

Reconstruction

Lesson 1

This lesson will introduce the main ideas of Reconstruction and examine the events that took place as the Civil War came to a close. Students will identify the problems facing the nation at this time, and evaluate different plans for dealing with these challenges.

- **Hook:** Have students respond to the following writing prompt, in order to get students thinking about Americans' feelings at the end of the Civil War. "Imagine that you have two sons. Your older son has been bullying and fighting your younger son. The older son says he is upset because the younger son gets more attention. You punish your son, and he responds by running away from home. Before he leaves, he steals \$500 from you. What would you do when your son returns? Would you punish him harshly so he won't do it again, or be lenient with him if he promises not to do it again? Explain your choice." After students have written their responses, give them an opportunity to share and have a class discussion. Explain to students the connection to how American leaders had to decide if the South should be punished for the Civil War.
- Show students images of life in the U.S. in the immediate aftermath of the Civil War. As they look at the images, have them brainstorm a list of problems that the U.S. faced. Images include: the destruction of the South, the newly emancipated slaves, the assassination of Abraham Lincoln, and violence toward the freedmen. Encourage students to think about what problems might be caused by these events. After students have brainstormed, have them share their lists. Make one large list on poster paper. This can be referred back to throughout the unit to remind students of the many challenges facing the nation.
- Introduce Lincoln's plan of peaceful and forgiving reunification for the nation. Johnson's continuation of this plan can also be introduced here. A short textbook reading might be useful to set the scene. Then have students work together in pairs to make a pro/con list for the Presidential Reconstruction plan. Have them think about how the following groups would respond to this plan: former Confederates, other Southerners, Northerners, and freedmen. Have students share their responses and lead a class discussion about the merits and weaknesses of this approach to Reconstruction.
- **Wrap Up:** Have the students look again at the images of life at the end of the Civil War. Have them answer these questions:
 - Pick an image that shows a problem that you think would be improved by the President's plan. Explain why the plan will help.
 - Pick an image that shows a problem that will be made worse by the President's plan. Explain why.

Materials for Lesson 1

Images of the aftermath of the Civil War. These images are from the American Memory section of the Library of Congress website. Bibliographic information is included in the links if not otherwise noted.

- President Lincoln's funeral procession

[http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/i?ammem/cwar:@field\(NUMBER+](http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/i?ammem/cwar:@field(NUMBER+)