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Unit Overview

The end of the Civil War marked a significant turning point in American history as the nation faced the task of rebuilding the Union and integrating millions of newly freed individuals into civic life. Unit 10 begins by examining the challenges left in the wake of the conflict—damaged infrastructure, economic instability, and the need to establish new social and political systems in the former Confederate states. Students analyze how the federal government responded through various Reconstruction plans, including Lincoln’s Ten Percent Plan, Johnson’s Presidential Reconstruction approach, and the Congressional Reconstruction policies that followed. These lessons help students consider how governments attempt to restore stability and address national challenges after major conflict.

The unit then turns to the Reconstruction Amendments—the 13th, 14th, and 15th—which expanded civil rights protections and redefined citizenship in the United States. Students examine how these amendments sought to secure freedom, rights, and political participation for African Americans. Lessons explore the Freedmen’s Bureau, the election of Hiram Rhodes Revels to the U.S. Senate, and the increased civic involvement among African Americans during this period. Students also study the federal and state-level debates surrounding these changes, noting differing perspectives on how Reconstruction should proceed and how rights should be implemented and protected.

As Reconstruction progressed, students analyze how some states enacted laws and practices—such as Black Codes, poll taxes, literacy tests, and segregation statutes—that limited the full exercise of newly established rights. They study historical examples of violence and intimidation carried out by individuals and groups, including the Ku Klux Klan, as well as the legal and political responses that followed. By engaging with primary sources, images, and historical case studies, students consider how various systems and local policies affected the lives of Americans during and after Reconstruction.

The unit concludes by having students synthesize the political, social, and economic outcomes of Reconstruction. They evaluate both the achievements—such as expanded citizenship and constitutional protections—and the challenges that emerged as federal oversight declined and new state-level systems were established. Ultimately, Unit 10 encourages students to understand Reconstruction as a period of significant change whose outcomes shaped the nation’s development and informed later conversations about rights, civic participation, and equality under the law.

CONTENT STANDARDS -

Reconstruction		Connected Knowledge and Skills 8.7, 8.8, 8.16, 8.19, 8.26
8.9 History. The student understands the effects of Reconstruction on the political, economic, and social life of the nation.		
STAAR	Readiness Standards	Supporting Standards
3-4 items	8.1(A)^ identify the major eras in U.S. history through 1877, including ... Reconstruction, and describe their causes and effects	8.7(B) compare the effects of political, economic, and social factors on slaves and free blacks
	8.8(B) explain significant events of the Civil War, including ... the assassination of Abraham Lincoln	8.9(A) evaluate legislative reform programs of the Radical Reconstruction Congress and reconstructed state governments
	8.9(C) explain the economic, political, and social problems during Reconstruction and evaluate their impact on different groups	8.9(B) explain the impact of the election of African Americans from the South such as Hiram Rhodes Revels
	8.10(B)^ compare places and regions of the United States in terms of physical and human characteristics	8.21(A)^ identify different points of view of political parties and interest groups on important historical issues
	8.10(C)^ analyze the effects of physical and human geographic factors such as ... transportation, and communication on major historical events in the United States	8.21(C)^ summarize historical events in which compromise resulted in a resolution ...
	8.16(A) summarize the purposes for amending the U.S. Constitution	8.23(D)^ analyze the contributions of people of various racial, ethnic, and religious groups to our national identity
	8.16(B) describe the impact of the 13th, 14th, and 15th amendments	8.26(B) analyze the relationship between fine arts and continuity and change in the American way of life
	8.19(A) define and give examples of unalienable rights	

UNDERSTANDINGS, QUESTIONS

Enduring Understanding	Vocabulary of the Topic			
The Reconstruction Era was a time of change and turmoil for the South, which ultimately resulted in legal but not practical freedom for African-Americans.	Amendment	Poll	Suffrage	Black Codes
	Radical	Literacy	Enfranchisem	Poll
	Impeachment	Equality	ent	Literacy
	Reconstruction	Amnesty	Terrorism	Terrorism
	Suppression	Pardon	White	Ku Klux Klan
	Oppression	Oath	supremacist	Sharecropping
	Emancipation	Bureau	Communal	Tenant farmers
	Freedmen	Civil Rights	Assimilation	Jim Crow Laws
				Landmark case

Guiding Questions:

- How did the South change during Reconstruction?
- How did life for African-Americans change during Reconstruction?
- What were the political forces motivating developments of the Reconstruction Era?
- How did Reconstruction change our Constitution?
- Why were power structures largely unchanged by the end of Reconstruction?
- Why did Reconstruction end?
- What is the legacy of Reconstruction?

Unit 10 At-A-Glance

Lesson 01

The Aftermath of War: Setting the Scene for Reconstruction

Lesson 02

Competing Plans for Reconstruction

Lesson 03

The 13th Amendment and the Freeman's Bureau

Lesson 04

The 14th Amendment and the Black Codes

Lesson 05

15th Amendment and Hiram Rhodes Revels

Lesson 06

[2 - Day Lesson] Losing Ground: Black Codes, Poll Taxes, Literacy Tests and the

Lesson 07

KKK

Lesson 08

End of Reconstruction: Sharecropping, Jim Crow Laws & Plessy vs. Ferguson

FLEX DAY

Unit 10 Exam