

## North or South: Who Killed Reconstruction?

*...the slave went free; stood a brief moment in the sun; then moved back again toward slavery.* W.E.B. Dubois

1876 was an exciting year for America. It was the 100th anniversary of The Declaration of Independence and America was on the move. Homesteaders and ranchers were filling up the land west of the Mississippi River. Railroads were being built at an astounding rate. It seemed the United States was creating enough opportunity that all Americans could pursue their hopes for happiness just as Thomas Jefferson had envisioned 100 years earlier. So it is a great irony of history that the election of 1876 officially crushed the American dream for millions of black Americans living in the South.

In the aftermath of the Civil War, the policy of Reconstruction was developed for the purpose of reconnecting the eleven states that had left the Union and welcoming the millions of freedmen (former slaves) as full American citizens. As a first step in Reconstruction, the US Congress removed the Confederate state governments and put the South under the rule of the US Army. The army then held new elections. Three groups – **freedmen**, **carpetbaggers**, and **scalawags** – worked together to form new state governments. Carpetbaggers were recent arrivals from the North, and scalawags were white Southerners who supported Reconstruction.

For a while, it seemed that the dream of Reconstruction might come true. The **13th Amendment** ended slavery. The **14th Amendment** gave blacks American citizenship and civil rights. A Military Reconstruction Act was passed to make sure African Americans' new rights were protected. Black churches were

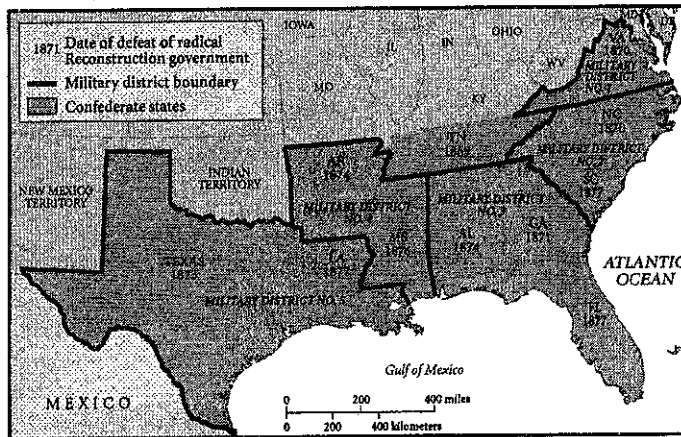
founded, public schools were built for black children, and universities like Howard, Fisk, Morehouse, and Hampton were established for black students seeking higher education. Sixteen African Americans were elected to Congress and numerous others served at state and local levels. Finally, the **15th Amendment** was ratified making it illegal to deny someone the right to vote based on race. Indeed, real progress was made.

However, in the early 1870s, the tide shifted. Southern states began to elect governments dedicated to whites-only rule. Between 1870

and 1876 all but three Southern states turned back Reconstruction efforts. Then, with the presidential election of 1876, Reconstruction was dealt a death blow. The election saw Rutherford B. Hayes,

the Republican candidate, square off against Samuel J. Tilden, the Democratic nominee. This was one of the most controversial presidential elections in American history. The close election placed the nation on edge. There was even talk of a new Civil War. To avoid a crisis, an informal agreement – now called the Compromise of 1877 – granted Hayes the Presidency. In return, and this was a huge point, Hayes promised to remove the last federal soldiers from the South. This almost guaranteed that all-white governments would reclaim power in the South.

When Rutherford B. Hayes agreed to remove federal soldiers, he was simply putting an end to an already dying effort. But dying or dead, what had gone wrong? Your job is to read the documents that follow and answer the question: *North or South: Who killed Reconstruction?*



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## Background Essay Questions

1. Why was 1876 an important year for America?
2. Who ran for President in 1876? What were their political parties?
3. An “irony” is something you don’t expect, something that doesn’t seem to fit. What was the irony of history that occurred in 1876?
4. What was the Compromise of 1877? Who got what?
5. Describe each of the following:
  - freedmen
  - carpetbaggers
  - scalawags
  - 13th Amendment:
  - 14th Amendment:
  - 15th Amendment:
6. After reading the essay, reread W.E.B. Dubois’ quote at the top. Restate his famous summary of Reconstruction in your own words.

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### Timeline

- 1865** – Civil War ends.
- 1867** – South placed under military rule.
- 1869** – First college football game between Princeton and Rutgers
- 1870** – Hiram Revels is elected first black Senator.
- 1877** – Last federal troops leave South.
- 1877** – First Easter egg hunt on White House lawn

## Understanding the Question and Pre-Bucketing

1. What is the analytical question asked by this Mini-Q?
2. What term in the question needs to be defined?
3. Rewrite the question in your own words.

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### Pre-Bucketing

**Directions:** Using clues from the Mini-Q question, think of logical analytical categories and label the buckets.

