

# ESSENTIAL CIVIL WAR CURRICULUM

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## Reconstruction

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### Resources

**If you can read only one book**

Author	<i>Title</i> . City: Publisher, Year.
Foner, Eric	<i>Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877</i> . New York: Harper & Row, 1988.

### Books and Articles

Author	<i>Title</i> . City: Publisher, Year.   "Title," in <i>Journal</i> ##, no. # (Date): #.
Baker, Bruce E.	<i>What Reconstruction Meant: Historical Memory in the American South</i> . Charlottesville & London: University of Virginia Press, 2007.
Baker, Bruce E. & Brian Kelly, ed.	<i>After Slavery: Race, Labor, and Citizenship in the Reconstruction South</i> . Afterward by Eric Foner. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2013.
Brandwein, Pamela	<i>Rethinking the Judicial Settlement of Reconstruction</i> . Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011.
Brown, Thomas J., ed.	<i>Reconstructions: New Perspectives on the Postbellum United States</i> . Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 2006.
Carter, Dan T.	<i>When the War Was Over: Failure of Self-Reconstruction in the South, 1865-1867</i> . Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1985.

Cooper, Frederick, Thomas C. Holt, & Rebecca J. Scott	<i>Beyond Slavery: Explorations of Race, Labor and Citizenship in Postemancipation Societies.</i> Chapel Hill & London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000.
Downs, Gregory P. and Kate Masur	<i>The World the Civil War Made.</i> Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2015.
Du Bois, W. E. B.	<i>Black Reconstruction in America, 1860-1880.</i> New York, London, Toronto & Sydney: The Free Press, 1998 [1935].
Foner, Eric	<i>The Second Founding: How the Civil War and Reconstruction Remade the Constitution.</i> New York & London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2019.
Green, Hilary	<i>Educational Reconstruction: African American Schools in the Urban South, 1865-1890.</i> New York: Fordham University Press, 2016.
Hahn, Steven	<i>A Nation Under Our Feet: Black Political Struggles in the Rural South From Slavery to the Great Migration.</i> Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2003.
Holt, Thomas C.	<i>Black Over White: Negro Political Leadership in South Carolina during Reconstruction.</i> Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1977.
Hunter, Tera W.	<i>To 'Joy My Freedom: Southern Black Women's Lives and Labors After the Civil War.</i> Cambridge, MA & London: Harvard University Press: 1997.
Parsons, Elaine Frantz	<i>Ku-Klux: The Birth of the Klan during Reconstruction.</i> Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2015.
Prince, K. Stephen	<i>Stories of the South: Race and the Reconstruction of Southern Identity, 1865-1915.</i> Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2014.
Rable, George C.	<i>But There Was No Peace: The Role of Violence in the Politics of Reconstruction.</i> Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1984.
Rosen, Hannah	<i>Terror in the Heart of Freedom: Citizenship, Sexual Violence, and the Meaning of Race in the Postemancipation South.</i> Chapel Hill: University of North

	Carolina Press, 2009.
Summers, Mark Wahlgren	<i>A Dangerous Stir: Fear, Paranoia, and the Making of Reconstruction</i> . Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010.
_____.	<i>The Ordeal of Reunion: A New History of Reconstruction</i> . Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2014.
Trelease, Allen W.	<i>White Terror: The Ku Klux Klan Conspiracy and Southern Reconstruction</i> . Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1971.
Vandal, Gilles	<i>Rethinking Southern Violence: Homicides in Post-Civil War Louisiana, 1866-1884</i> . Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2000.
White, Richard	<i>The Republic For Which It Stands: The United States during Reconstruction and the Gilded Age, 1865-1896</i> . New York: Oxford University Press, 2017.
Williams, Heather Andrea	<i>Help Me to Find My People: The African American Search for Family Lost in Slavery</i> . Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2012.
Williams, Kidada E.	<i>I Saw Death Coming: A History of Terror and Survival in the War against Reconstruction</i> . New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2023.

## Organizations

Organization Name	Description, Contact information including address, email
Reconstruction Era National Historical Park, South Carolina.	The National Park Service reconstruction Era National Historical Park is located in and around Beaufort, South Carolina. It was first established as the Reconstruction Era National Monument in 2017 and redesignated a national historical park in 2019. It offers programs and services meant to enhance understanding of the Reconstruction era. Their website is: <a href="https://www.nps.gov/reer/index.htm">https://www.nps.gov/reer/index.htm</a>

## Web Resources

URL	Name and description
<a href="https://www.pbs.org/show/reconstruction-america-after-civil-war/">https://www.pbs.org/show/reconstruction-america-after-civil-war/</a>	<i>Reconstruction: America After the Civil War</i> , 2019 offers videos relating to the Reconstruction era.
<a href="https://coloredconventions.org/">https://coloredconventions.org/</a>	The Colored Conventions Project (CCP) is a scholarly and community research project dedicated to bringing the seven decades-long history of nineteenth-century Black organizing to digital life.

## Other Sources

### Scholars

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Bradley D. Proctor	<a href="mailto:proctorb@evergreen.edu">proctorb@evergreen.edu</a>

## Topic Précis

Reconstruction, both a time period after the War and a process of recovery, was a time of fear and paranoia. The defeat of the Confederacy established that secession was illegitimate but did not answer the question of what was to become of the Confederate states and what freedom would mean for former African American slaves. Answering these two questions led to escalating conflicts between individual people, between southern states and the federal government, and between the president and Congress. Southern state governments began to be formed in late 1865 under lenient policies of President Johnson, controlled by the same white southerners who had been leaders in the antebellum period and they sought to recreate the pre-war caste system, albeit without slavery, by passing Black Codes restricting Black rights. At the same time former slaves were trying to actualize their freedom with political associations, labor contracts and education while white southerners began campaigns of violence both individually and through organized vigilante groups like the Klan. In the face of Johnson’s leniency and the rising suppression in the south, Congress passed a series of acts in 1866 and 1867 aiming to seize control of reconstruction including the Civil Rights act of 1866, the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment and the Military Reconstruction Acts. What came to be called Radical Reconstruction started in the spring of 1867. In constitutional convention elections in the south in 1867-1868 Republican candidates, black and white saw sweeping victories. The immediate accomplishments of Radical Reconstruction remain astounding. They were unprecedented both in terms of what

Americans might have expected a few years before as well as unprecedented in terms of human history. Never before, and perhaps never since, had so many people denied legal personhood gained immediate political and civil rights. Most African American men went from enslavement to political power in a span of three to four years. The opportunity to enfranchise women as part of reconstruction was not taken as most Republican men did not support political rights for women.

The high-water mark for reconstruction was 1868 when Congress' control of the process led to electoral success. Increasing violence and repressive laws gradually eroded the gains. In the debates in Congress in 1871 Republicans saw vigilante violence, fraud, and disfranchisement of blacks by white southerners and Democrats believed that Republicans were exaggerating the violence in order to expand the authority of the federal government to make Grant a despot and to destroy the independence of southern states. In 1870 and 1871 Congress passed a series of acts known as the Enforcement Acts to suppress organizations like the Klan and sent federal troops and marshals to protect African American. Then in the Panic of 1873 a depression resulted in political backlash against Republicans in the North and West and eroded the party's ability to support interracial politics in the south. A new wave of white supremacist violence in the south worsened the situation. The Grant administration tried to counter the violence, passing a new Civil Rights Act in 1875, but by 1876 Republicans were in power in only three southern states and the Supreme Court had begun to dismantle the government's ability to protect interracial democracy with the Slaughterhouse Cases and *Cruikshank*. In 1883 the Court demolished the Civil Rights Act of 1875 in the Civil Rights Cases and further supported segregation in *Plessy v Ferguson* in 1896. After 1876 black disenfranchisement grew and the Jim Crow era was ushered in during the 1890s, not fully dismantled until the Civil Rights eras of the 1960s.

Over time the historiography of Reconstruction has changed. The Dunning School from the 1880s to the 1920s during the height of Jim Crow saw Reconstruction as a process whereby that white Northerners had dominated the South by enfranchising African American men—a move they framed as unwise and even immoral—establishing corrupt regimes that oppressed conservative white men. Black historians began deconstructing the Dunning School in the early twentieth century but were largely ignored by white historians until W.E.B. Dubois published his study in 1935. In the latter half of the twentieth century historians reversed the Dunning School's equation and asserted that Reconstruction was a revolution in political equality and democratic opportunity that failed because of racism. Later some historians argued for an understanding that situates Reconstruction as a more moderate process of reintegration of the seceded states that was accomplished through a cultural reconciliation. Scholars still have many questions about Reconstruction. In what places are its myriad conflicts best analyzed: North, South, East, West; local or regional or national? Should Reconstruction be considered a radical expansion of the federal state's power, or should we emphasize the ways the federal government was unable to solve the problems of violence and white supremacy? Should Reconstruction be seen as a failure because of the erosion of civil, political, and social rights for African Americans as thousands of Americans were murdered because they supported a more equitable and democratic world? Or should we remember Reconstruction as a compromise: a conclusion of the Civil War that preserved the sovereignty of the United States, established the

primacy of the federal government, and established new constitutional guarantees of racial equality?

Reconstruction might best be understood as a series of escalating crises at national and local levels. As Reconstruction unfolded, different groups of people expressed conflicting ideas about politics, economics, race, and gender. Reconstruction resulted in revolutionary constitutional changes in the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments. These amendments radically and permanently changed who belonged as citizens of the United States. Virtually all anti-discrimination and pro-democratic legal efforts since have been grounded in the struggles of Reconstruction to make freedom real for African Americans. Violence, political disfranchisement, and social and economic oppression left deep racial disparities in health and wealth. Reconstruction's political, racial, and economic conflicts reverberate today throughout the United States.

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