

TEACHING AMERICAN HISTORY PROJECT

Southern Perspective on Reconstruction

Grade – 8th or 11th U.S. History

Length of class period – 47 minutes

Inquiry – (What essential question are students answering, what problem are they solving, or what decision are they making?)

- What was the Southern perspective on Reconstruction? How does it differ from the Northern perspective?

Objectives (What content and skills do you expect students to learn from this lesson?)

- Students will know and understand the perspectives of the South during Reconstruction
- Students will detect and analyze bias and racism in writings.

Materials (What primary sources or local resources are the basis for this lesson?) – (please attach)

- Confederate Military History: A Library of Confederate States History, Written by Distinguished Men of the South
- Excerpts from Recollections and Letters of General Robert E. Lee

Activities (What will you and your students do during the lesson to promote learning?)

1. Introduction – Ask students what they think the South thought about the Civil War. Write their ideas on the board. For a comparison to today, ask students how Iraqi's feel about American reconstruction? How do people who lost their home in Katrina feel about reconstruction? [4 minutes]
2. Have students read Confederate Military History. Discuss how some ex-Confederates felt about Reconstruction. [15 minutes]
3. Read Recollections and Letters of Robert E. Lee. Explain to students that not all Southerner's disliked Reconstruction. Ask students who in the South would like Reconstruction? Who would dislike it? [10 minutes]
4. Find the summary of the effects of Reconstruction in your class's textbook. Have students read this, if they have not already. [6 minutes]
5. Conclusion – Have student right a short essay on how their textbook summary of the effects of Reconstruction is different from that in Confederate Military History. [12 minutes]

How will you assess what student learned during this lesson?

The conclusion essay is an assessment of student learning.

Connecticut Framework Performance Standards -

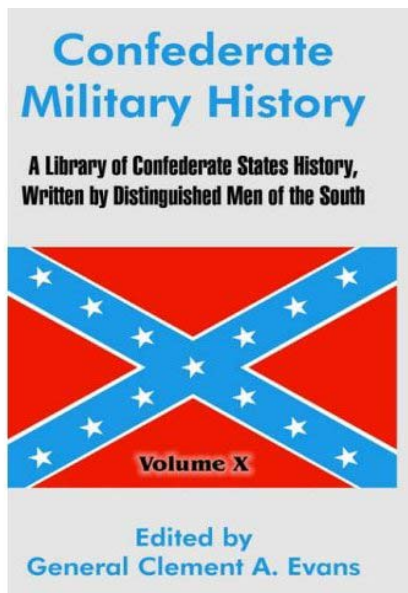
- formulate historical questions based on primary and secondary sources, including documents, eyewitness accounts, letters and diaries, artifacts, real or simulated historical sites, charts, graphs, diagrams and written texts;

- examine data to determine the adequacy and sufficiency of evidence, point of view, historical context, bias, distortion and propaganda, and to distinguish fact from opinion;

- analyze data in order to see persons and events in their historical context, understand causal factors and appreciate changeover time;

use primary source documents to analyze multiple perspectives.

Confederate Military History: A Library of Confederate States History, Written by Distinguished Men of the South



This is an excerpt from a 12 book-set titled "Confederate Military History." The books were edited by Clement A. Evans of Georgia and originally published in 1899. Evans, a veteran of the Army of Northern Virginia who rose to the rank of brigadier general before the war ended, asked prominent Southerners--many of whom were also Confederate veterans--to contribute to his project.

Part XII SUMMARY

The conduct of the true citizens of the South during the days of reconstruction surpassed in wisdom, endurance, patience, and subordination to law (military law), any traits they had displayed in the war. They never yielded moral support to the corrupt legislation surrounding them, but patiently waited for the time to come when they could act together to restore local self-government. This time came when the corrupt influences of those in power had passed beyond endurance. All thinking men now saw that there was no doubt that white civilization itself, the very existence of society, was at stake. The white people arose as one man to correct the evil. Illegal and corrupt returning boards, set up under the reconstruction law, remained only because held up on the points of the bayonets of the United States army.

The cost to the South was great, but her citizens did not repine, but began to work with a will to revoke all improper and corrupt legislation, to restore economy in public expenditures, to reduce taxation, to do away with useless offices, to make the schools efficient, and to build up the waste places.

It cannot now be a question that the policy of the Northern statesmen was a failure, and that the wisdom of Southern leaders was superior in their ideas of reconstruction. "Reconstruction accomplished not one useful result and left behind not one pleasant reflection." History will certainly condemn the legislation that entailed such misery, such corruption, such profligate expenditure of the money of an impoverished and crushed people, and in establishing negro governments at a time when the whites of the South had the best intentions of protecting the negroes in their new given freedom.

The assessed property in 1876 was about one-third of what it was in 1860. Two-thirds of the wealth of the Southern people had been swept away, and the South was helpless and bankrupt. However, as soon as the white people realized that they again had control of their

country, that the eleven years' trial of negro lawmaking and legislation was about ended, they at once went to work with a will to correct the corrupt and vicious legislation of the experiment of negro suffrage, in administering the affairs of the great States, and with heart and soul to reassert their influence and rights in the union of their fathers.

Yet they were at least able to face the future and apply their wisdom and statesmanship to the upbuilding of a new civilization, having to accept the Thirteenth, Fourteenth and Fifteenth amendments to the Constitution irrevocably, although fastened on them by the bayonet; and having negro suffrage as a fixed fact, and that, too, in face of the great burdens imposed on them in the ten years' experiment. Two races differing in almost every respect, one a governing race with a proud prestige of success, the other a docile, inexperienced, uneducated race without a record, had to live side by side with equal political power and rights.

They knew that with patriotism, patience, and fidelity and good principles, success might be assured. They were conscious that in the ordeal through which they had passed, they had preserved their self-respect and honor, and there was nothing to be ashamed of in their conduct. And they now determined to enter with courage and skill the great future before them, relying on their strong arms and hearts and on their own meager resources, for it has been shown that there were no friends at hand to aid them materially. The only friends they had politically were the Democrats at the North, and these friends had never deserted them from the time the war closed.

Source: <http://www.civilwarhome.com/summaryParXIIIi.htm>

Excerpts from Recollections and Letters of General Robert E. Lee

RECOLLECTIONS AND LETTERS
OF GENERAL ROBERT E. LEE

BY HIS SON
CAPTAIN ROBERT E. LEE

With Photogravure Portraits



New York
Doubleday, Page & Company
1905

Letter to the Wife of Jefferson Davis:

LEXINGTON, Virginia, February 23, 1866. "

My Dear Mrs. Davis: . . . I have thought, from the time of the cessation of hostilities, that silence and patience on the part of the South was the true course; and I think so still. Controversy of all kinds will, in my opinion, only serve to continue excitement and passion, and will prevent the public mind from the acknowledgment and acceptance of the truth . . . Your obedient servant,

"R. E. LEE."

Letter to Chauncey Burr

LEXINGTON, Virginia, January 5, 1866. "
MR. C. CHAUNCEY BURR. "

My Dear Sir: I am glad to know that the intelligent and respectable people at the North are true and conservative in their opinions, for I believe by no other course can the right interests of the country be maintained. All that the South has ever desired was that the Union, as established by our forefathers, should be preserved, and that the government as originally organized should be administered in purity and truth. If such is the desire of the North, there can be no contention between the two sections, and all true patriots will unite in advocating that policy which will soonest restore the country to tranquility and order, and serve to perpetuate true republicanism. Please accept my thanks for your advocacy of right and liberty and the kind sentiments which you express toward myself, and believe me to be, with great respect, "

Your obedient servant,
"R. E. LEE."