

Primary Source Set 6

Reconstruction in Georgia

Georgia Standards of Excellence

- SS8H6: Impact of Reconstruction on Georgia
- Information Processing Skills: 4, 6, 10, 11, 15
- Reading Standard of Literacy in History/Social Studies (RHSS) Grades 6-8: L6-8RHSS1, L6-8RHSS2, L6-8RHSS4, L6-8RHSS5, L6-8RHSS6, L6-8RHSS7, L6-8RHSS8, L6-8RHSS9.

Historical Context

Under President Andrew Johnson, Reconstruction, or the restoration of the seceded states to the United States of America, began. In May of 1865, Johnson issued a proclamation of pardon to nearly all those engaged in the war. The 13th Amendment to the United States Constitution prohibiting slavery in the United States was ratified, the war debt declared null and void, and the Freedman's Bureau was established to help former slaves transition to freedom. The United States Congress thought the President was being too lenient with the former Confederate states. Some leaders considered the South conquered territory and denied southern representatives their seats. Congress made several new laws to protect the freed slaves, including the 14th Amendment, which guaranteed all African Americans full citizenship. Congressional Reconstruction policies were not easily accepted by many of the white citizens, leading to resentment, resistance, and sometimes violence. Some examples include the expelling of African-American legislators in 1868 and the Camilla massacre the same year. This period also saw the rise of the Ku Klux Klan. Georgia was not readmitted into the Union until July of 1871 after the reinstatement of federal military rule and the passage of the 15th amendment. Although federal troops left Georgia in 1871, Reconstruction was considered officially over in 1877 with the passage of a new constitution for Georgia and the removal of federal troops from all southern states. The National Council for the Social Studies has developed ten themes to create national social studies standards. Theme two is titled "Time, Continuity, and Change." This is a very broad theme and deals with a student's ability to interpret events in the past through research, investigation, and other forms of inquiry. This theme provides an excellent framework to study Georgia during the Reconstruction and New South era. Through this framework, students can investigate how life in Georgia both changed and remained unchanged after the Civil War. For example, the students could study Georgia's economy through the lens of continuity and change. Students might find that there was a greater emphasis on industry in the south after the Civil War but agricultural products

like cotton remained the staple of the southern economy. Students could also conclude that while African Americans gained freedoms from the 13th, 14th, and 15th amendments, these rights were negated by Jim Crow policies.

Primary Sources

Primary sources of the Reconstruction period allow teachers and students to see into an often skimmed over moment in history. This decade or so following the Civil War was an unprecedented time in political history, bringing black southerners, many of whom were enslaved only years earlier, to local, state, and national offices. Moreover, the technological innovations of the 19th century allow students to see photographs commemorating progress, such as black politicians, as well as mementos, such as the Confederate Seal below, glorifying the Old South of antebellum and the Confederacy. The primary sources below will bring Reconstruction alive and demonstrate the importance of the years immediately following the Civil War. For a few helpful hints about working with primary sources, check out Sophia's Schoolhouse lesson, [5 Practical Methods for Primary Source Inquiry](#).

Confederate seal, 1873 link [this](#).

This is a silver seal with a horse and rider in the center, surrounded by a wreath of grain, which is then encircled by the inscription "The Confederate States of America : 22 February 1862, Deo Vindice" The seal is mounted in a leatherette case with velvet lining a plastic cover over the seal. This Confederate seal was produced as a fundraiser for the widows and orphans of the Confederacy. The seal commemorates the election of Jefferson Davis, the only president of the Confederate States of America. What does it mean that after the war, Southerners were still celebrating an extinct government? What does this say for the success of Reconstruction and the new Union?

William Jones Pardon, 1865

William Jones was a planter in Columbia County, Georgia. Following the Civil War, Jones was pardoned by President Andrew Johnson on August 25, 1865. On December 5, 1865, Jones took an amnesty oath pledging to support and abide by the Constitution of the United States. This pledge was required for anyone who wished to vote or participate in the Reconstruction government. From this record, students can better understand Reconstruction policies under President Andrew Johnson specifically and the effects of war more generally. Students can discuss why pardons were given, why an oath was required, and how these policies were likely received by different groups. What opinion did some Republicans in Congress have of the pardons? Was it easy for the former Confederate soldiers to sign the oath? How might the roles of victor, enemy, and loser be different in a civil war versus a war between foreign states?

First Colored Senator and Representatives

This group portrait shows the first African-American congressmen to serve in the United States Congress. During Reconstruction, Republicans gained the upper hand in Georgia politics, and African Americans served in Congress at both the state and national level. Thirty-two African Americans were elected to the Georgia Assembly in 1868. Standing in the back on the right side is Jefferson Long, Georgia's first African-American senator. At Reconstruction's end, Democrats gained control of political power and an African American would not represent Georgia in Congress again until Andrew Young in 1972. Not only does this primary source provide an interesting visual for students to engage with, but it also provides an opportunity for historical inquiry in the classroom. As with all visual sources, students should pay careful attention to the title and caption information provided. Students could be asked what they can learn from the title. Students may need to do some investigating to discover what years the 41st and 42nd Congress was held. Students could also be asked what they find interesting about what states the congressmen hail from. Does this raise any questions? The caption information also provides an opportunity to discuss the Library of Congress with students. Why would this image be stored at the Library of Congress? From this image, students may be prompted to investigate the history of African Americans serving in Congress. There are several great online resources on this topic including the Black Americans in Congress webpage (<http://history.house.gov/Black-Americans-in-Congress>).

Slave Cabins on St. Catharines Island

For African Americans living in Georgia, the Reconstruction and New South periods were a time of both continuity and change. Between 1883 and 1892, photographer William E. Wilson documented the lives of sharecroppers and day-to-day life in Georgia through his photography. Wilson made his living doing portraits but he had a passion for documentary photography. This type of photography focuses on capturing the everyday. Unlike a posed portrait, these photographs show a more unstaged view of life in the Savannah area during the late 1880s and early 1890s. This image shows a group of unidentified African Americans posed outside of a former slave cabin on St. Catharines Island. Before revealing the date of the photograph, ask students to guess what period this image is from. Students may guess that the people in the photograph are slaves. It is reasonable to guess that the subjects of this photograph were sharecroppers. From this image, students can begin a discussion on how life changed and remained the same for African-Americans living in Georgia during this period. Have students investigate some of the additional primary and secondary sources linked in this teacher guide to discover more about continuity and change for African Americans after the Civil War.

Portrait of Mathilda (/Josephine) Beasley

This source is particularly interesting, because it demonstrates the complications of archival research. This image, originally believed to be a portrait of Matilda Beasley, manager of the Sacred Heart Orphanage. Based on the style of clothing and hair the image is thought to be circa 1890, when Matilda would have been 71 years old. The image is most likely of Josephine Beasley, wife of Abram Beasley who was a child of Mathilda's husband. Josephine and her husband were both domestic servants in Savannah. Yet, if you look at the [Featured Historical Figure: Mother Mathilda Beasley](#) on the GHS website, you will still find this image representing Mathilda Beasley. Discuss the challenges of removing this image from the historical knowledge of Mathilda Beasley, even as archivists believe this image to be someone else. Ask students why we might keep this image as an example of Beasley and just add a fact checking note.

Selected Bibliography

- “Black Legislators in Reconstruction Georgia.” New Georgia Encyclopedia.
<https://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/history-archaeology/black-legislators-during-reconstruction>
- Edmund L. Drago, *Black Politicians and Reconstruction in Georgia: A Splendid Failure* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982).
- Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History: [Civil War & Reconstruction, 1861-1877](#)
- George Rable, *But There Was No Peace: The Role of Violence in the Politics of Reconstruction*, (Athens: University of Georgia Press), 2007.
- “Freedman’s Education during Reconstruction.” New Georgia Encyclopedia.
<https://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/history-archaeology/freedmens-education-during-reconstruction>
- “Ku Klux Klan in the Reconstruction Era.” New Georgia Encyclopedia.
<https://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/history-archaeology/ku-klux-klan-reconstruction-era>
- Lee W. Formwalt, “The Camilla Massacre of 1868: Racial Violence as Political Propaganda,” *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 71 (fall 1987).
- Lee W. Formwalt, “Petitioning Congress for Protection: A Black View of Reconstruction at the Local Level,” *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 73 (summer 1989).
- “Reconstruction Conventions.” New Georgia Encyclopedia.
<https://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/government-politics/reconstruction-conventions>
- “Reconstruction in Georgia.” New Georgia Encyclopedia.
<http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/nge/Article.jsp?id=h-2533>
- “Reconstruction: The Second Civil War,” PBS
<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/reconstruction/40acres/index.html>
- Russell Duncan, *Freedom’s Shore: Tunis Campbell and the Georgia Freedmen* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1986).
- Susan E. O’Donovan, “Philip Joiner, Black Republican Leader,” *Journal of Southwest Georgia History* 4, no. 4 (1986).

Suggested GHS Resources

Three Centuries of Georgia History: [Civil War and Reconstruction](#)

- [Teacher Guide](#) for Three Centuries of Georgia History

[Featured Historical Figure: Mother Mathilda Beasley](#)

[Featured Historical Figure: Cornelius McKane](#)

[Online Exhibit: Exchanges in Slavery and Freedom](#)

[Chapter 13 Primary Sources: Reconstruction](#)

[Today in Georgia History: Jefferson Franklin Long](#)

[Today in Georgia History: Tunis Campbell](#)

[Today in Georgia History: Henry Mcneal Turner](#)

[Today in Georgia History: Camilla Massacre](#)

[Today in Georgia History: Thirteenth Amendment Ratified](#)

[Today in Georgia History: Rebecca Latimer Felton](#)

[Today in Georgia History: Henry Wirz](#)

[Today in Georgia History: Horace King](#)

Suggested Search Terms

- [Camilla Massacre](#)
- [Tunis Campbell 1812-1891](#)
- [Carrie Steele Logan 1829-1900](#)
- [Susie King Taylor 1848-1912](#)
- [Freedman's Bureau](#)
- [Sharecropping](#)
- [Redemption](#)
- [Andrew Johnson](#)
- [Charles Jones Jenkins 1805-1883](#)