

Legacy and Reconstruction

*Civil War and Reconstruction
(1850–1877)*



Legacy of the Civil War

Reconstruction

The end of Reconstruction

Thematic Icons



Economics and business



Geography and environment



Historical concepts and questions



Politics, government and citizenship



Society and culture



War, diplomacy and foreign policy

Icons: For more detailed instructions, see the *User Guide*



Flash activity (these activities are not editable)



Teacher notes included in the Notes page



By the end of this section, you will know how the following events led to the end of Reconstruction:

- The Amnesty Act of 1872
- The Panic of 1873
- Supreme Court cases that weakened Reconstruction legislation
- The 1876 election
- The Compromise of 1877.



The South “redeemed”



In 1872, the **Amnesty Act** returned voting rights to roughly 150,000 former Confederates.

This allowed Democrats to retake Southern state governments in the so-called **redemption** of the South.

Corruption in Grant’s administration further weakened the Republicans. Sentiment was turning against the Radicals and Reconstruction.



“AMNESTY”; OR, THE END OF THE PEACEFUL (DEMOCRATIC) TIGER
(Fernando Wood, S. S. Cox and others fail to hold him)

Although Southern Democrats promised to protect blacks’ rights, they quietly imposed laws designed to re-establish white supremacy.

How does this cartoonist view the Amnesty Act?

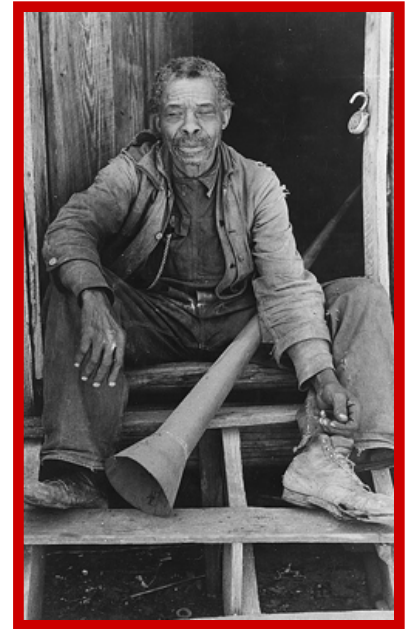


Sharecropping

Many freedmen hoped to make a living by farming, but poverty and prejudice made it nearly impossible for them to purchase land.

At the same time, white planters hoped to regain their wealth using low-cost labor. The result was **sharecropping**.

Sharecropping is when a landowner lends tools, seeds and land to a farmer in exchange for a percentage of his harvest.



High percentages and competition meant that most sharecroppers could barely feed their families. The system led to a cycle of poverty few could escape.



The Panic of 1873

After the war, companies and individuals had invested large sums in developing infrastructure.

In 1873, a large banking firm went bankrupt after losing its investments in bad railroad companies. This bankruptcy led to a series of others, beginning the **Panic of 1873**.



The result was a five year depression and the loss of roughly three million jobs. It was the worst economic downturn in the nation's history up to that point.

The depression caused the government and the public to turn their attention away from Reconstruction.



Repealing civil rights



In the 1870s, several Supreme Court cases began to erode civil rights reforms. Press on the folder tabs to learn more about three important Supreme Court decisions following Reconstruction.

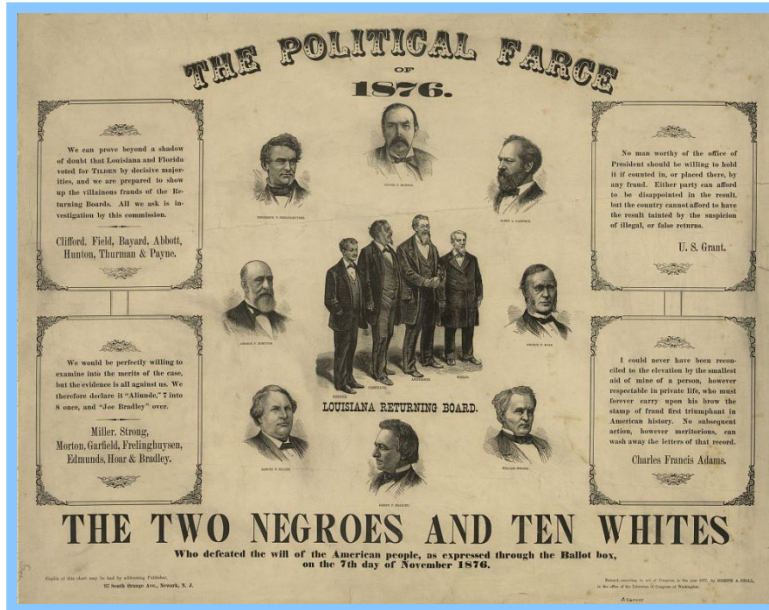
Press **start** to begin.

start





In 1876, Democrat **Samuel Tilden** ran against Republican **Rutherford B. Hayes**.



Although Tilden won the popular vote, the electoral result was disputed. The decision went to a congressional electoral commission, which found in favor of Hayes.

Because Congress was largely Republican, Democrats rejected their decision as biased. Some even threatened another civil war.



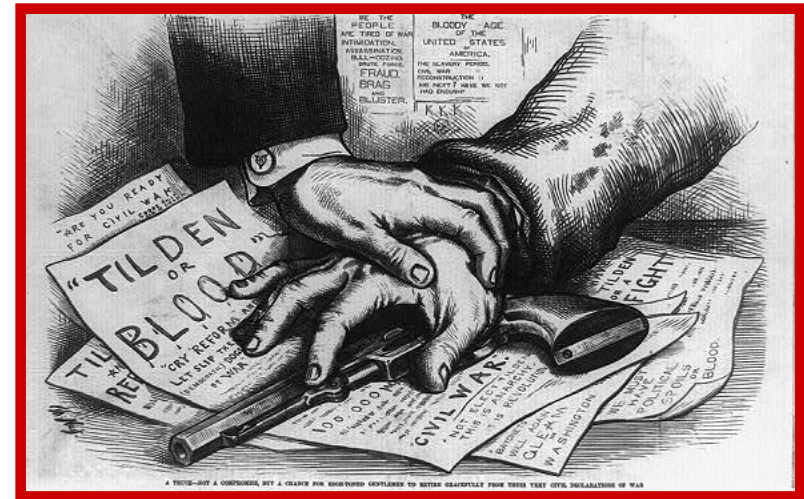
The Compromise of 1877



The issue was resolved with the **Compromise of 1877**.

Southern Democrats agreed to accept Hayes as president if:

- Hayes appointed a Southerner to his cabinet
- the government put money toward internal improvements in the South
- federal troops were withdrawn from Louisiana and South Carolina.



Without federal protection, blacks were completely vulnerable to racist state laws and violence that would not be challenged until the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s.

How does this cartoonist view the Compromise?



The legacy of Reconstruction



Some historians have argued that Reconstruction was a failure. The Supreme Court undermined civil rights legislation and the government was unable to protect black Americans in the long term.



Others say that Reconstruction succeeded. Southern states developed school systems and transportation infrastructure, while new legislation made important strides toward equal rights.

Was Reconstruction a success or failure?





Test your knowledge of the Reconstruction era with this quiz. Choose the correct answer to each question to see how much you can remember about Reconstruction.

Press **start** to begin.

start





Test your understanding of Reconstruction
by recapping key terms and important
people using this glossary.
Press on the tabs and then each term to
see a definition.
Press **start** to begin.

start

