

Presidential Reconstruction

Main Ideas

1. After Emancipation, many former slaves left the plantations to look for family or find work.
2. In order to rejoin the Union, Texas had to write a new constitution, abolish slavery, and declare secession illegal.
3. The lives of freedpeople in Texas remained restricted under the Black Codes.

Why It Matters Today

The federal government helped former slaves after the Civil War. Use current events sources to learn more about a government program that helps citizens today.



TEKS: 5B, 6A, 10B, 17C, 18B, 21A, 21B, 21C, 21D, 21E, 21F, 22A, 22B, 22C, 22D

myNotebook

Use the annotation tools in your eBook to take notes on emancipation and presidential reconstruction in Texas.

Key Terms and People

- Juneteenth
- freedpeople
- Reconstruction
- Thirteenth Amendment
- Freedmen's Bureau
- suffrage
- Black Codes
- civil rights

The Story Continues

One day after the Civil War ended, Tempie Cummins's mother was eavesdropping on their slaveholder. She heard him say that slaves in Texas had been freed. He also vowed to keep his slaves until "he had made another crop or two." Tempie's mother immediately told the other slaves that they were free and that they should quit working. The slaveholder chased her and shot at her, but she escaped with Tempie.



Emancipation

U.S. troops took control of Texas at the end of the Civil War. When Union general Gordon Granger landed at Galveston in 1865, he issued a proclamation freeing Texas slaves. That day, June 19, is celebrated as **Juneteenth**. One former slave remembered hearing the news.

TEXAS VOICES



"We were working one day when somebody . . . came by and told us we were free, and we stopped working. . . . The boss man came up, and he said he was going to knock us off the fence if we didn't go back to work. . . . He called for his carriage, and said he was going to town to see what the government was going to do. Next day he came back and said, 'Well, you're just as free as I am.'"

—Anonymous, quoted in *Black Texas Women: A Sourcebook*, by Ruthe Winegarten

As the news of emancipation spread, many **freedpeople**, or former slaves, left the plantations. For many it was the first time they had the freedom to travel. During the summer and fall of 1865, Texas roads were crowded with former slaves loaded down with their possessions. Many freedpeople rushed to courthouses to legalize their informal slave marriages. Others searched for family members from whom they had been separated. Some gathered at military posts and towns, hoping to find paying jobs and military protection. Many who had been sent to Texas during the war returned to their prewar homes.


Reading Check Summarizing How did the end of the Civil War affect Texas slaves?

The Freedmen's Bureau

The U.S. government wanted to help freedpeople and bring the southern states back into the Union. **Reconstruction**—the process of reuniting the nation and rebuilding the southern states—lasted from 1865 to 1877. In February 1865 the U.S. Congress had proposed the **Thirteenth Amendment**, which abolished slavery. In March, Congress created the **Freedmen's Bureau** to provide help and legal aid to freed people. Because they had no land and few job opportunities, many freedpeople returned to their old plantations for work. Bureau agents tried to regulate freedpeople's employment contracts with landowners.

In addition, the bureau and churches helped African Americans open many schools in Texas. By 1870 more than 9,000 African Americans were enrolled in 150 schools. As a result, illiteracy—or the inability to read or write—among African Americans dropped from 95 percent in 1865 to 75 percent in 1880. A reporter toured one school.

TEXAS VOICES

 “We saw fathers and mothers . . . with their grown up children, all anxiously engaged in the pursuit of knowledge. . . . We are informed that their progress is rapid, and from what we saw, the pupils are deeply interested in learning to read.”

—*Flake's Bulletin*, quoted in *Republicanism in Reconstruction Texas*, by Carl H. Moneyhon

However, with only a few dozen agents assigned to Texas at any one time, bureau agents were limited in what they could achieve. There was also a limited number of federal troops assigned to support the agents' activities. Many Texans opposed the bureau's efforts to help freedpeople. One agent noted that former Confederates “seem to take every opportunity to vent their rage and hatred upon the blacks. They are frequently beaten unmercifully.” Bureau agents tried to protect freedpeople from such violence and to help them adjust to freedom.

Reading Check Analyzing Information Why might new educational opportunities for African Americans be considered an important social effect of Reconstruction in Texas?



Juneteenth

In 1863 the Emancipation Proclamation had declared all slaves in the rebelling states free. Because Union forces did not control Texas at that time, the Proclamation had no practical effect in the state until General Gordon Granger read his order in Galveston. Since 1865, June 19 has been celebrated in Texas as a day of freedom. Since 1979 Juneteenth has been a state holiday and its celebration has been spreading across the nation. **Why do African Americans celebrate Juneteenth?**

Analyzing Primary Sources

Drawing Inferences and Conclusions Why were adult African Americans in school alongside their children?

Daily Life

African American Schools

Reconstruction schools offered the first chance for freedpeople to get an education. But schools faced many challenges. The Freedmen's Bureau had difficulty recruiting teachers, and schools were often short of supplies. In September 1865 a Galveston teacher complained that he had 250 students but no books. Some schools were held in local churches. A teacher in Chambers County taught school in a grove of trees.

What challenges did black schools face during Reconstruction?



★ President Johnson's Plan

While the bureau was helping freedpeople, leaders in the federal government were debating how Reconstruction should proceed. Some people wanted to punish the South. Others, like President Abraham Lincoln, did not want to increase feelings of bitterness. Before the war ended he proposed a plan to reunite the country quickly. After Lincoln was assassinated in April 1865, Andrew Johnson became president.

Like Lincoln, Johnson wanted Reconstruction to proceed quickly. Under his plan, voters in the former Confederate states had to take oaths of loyalty to the United States. High-ranking Confederate officials and wealthy property owners needed to apply for a presidential pardon. Afterward, they could take part in government once again.

Before a state could rejoin the Union, it had to create a provisional government. The state had to write a new constitution that declared secession illegal and abolished slavery. After ratifying the new constitution, voters would elect a governor and legislature. The legislature then had to ratify the Thirteenth Amendment. Once a state's representatives had been seated in the U.S. Congress, the state would be fully restored to the Union. Johnson's Reconstruction plan was acceptable to many Texans.

Johnson appointed Unionist Andrew J. Hamilton as provisional governor of Texas in June 1865. Hamilton had previously represented Texas in the U.S. Congress from 1859 to 1861. When war broke out, he had gone north and become a general in the Union army. Nonetheless, many Texans welcomed him back to Austin in August 1865. Governor Hamilton soon appointed government officials, selecting Unionists as well as some former Confederates. In November he called an election to select delegates to a constitutional convention. Former Confederates, but not African Americans, could vote in the election.

The convention assembled in Austin on February 7, 1866. The delegates completed their work in two months. They declared secession illegal, recognized the end of slavery, and canceled the Confederate war debt. The remainder of the constitution was similar to the 1845 constitution. Debate was heated, however, over the status of freed people. The delegates failed to give African Americans equal rights. For example, black Texans could not testify in court cases involving white Texans or hold office. Nor were they granted **suffrage**, or voting rights. In June 1866, Texas voters approved the new constitution and elected government officials. James W. Throckmorton won the governor's race over Elisha M. Pease, a former governor. Former secessionists easily won control of the legislature. When it met on August 6, 1866, the legislature refused to ratify the Thirteenth Amendment.

Reading Check Finding the Main Idea Why did Governor Hamilton call a constitutional convention?

★ The Black Codes

The Texas legislature, like others in the South, passed **Black Codes**. These laws denied African Americans' **civil rights**. Civil rights are the individual rights guaranteed to people by the U.S. Constitution. Many Black Codes restricted African Americans' freedom of movement and work.

For example, African Americans had to sign labor contracts that strongly favored their employers. In addition, they could be jailed simply for not having jobs. Some large landowners in Texas argued that such laws were needed to ensure that enough workers were available to harvest the state's crops.

African Americans also had to deal with threats and violence. Between 1865 and 1868, some 468 freedpeople in Texas were murdered—90 percent of them by white men. Bringing the murderers to justice was difficult, as one Texas judge noted.

TEXAS VOICES

"I regard it as almost an impossibility under existing arrangements to convict a white man of any crime . . . where the proof . . . depends upon the testimony of a black man, or where the violence has been against a black man. . . . I can suggest no means by which I think the civil courts can remedy the evil without a change in the public sentiment of the country."

—James J. Thornton, quoted in *Reconstruction in Texas*, by Charles William Ramsdell

Reading Check Comparing and Contrasting How was life similar and different for African Americans under the Black Codes and slavery?



Even after the Civil War, freedpeople who fell into debt could be auctioned as servants to pay off the debt.



Section 1 Review



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ONLINE QUIZ

1. Define and explain:

- freedpeople
- suffrage
- civil rights

2. Identify and explain

the historical significance of:

- Juneteenth
- Reconstruction
- Thirteenth Amendment
- Freedmen's Bureau
- Black Codes

3. Sequencing

Copy the graphic organizer below. Use it to show, in order, the steps Texas had to take to be readmitted to the Union under President Johnson's plan.



4. Finding the Main Idea

- a. How did the Freedmen's Bureau assist freedpeople in Texas?
- b. In what ways were African Americans in Texas denied their civil rights after the Civil War?

5. Writing and Critical Thinking

myWriteSmart

Analyzing Information Imagine that you are living in Texas when General Granger announces the Emancipation Proclamation. Write a letter depicting freedpeople's response. Consider the following:

- activity at military posts and courthouses
- activity on the state's roads