

The Story of Reconstruction

Option A

Lexile: 1130
Word Count: 602

Vocabulary

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|-----------|---------------|----------------|---------------|
| ▶ whereof | ▶ lenient | ▶ servitude | ▶ duly |
| ▶ malice | ▶ involuntary | ▶ proclamation | ▶ assassinate |

During the Civil War, President Lincoln fought to keep the United States together and ensure freedom for all Americans. After the Southern states left the Union when Lincoln was elected in 1860, he led the country in a fight to bring them back. During the war, in 1863, Lincoln used his power as president to issue the Emancipation Proclamation, which helped weaken the South by freeing slaves there. After the war ended, several changes were made to the Constitution to safeguard African American's basic rights as citizens.

On March 4, 1865, President Lincoln gave his Second Inaugural Address. In this speech, he spoke about reuniting with the South in a peaceful way and hoped both sides would support equal rights for everyone. He said,

“With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation's wounds...to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and a lasting peace, among ourselves, and with all nations”

malice- desire to harm

strive- make great efforts

cherish- hold dear, protect

(Abraham Lincoln, “Second Inaugural Address,” March 4, 1865).

Lincoln and the Republican Party wanted to end slavery permanently through a constitutional amendment for several reasons. They wanted it to become a permanent law, and they knew Lincoln's power over slavery would end when the war was over. They also worried that the Emancipation Proclamation might be challenged in court. Even if it survived, the proclamation didn't affect slavery in states like Kentucky, Missouri, and Delaware. Only changing the Constitution could completely end slavery, though this would be difficult because it required strong support from both Congress and the states.

In April 1864, the Senate passed the amendment to end slavery, but it failed to get enough votes in the House of Representatives. When Lincoln ran for president again in 1864, he made sure the Republican Party supported the amendment. After winning the election, he worked hard to get more support for it. On January 31, 1865, the House finally passed the amendment by just three votes.

The Thirteenth Amendment states:

“Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction”

whereof the party- of which the person

duly convicted- found guilty through due process

(The United States Constitution, Thirteenth Amendment, 1865).

The amendment was finally ratified on December 6, 1865, months after Lincoln's death.

The Civil War cost more than 600,000 lives, but it finally brought freedom to African Americans as promised in the Declaration of Independence. However, there was still much work to be done before they would have full equality under the law.

After Lincoln was assassinated on April 14, 1865, the country struggled with how to bring the South back into the Union. Lincoln had wanted a moderate approach, but after his death, President Johnson and Congress fought over different plans. Johnson wanted to be lenient with the South, while Republican leaders in Congress wanted stricter rules.

Even as states were approving the Thirteenth Amendment, Southern states were passing laws called 'Black Codes' that severely limited the rights of freed slaves. Congress then passed the Fourteenth Amendment in 1868, which made African Americans citizens and promised them equal protection under the law. The Fifteenth Amendment followed in 1870, giving African Americans the right to vote.

Despite these new laws, African Americans still faced many challenges. Southern states found ways to stop them from voting through things like poll taxes and literacy tests. They also faced violence from groups like the Ku Klux Klan, unfair farming practices that kept them in debt, and laws that separated them from white people. It would take almost another hundred years, until the Civil Rights Act of 1964, for African Americans to gain more equal treatment under the law.



Secession and the Start of the Civil War

Option B

Lexile: 1060
Word Count: 601

Vocabulary

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| ▶ firmness | ▶ harshly | ▶ rebuilding | ▶ proclamation |
| ▶ assassin | ▶ lasting | ▶ kind | ▶ surrender |

During the Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln worked hard to keep the American republic and Union together so that all Americans could have freedom and equality. When Lincoln was elected in 1860, the South wanted to leave the country, but he fought to keep the nation together. He also worked to end slavery, and in 1863 he issued the Emancipation Proclamation to help weaken the South. After the war, several changes were made to the Constitution to give African Americans more rights.

On March 4, 1865, Lincoln gave his Second Inaugural Address. In this speech, he was kind toward the South and wanted to bring the country back together. He hoped everyone would support equal rights for all Americans. He said,

“With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation’s wounds... to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and a lasting peace, among ourselves, and with all nations”

malice- desire to harm

strive- make great efforts

cherish- hold dear, protect

(Abraham Lincoln, “Second Inaugural Address,” March 4, 1865).

Lincoln and the Republicans in Congress wanted to make slavery illegal according to the Constitution for several reasons. First, they wanted it to be a permanent law. Second, Lincoln's power over slavery would end when the war was over. Third, people might challenge the Emancipation Proclamation in court. Fourth, even with the proclamation, slavery would still exist in some states. Only changing the Constitution would completely end slavery in America, but this would be difficult because it needed many votes from Congress and the states. In early 1864, the Senate passed the amendment to end slavery, but it failed to get enough votes in the House of Representatives.

Later that year, Lincoln announced he would run for president again. He won and quickly tried to get support for the amendment. He told Congress that his election victory meant people wanted this change.

Early in 1865, after much debate and political deals, the House finally passed the amendment by just three votes. Lincoln's home state of Illinois approved it the next day, and many other states followed. On December 6, 1865, after Lincoln had died, enough states had approved it to make it law.

The Thirteenth Amendment says:

“Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction”

whereof the party- of which the person

duly convicted- found guilty through due process

(The United States Constitution, Thirteenth Amendment, 1865).

After more than 600,000 deaths in the Civil War, African Americans finally had the freedom promised in the Declaration of Independence. Slavery was gone, but there was still much work needed before African Americans would have full equality.

Lincoln lived to see the South surrender but was killed by an assassin on April 14, 1865. His death made things uncertain for the country's rebuilding, known now as Reconstruction. Lincoln had wanted a moderate plan where only ten percent of Southerners needed to promise loyalty to rejoin the Union. But some Republicans in Congress wanted to punish the South more harshly before they could come back. After Lincoln died, President Johnson made an even easier plan for the South, which only made things worse.

While states were approving the Thirteenth Amendment, Southern states were making new laws that limited freed slaves' rights. Congress and President Johnson fought over how to handle Reconstruction, and Johnson kept blocking laws that would help African Americans. Congress and States passed more amendments to protect Black rights, but Southern states found ways around these laws using things like voting taxes and literacy tests. African Americans faced many problems including debt, violence from groups like the Ku Klux Klan, and laws that kept races separate. It would take almost 100 years, until the Civil Rights Act of 1964, for African Americans to win more equal rights.

