

CHAPTER  
**12**  
Summary

TELESCOPING THE TIMES *Reconstruction and Its Effects*

**CHAPTER OVERVIEW** As Congress enacts a policy of punishing the South for the Civil War, African Americans struggle to establish new lives. Eventually, the North tires of Reconstruction, and Southern whites regain control over the states.

## 1 The Politics of Reconstruction

**KEY IDEA** Presidents Lincoln and Johnson face opposition to their Reconstruction plans. Congress wins control, and Radical Reconstruction begins.

Reconstruction refers to the period from 1865 to 1877, when the country rebuilt from war and the federal government determined how the Southern states were to reenter the Union. Lincoln wanted the Southern states to rejoin quickly. His plan readmitted a state once 10 percent of voters took an oath of allegiance. He also promised to pardon most former Confederates.

Four states applied for readmission under this plan, but Radical Republicans in Congress blocked them. They wanted to deny power to former slave owners and to give the right to vote to African Americans. They passed a more severe bill in 1864, but Lincoln vetoed it.

After Lincoln was killed, Andrew Johnson of Tennessee became president. His Reconstruction policy was also lenient. Among provisions, a state had to declare secession illegal and ratify the Thirteenth Amendment abolishing slavery. Many Southern states met these terms, and in December 1865, new Southern members of Congress arrived in Washington.

The Radicals—outraged because many of these members had served in the Confederate government or fought in its armies—refused to seat the new members. Congress passed a law extending the Freedmen's Bureau, which had been created to help former slaves adjust to a new life. It also passed a civil rights bill. This law made African Americans citizens and banned the black codes. The codes were new Southern laws that restricted African Americans' freedom.

Johnson, feeling the two bills made the federal government too powerful, vetoed both. Congress voted to override the veto. It also passed the Fourteenth Amendment, which confirmed African Americans citizenship and barred most former Confederate leaders from political office. Johnson,

thinking the bill too punishing, angered Congress again by urging Southern states not to approve the amendment.

In the 1866 congressional elections, Johnson campaigned against the Radicals. His harsh words angered many Northern voters, as did race riots in the South that left many African Americans dead. The freed slaves needed the federal government, many thought. The Radicals won an overwhelming victory, gaining enough seats to override any presidential veto.

In 1867, the new Congress passed the Reconstruction Act. It declared the reorganized state governments invalid, put the Southern states under military control, and called for new state constitutions. Those new state laws had to give African Americans the right to vote.

The next year, the conflict between president and Congress reached a head. The House of Representatives voted to impeach President Johnson. If the Senate found him guilty, he would be removed from office. After an eleven-week trial, the Senate did not find him guilty.

That fall, Ulysses S. Grant won the presidential election with overwhelming support from African American voters in the South. Congress then passed the Fifteenth Amendment, which outlawed the denial of voting rights due to race.

## 2 Reconstructing Society

**KEY IDEA** After the war, the South faces the problem of rebuilding its economy. African Americans begin to exercise freedoms denied to them in slavery.

The Southern states wrote new constitutions, and by 1870 all were back in the Union under the Radicals' terms. The war had destroyed the population and economy of the region, however. The new state governments undertook ambitious rebuilding programs and instituted the first public school systems in many Southern states. They had to raise taxes and borrow money to fund these programs.