

POST-RECONSTRUCTION, MIGRATION & URBANIZATION UNIT

Was Reconstruction Successful?

LESSON OVERVIEW

Students participate in a Structured Academic Controversy to consider whether reconstruction was a success or a failure. They also examine the impact of Reconstruction on African Americans in the South.

OBJECTIVES

In this lesson, students will:

- identify and describe the multiple successes and failures of reconstruction
- describe the impact of the period of Reconstruction on African Americans

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- What were the successes and failures of Reconstruction?
- How did decisions made during Reconstruction affect African Americans during the final decades of the 19th century?

KEY CONCEPTS

- Democratic Citizenship
- Conflict

VOCABULARY

- Sharecropper
- Freedman's Bureau
- Radical Republicans
- Black Codes
- Civil Rights Bill of 1866
- 14th & 15th Amendment
- Reconstruction Act
- Controversy
- Evidence
- Consensus

GROUPING

- Small groups (4-6), mixed heterogeneously or purposefully. You may want to put more dominant "debater" students in one group.

MATERIALS

- 2.1-2.2 Round 1 Reconstruction Success or Failure Data Sheets
- 2.3-2.4 Round 2 Reconstruction Success or Failure Data Sheets
- 2.5 Success/Failure notes chart

Goal 1	Goal 2	Goal 3	Goal 4	Goal 5
Conflict	Democratic Citizenship	Historical Inquiry & Historiography	Historical Empathy	Discussion & Deliberation
X		X		X

Procedures

INTRODUCTION/HOOK

On the board or projector post the scenario:
You are president of the United States at the end of the Civil War. You are in charge of developing a plan for the Reconstruction of the South and also providing for the newly freed slave population.

What can you do to make the country united again and repair the damages of the war? How can you help African Americans gain equal status as citizens and heal the rift between white Southerners and the North?"

Have students write down ideas and then do a "Think - Pair - Share" with a partner. Ask each pair to report their best idea to the class. Write these on the board.

Now ask the students whether they can think of any reasons why their plans may or may not be successful. Is there anything that could stop them from being successful? Have the students report back from their pairs with possible hurdles or road blocks for their plan, then transition into the structured academic controversy.

Say:
Now we are going to look at the successes and failures of the Reconstruction period. There are conflicting views over whether or not Reconstruction should be called successful or a failure. We are going to examine both sides of the issue using evidence drawn from historic documents, first person accounts, and secondary historical sources.

Teacher Notes

- ✓ Encourage all possible answers here. You can go back to Lincoln vs. Johnson's plan here if you want to review.
- ✓ Encourage students to think about how white Southerners might feel after losing the war, having their economy and cities destroyed, and having their society drastically changed with the freeing of slaves. Remember that the South is now occupied. How might they react?

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Reconstruction Structured Academic Controversy

In this Structured Academic Controversy lesson, students will analyze historical sources and evaluate how effective Reconstruction was at promoting its goal of reunification and equality among the citizenry. It is intended to teach students how governmental policy is enacted and enforced. Students will begin the lesson with a review of the principle causes of the war and the reasons why it ended. After this lesson students will be able to evaluate the positive and negative short-term effects of the emancipation of slaves and Reconstruction. In addition, students will develop their ability to deliberate an issue in a respectful manner.

Group and room organization:

Before class begins arrange the desks in groups of 4 with 2 rows of 2 seats facing each other (groups up to 6 can be used with 2 rows of 3). Randomly assign students to a group. Assign each pair of students their positions: one side will take the position that Reconstruction was a success, and the pair across from them that Reconstruction was a failure. Inform students that there is no correct opinion and that there is no “winner,” and that they are to be respectful and attentive to their classmates. Provide each student with a two column chart (2.5). Instruct students to record their discussion ideas for each side on their chart.

Round 1 Positions (25 minutes):

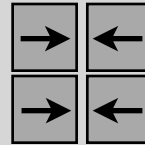
Hand out data sheets (2.1 - success, 2.2 - failure) for each side and instruct students to read and identify evidence to support their position. Ask them to write the evidence in the appropriate column on their chart. After 10 minutes have passed, students should begin discussing the document with their team mates to develop their arguments.

✓ The Structured Academic Controversy has two rounds. In round one, pairs of students use evidence from a “success” or “failure” document to get information for their side’s position. In round two pairs of students switch positions and get new information to add to the reasons for their new position.

The round one documents, 2.1 and 2.1 are more challenging to read than the second round documents, 2.3 and 2.4

✓ Desk setup for the deliberation:

Pair 1 Pair 2



Students should be sitting “knees to knees, eyeballs to eyeballs.”

✓ If you have odd numbers, you can create a group with up to six members, three on each side.

✓ It is often helpful for the teacher to keep positions consistent across groups - that is, keep all of the Yes’s on the left side and No’s on the right.

✓ If students have not done much presenting, you may want to model what it means to present evidence to support their positions.

✓ Emphasize that the goal is not to debate but to persuade the other side to agree with your position.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES (continued)

Tell them that they should pick out the best 4-5 pieces of evidence to support their position and decide who is going to present which pieces of evidence. Each student should present at least 1 piece of evidence.

Once students are prepared, announce that the students arguing that Reconstruction was a success will present their side of the issue first. They will have 3 minutes to speak (adjust times as needed).

Tell students:

Remember that your goal is to try to persuade the people across from you that you are right. Also remember to sit up, make eye contact, and speak clearly and with confidence.

After 3 minutes the opposing side will have an opportunity to ask clarifying questions (approximately one minute). The process will repeat: students will have 3 minutes to offer their statement on why Reconstruction was a failure and the opposing side will ask clarifying questions.

Round 2 Positions (25 minutes):

Tell the students that now they are going to switch sides; those who were arguing that Reconstruction was a success will now be of the position that it was a failure and vice versa.

Two new documents are presented (2.3 - success, 2.4 - failure). Students should need less time to prepare for the second round than the first. Let students know they can add evidence from the first round to their own ideas.

The same process as outlined in Round 1 will occur: students will read their articles, collaborate with their teammates to determine the best argument to support their side, clarifying questions will be asked by the opposition and answers will be provided to the best of the students' abilities.

✓ The lesson is designed so that 2.1-2.2 will be used for the first round and 2.3-2.4 for the second round. 2.1-2.2 will take more time for students to read and identify evidence. If you have students with lower reading levels or with disabilities, you may want to use the 2.3-2.4 forms for them during the first round as well. Similarly, you may want to use 2.1-2.2 in the second round for students who would benefit from a more challenging source.

✓ Have students take notes on the other side of their chart when the opposing pair presents so that they will have the information for consensus building portion of the activity.

✓ You may need to model and explain what clarifying questions are. A clarifying question is one that asks for more information or a more clear explanation of something the opposing pair presented. It should not be used to challenge what they presented.

✓ When you have students switch sides, remind the students what they are supposed to be doing and also remind them to work on presentation skills (e.g., posture, clear voice, eye contact).

LEARNING ACTIVITIES (continued)

Consensus Building / Open Discussion:

In their whole groups (all 4-6 people), students will discuss all the points made and share their opinions on whether or not they think Reconstruction was a success or a failure and why they think so. Instruct each group to develop a consensus and share with the rest of the class. This could be agreement over what the strongest pieces of evidence are or they all agree it was a success or failure. All students do not need to agree. Ask each student to submit their success/failure chart as part of the exit slip for the lesson.

DEBRIEFING

Exit Slip: Provide the following questions on the board or project them. Ask students to consider both questions and write their answers on the back of their success/failure chart.

- Was Reconstruction a success? Take a position and support it with evidence from the discussion.
- How did the Reconstruction period impact African Americans in the South? What were the successes and failures in terms of helping attain equality?

Collect their responses as they leave the classroom.

HOMEWORK

Ask students to respond to the following question:

In today's SAC, you had to take both positions on Reconstruction. You thought about why it might be considered a success and why it might be considered a failure. Why is it a good idea to think about both sides of an issue?

✓ Remind the students what it means to try to gain consensus and that this is not a debate but a chance to find and work toward an agreement about what they think about the effects of Reconstruction on the South.

✓ An exit slip is a quick assessment to see what students have learned, understood, what connections they have made, or what questions they still have. Teachers pose a question for students to answer at the end of class and have students answer in writing and turn it in as they are leaving the classroom.