

Name _____

Date _____



Reconstruction

The Reconstruction Amendments

The American Civil War, the bloodiest war in United States history, was fought between 1861 and 1865. The war ended when General Robert E. Lee surrendered to General Ulysses S. Grant on April 9, 1865.

Finally peace,
After so many years of death and bloodshed in the streets.
The Confederacy finally bent at the knee
And surrendered to the North reluctantly.
But would the North and the South just suddenly
Be best friends? It wasn't meant to be.
1865, war may have been over,
But down south, it's like they were hit with a boulder.
Congress had barely passed the
13th Amendment to the United States Constitution,
Which legally abolished slavery,
But what would these newly freed people be?
Down south, Lincoln set up the Freedmen's Bureau
To help them get school, food, medicine and clothes.
But many white Southerners resented
The North's aggression, plus they intended
To keep freed blacks the lowest class,
Keep them uneducated, poor and powerless.
After Lincoln's assassination, Johnson was leading,
His approach to the South was a lot more lenient.
The South set up Black Codes, laws to keep the black folk
Tied to a farm, digging fields, no backhoe.
Blacks needed permission to travel or get work,

It was slavery dressed up in a new shirt.

13th, 14th, 15th Amendments,

Gave black folks a little independence.

They freed the slaves and made them citizens

And said all races can vote, they were significant.

(2x)

Now Radical Republicans from the North

Weren't trying to let the South reset the course.

They passed the 14th Amendment which

Gave the freed slaves citizenship.

Yeah, the law was pointing in the South's direction,

It gave freed slaves the law's protection.

It includes the Equal Protection Clause:

States must provide equal protection under law.

And Congress took control of Southern state legislatures,

And sent Northerners to fill seats in their chambers.

These so-called carpetbaggers made sure

That Southern states didn't pass laws like before.

And 16 black representatives were sent to Congress,

It seemed to black folk like some progress.

Then in 1870, the country ratified

The 15th Amendment to the Constitution

Says men have the right to vote, no matter their race,

No matter their skin tone or if they were a slave.

Though black men now had the right to vote,

Were Southern states about to let that happen? No.

They came up with racist voting laws and poll taxes

And literacy tests, all designed to stop blacks from

Voting—they were disenfranchised, OK,

And the struggle for equal rights persists today.

13th, 14th, 15th Amendments,

Gave black folks a little independence.

They freed the slaves and made them citizens

And said all races can vote, they were significant.

(2x)