

Primary Source Set

President Andrew Johnson's First Annual Message, 1865

Guiding Question

- How did Lincoln and Johnson's plans for Reconstruction differ from congressional Reconstruction?

Objectives

- ☐ I can explore the best way for a country to heal after a civil war.
- ☐ I can assess President Johnson's goals for Reconstruction.

Background Information

In April 1865, just as the Civil War was nearing an end, Republican President Lincoln was tragically assassinated. His successor was Vice President Andrew Johnson, who was a Democrat from Tennessee but had remained loyal to the Union and did not join his home state in secession. However, Johnson had a very different plan for how to handle Reconstruction than Lincoln, which would lead to significant clashes with Radical Republicans in Congress during his time in office.

President Andrew Johnson's First Annual Message, 1865

Text	Vocabulary and Context
I found the [Southern] States suffering from the effects of a civil war. Resistance to the General Government appeared to have exhausted itself... Now military governments, established for an indefinite period, would have offered no security for the early suppression of discontent, would have divided the people into the vanquishers and the vanquished,	<i>Johnson argues that when he took office near the end of the Civil War, the Southern states were in immense toil and hardly resisting Union military advances.</i> <i>Radical Republicans in Congress believed that Union military governments needed to be established in states that had seceded in</i>

and would have envenomed hatred rather than have restored affection.	<i>order to punish the Confederacy and to ensure the rights of free Blacks were protected. Johnson argued that military governments would only continue sectional tensions rather than heal the country.</i> envenomed- to increase hostility
I have acted...restore the rightful energy of the General Government and of the States. To that end provisional governors have been appointed for the States, conventions called, governors elected, legislatures assembled, and Senators and Representatives chosen to the Congress of the United States. At the same time the courts of the United States, as far as could be done, have been reopened, so that the laws of the United States may be enforced through their agency...	<i>Johnson states that he has attempted to reopen and restore governments to operate as they had before the Civil War. Radical Republicans believed significant changes needed to be made, including punishing Southern leaders and preventing them from holding office. Johnson used his executive power to pardon high-level Confederate leaders.</i>
[E]very danger of conflict is avoided when the settlement of the question is referred to the several States. They can, each for itself, decide on the measure, and whether it is to be adopted at once and absolutely or introduced gradually and with conditions.... after the close of the war, it is not competent for the General Government to extend the elective franchise in the several States...	<i>Johnson wished to allow Southern states to return back to governing themselves in as many ways as possible, including determining who could vote. He criticized Radical Republicans who wanted a constitutional amendment that would require Southern states to allow Black men to vote.</i> competent- proper

[G]ood faith requires the security of the freedmen in their liberty and their property, their right to labor, and their right to claim the just return of their labor. I can not too strongly urge a dispassionate treatment of this subject, which should be carefully kept aloof from all party strife....	dispassionate- rational; well-reasoned
It is one of the greatest acts on record to have brought 4,000,000 people into freedom. The career of free industry must be fairly opened to them, and then their future prosperity and condition must, after all, rest mainly on themselves. If they fail, and so perish away, let us be careful that the failure shall not be attributable to any denial of justice...	

Reading Comprehension Questions

1. In your own words, explain why President Johnson was opposed to setting up military governments to rule in the South.
2. Why does Johnson believe that the states should be the ones to determine if Black men should vote or not?
3. How does Johnson believe freedmen should be treated under the law?
4. How does he believe any lack of economic or social success for them should be viewed?
5. Complete the VIEW document analysis organizer.

