

Name _____ Date _____

Reconstruction

Learn more about this topic! Each section gives more detail on one of the lyrics from the song. Read each section, and then respond by answering the question or taking notes on key ideas.

1. b'

The Emancipation Proclamation, issued by Abraham Lincoln in 1863, freed enslaved people from states in active rebellion. The Thirteenth Amendment, passed by Congress in 1865, legally abolished slavery. This amendment ended slavery throughout the United States, freeing four million Black Americans. However, these men and women faced extreme challenges to their freedom right away. In the South, many states passed laws that fined or imprisoned freedmen who did not find work. Other state laws prohibited freedmen from assembling or required them to sign yearly labor contracts. Collectively, these laws were known as Black Codes. The end of slavery also marked the end of the plantation system in the South. The sharecropping system took its place. Sharecroppers rented their land and paid the owners a portion of their crops. This new system kept many formerly enslaved peoples in debt to their former enslavers.

Notes

2. b'

The Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments are together known as the Reconstruction amendments. The Thirteenth Amendment, passed in 1865, ended slavery at the national level. In 1866, Congress sent the Fourteenth Amendment to the states for ratification. It was ratified in 1868. This amendment granted citizenship to anyone born or naturalized in the US, which included formerly enslaved people. It also provided all citizens equal protection under the law. Congress passed the Fifteenth Amendment in 1869, and it was ratified in 1870. The Fifteenth Amendment aimed to address the disenfranchisement of Black voters in the South. It stated that the right to vote cannot be denied based on a person's race.

Notes

3. b'

Notes

The Fifteenth Amendment did not solve the problem of disenfranchisement for Black voters. With literacy tests, poll taxes, and other laws, many Southern states found new ways to deny Black men the right to vote. In 1870, Georgia became the last former Confederate state to be readmitted to the Union. In 1877, Reconstruction came to an abrupt end. That year, there was a close presidential election and both candidates claimed to have won. It is reported that Republicans and Democrats made a compromise. Republicans agreed to withdraw federal troops from the South in exchange for the presidency. Rutherford B. Hayes became the President of the United States. Civil rights for Black Americans would gain national attention again, but not for several decades.

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