment be?**

B. Should they be "reunited" as is, or should the federal government **redraw state boundaries?**

C. **What laws will need to be passed and how will these laws be enforced?** Should the North issue a military occupation of the South and for how long? Or....should the US leave the South to "reconstruct" on their own?

2. Now, let's consider the **restoration of rights and property** in the South.

SITUATION: Right now, almost no ex-slaves in the South own any land. Legally, most ex-slaves don't even own the clothes they are wearing. All their lives they have lived and worked on plantations owned by wealthy whites. Some people argue that the legitimate owners of the Southern plantations are the freed slaves. They say that for almost 250 years, they are the ones who did all the work and made the plantations profitable—and that because of their sacrifices, rightfully the plantations should belong to them. And, remember, these white plantation owners are traitors. **They began a war that killed more than 600,000 people. Why should they get to keep the land that slaves worked on all those years? Others say that this might be the moral thing to demand, but it would be politically unwise. Ultimately, it will be Northern politicians who will be deciding your fate. Remember, like Abraham Lincoln, most of these people were never abolitionists. And now that slaves are free, they will be reluctant to take away the property of other white people to give it to Black people. For one thing, they may worry that this would set an example for poor whites in the North to take over the property of rich whites. They, too, could say that the factories were built with their labor and they should own them. Northern politicians may also worry that if ex-slaves owned the land, they might want to grow food instead of cotton, and this could have a negative impact on the Northern economy.**

A. How will the Federal government go about **rebuilding the South**? (stuff like burned municipal buildings, scorched cotton fields, torn up railroad tracks, etc).

B. How much **money will the government provide**?

C. Should Southern property rights be restored? That is, **should ex-Confederates get their plantations back**?

3. What should be done with the **leaders of Confederacy**?

SITUATION: There are still lots of Confederate (Southern) military officers and political leaders at large in the South. True, the war is over. But these are the people who actively led the slave owners' fight to keep slavery.

ARGUMENTS: Some of you argue that the top leaders should be executed or at least imprisoned for the rest of their lives. They argue that these ex-Confederate leaders are guilty of mass murder because they led an illegal war—a war that killed more than 600,000 human beings and caused great suffering. These people also argue that not only do Confederate leaders deserve to be executed because of their role in the war, but more importantly they also pose the greatest danger to your freedom. These are the people who will be desperate to return to slavery days and they have the money and leadership capabilities to organize secret armies to push you back into slavery. Others argue that if you appear to want revenge, and go after the most popular white leaders in the South that it will poison relations between Blacks and whites, and damage the long-term possibility for racial harmony. They argue that the best way to get white Southerners to rise up against you is to kill or imprison their leaders. They say that we need to put the war behind us, and that so long as you have rights and resources, you don't need to hurt anyone else.

A. Did they **commit treason, the crime of betraying one's country**?

B. Should they be **put on trial and hanged**?

C. **What should their punishment be?** (hard labor, jail time, loss of property, something else?)

4. Let's look at the **status of freed slaves, or Freedmen.**

SITUATION: Before the war, enslaved Blacks counted as 3/5 of a person in determining how many U.S. representatives a state was entitled to—even though, of course, Blacks held in slavery had no vote. **Now that slavery has ended, Blacks will be counted as full people whether or not they are allowed to vote. Ironically, if former slaves *don't* vote, this could mean that the white-controlled South could become even more powerful.**

ARGUMENTS: This is a controversial and complicated issue: Some people say only those with **land should vote**, because they are the ones who have the most stake in society and they are the most stable people. **Some argue that only people who can read should be able to vote**, because otherwise people will not vote intelligently. **Others say this sounds good, but if land ownership or literacy were qualifications for voters, then people who would be able to vote would be mostly rich white people with education.** Some argue that any **Southerner who picked up arms against the U.S. government should not be allowed to vote**—that these people proved that they were disloyal to the United States and should not now be rewarded with the vote. Besides, anyone who supported the Confederacy and slavery will now use their vote to work against your freedom. **Others believe that if you try to deny the vote to all those who supported the Confederacy that would mean taking it away from most white Southerners, and this would make it seem like you were trying to impose a Black government on the South.** Denied the vote, whites might turn to rebellion or terrorism and begin murdering Blacks. As you know, many of those who made up the abolition movement in the North were white women. They argue that now is the time to demand a Constitutional amendment that would give everyone the vote: white men, white women, Black men, Black women. Freedom and democracy is in the air, and this is the time to create a whole new society based on equality. Others say that if you demand the right for women to vote, this will make you look radical and foolish and no one will take you seriously. It will be seen as radical enough just demanding the vote for Black men, but to add women to the mix will doom your movement.

A. What will the **status of freed slaves (4 million people) be?**

B. Will all **black people be given suffrage (right to vote)?** Who else will be given suffrage?

C. What will **freed slaves do for employment?**

5. Let's discuss the **transition from slave to citizen**.

SITUATION: Most of the guns in the South are owned by whites. Many people who fought with the Confederacy still have their weapons from the war. Temporarily, the South is occupied by the Union army. Many white Southerners, probably most of them, would like nothing better than to return Blacks to slavery. There has been talk of a new organization, called the Ku Klux Klan, designed to terrorize Blacks and their white supporters, and to return the South to slavery.

ARGUMENTS: One proposal would be to keep the Union army in the South, and perhaps to even bring in more troops. Some people argue that the Confederate army might not have been able to defeat the Union army, but it would be able to defeat the newly freed Black people. Therefore the Union army will be needed for years. Others argue that the presence of Union soldiers will continue to anger white Southerners and some other solution must be found. Some argue that no Confederates should be allowed to own guns. Others counter that this would not be a solution and would continue to anger white Southerners. Some suggest that the Union army should arm Blacks, so that they can defend themselves from possible attacks from whites. Others say that more guns in the South will just lead to more violence.

A. How will the Black freedmen and women be **protected from the revenge of the defeated soldiers and from the plantation owners**?

B. What structures will need to be put in place to **ease the transition from slave to citizen**?

C. How will the **Southern society change socio-culturally** and what problems should the government anticipate?