Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877 Study Guide

Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877 by Eric Foner

BOOKRAGS

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Plot Summary

"Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution 1863-1877" is a historical account of the years following the Civil War, known as the Reconstruction Era, and how the political, economic, and social environments were changed in both the North and South during this period.

Eric Foner defines Reconstruction as beginning January 1, 1863 or the day that President Abraham signed the Emancipation Proclamation, which indicated the position of the federal government under the Republican party that it had the national authority to emancipate the slaves in the South. This ushered in a series of civil rights acts and constitutional conventions that sought to extend and protect the rights of blacks in the South in the years after the war.

Reconstruction efforts were first undertaken by President Lincoln and then his successor, Andrew Johnson, in the years from 1865 to 1867, however President Johnson fell into conflict with the radical wing of the Republican party who felt he was too lenient on former rebels and that he did not support the radical agenda of providing blacks with equal civil rights, including the right to vote. His successor, the former general U.S. Grant, had little political experience and left Reconstruction largely to Congress in a period Foner calls Congressional or Radical Reconstruction, which lasted until 1877, when Republican President Rutherford B. Hayes finally ordered the last federal troops in the South to stand down.

During Radical Reconstruction, southern blacks saw their rights expanded to include the right to own property, negotiate their own labor and for black males to vote. As the nation sunk into a depression in the 1870s, however, the Radical Republicans who fought to protect these rights for blacks lost influence in state and national government. "Redeemer" governments of Democrats took over the southern states and instituted laws that protected groups like the Ku Klux Klan and effectively removed economic and political influence from southern blacks.

Reconstruction transformed the North as well. The expansion of industry, aided by the tremendous growth of the railroads, created a wealthy class of industrialists who found sympathy from the Republican administration and assistance to regulate and suppress labor movements among the growing working class.

The nation was also transformed politically. Federal authority over the states expanded under Republican authority during the war and Reconstruction years, but was then sharply curtailed in 1877 in a series of decisions by the Supreme Court that limited authority over the states. A precedent had been set, however. Foner concludes that Reconstruction failed its two main goals of achieving equal rights for blacks and expanding Republican influence in the South. The issue of civil rights would not be taken up by the nation in earnest for another hundred years, he writes, and in many ways the issue has still not been fully addressed.

The World the War Made

The World the War Made Summary and Analysis

In Chapter 1, Foner begins his examination of the Reconstruction era with the Emancipation Proclamation of President Abraham Lincoln on January 1, 1863. The proclamation freed some 3 million slaves in the parts of the South that were in rebellion, but did not affect the nearly 1 million slaves in loyal states or parts of the Union-controlled South. Slavery had been deteriorating as an institution since the beginning of the war two years before, accelerated in the border states like Kentucky by the enlistment of blacks in the Union forces. As the Union army pushed into the South, they made increased use of available black labor and became, in Foner's words, "an army of liberation." (p. 10). The Emancipation Proclamation had also brought the slavery issue to the front of the conflict between the states. What had been a military war became a cultural war.

The people of the South were hardly unified in their support for slavery and the Confederacy, Foner explains, and the Emancipation Proclamation brought these differences to the surface. Many rural white farmers, who made up most of the soldiers in the Confederate army, began to see the war as a battle to protect the economic and political power of the wealthy plantation owners. Support for the war was strong in the early years, but after 1863 desertion became a serious problem.

The war brought out significant changes in northern society as well, Foner argues. Industrial capability had been rising before the war and government contracts helped expand manufacturing and the railroads. The Emancipation Proclamation had signaled a new authority for the national government, which had been gaining prominence under the Republican party. Social reformers were encouraged by the proclamation and grew more outspoken and influential. Women took on new roles as organizers and sponsors of social causes such as abolition. Free black citizens in the North became hopeful that they might one day be recognized as full citizens with the right to vote.

Underlying differences were magnified in the North as well. The working class came under economic pressure owing partly to the printing of paper money and heavy taxes. The Democratic party seized on the dissatisfaction of many workers and spoke out against Republican policies.

This was the condition of the nation at the beginning of the Reconstruction years, Foner explains. North and South were internally divided as well as divided from one another, yet everyone shared the feeling of having experienced a tremendous change in the national character.

Rehearsals for Reconstruction

Rehearsals for Reconstruction Summary and Analysis

The Emancipation Proclamation complicated some of the questions that arose out of the war, Foner explains in a section of Chapter 2 entitled "Dilemmas of Wartime Reconstruction." Uppermost among these dilemmas were the questions of how former Confederate states might be allowed back into the Union and the status of the millions of former slaves. After the proclamation, it was clear that recognizing the abolition of slavery would be a requirement for southern states, but it was not clear what role free blacks might take in the post-war society.

Lincoln implemented what became known as the "10 percent" plan. White southern men could take an oath of allegiance to the Union and pledge to accept the abolition of slavery. If a number of loyal southerners in any state reached 10 percent of the number of votes cast in 1860, this minority group could elect a state government and adopt a constitution. The constitution would have to abolish slavery, but allowed the state government to make other laws regarding the position and work of the former slaves.

The ten percent plan played out differently from state to state, and Foner provides cases from many of them. Border states like Delaware and Kentucky resisted the formal abolition of slavery while others like West Virginia abolished slavery more or less voluntarily. In Missouri, the requirements for the loyalty oath were made so strict that former rebels were essentially disenfranchised. In the internal southern states, the reforming of local governments was overseen by Union military authorities.

Louisiana presented an unusual case, Foner explains, as New orleans had a long-established population of free blacks, the descendants of white French settlers. These free blacks were largely well-educated, moved freely in society and were organized. They argued for the extension of voting rights to blacks along with the abolition of slavery, something not seriously considered elsewhere, Foner explains. In the end, the free blacks found themselves lumped with the newly-freed slaves under the new Louisiana laws. Emancipation, ironically, had temporarily reduced their rights.

Another major question that stemmed from emancipation was the form agricultural labor would take. In some cases, former slaves took over the lease of the plantations they had worked and began raising food crops for their own subsistence rather than cash crops such as cotton. In one special case, the former slaves on the plantations of Confederate president Jefferson Davis and his brother developed a successful black-run model that grew subsistence crops as well as turned a profit from cotton. In Louisiana and elsewhere, state laws implemented a contract system where freed blacks were paid a basic wage for their labor and provided with housing. They were required to sign an annual contract, however, that restricted them from leaving the plantation and locked them into service. In many ways it was not much different than slavery.

Emancipation and Reconstruction created political division in national politics. Radical Republicans argued for a stronger oath of loyalty. The free blacks of Louisiana had put the issue of voting rights for freed blacks on the table, something even President Lincoln was reluctant to call for. Lincoln appeared to be struggling to find a compromise to some of these competing views on Reconstruction when he was assassinated in April of 1865. Most of the questions still remained unresolved.

The Meaning of Freedom

The Meaning of Freedom Summary and Analysis

In Chapter 3, Foner argues that the making of the modern American black community can be traced to the early years after the Civil War. Emancipation had created many new questions regarding how blacks would be included in the new society. Their new formal standing as free people did nothing to change the attitudes of many white Americans that they were inferior in intellect and social standing and especially in the South, blacks continued to be treated almost as poorly as they had been as slaves.

For many blacks, the basic meaning of "freedom" was the ability to work and make decisions for themselves and they often modeled their behavior on that of the free whites they had observed during slavery. Black women eagerly took up household chores and child rearing while black men worked outside the home. This had the effect of removing many women and children from field work, which had been common under slavery, creating a labor shortage on many plantations who sometimes had to supplement their hired black labor with white workers.

Women and children did not cease to work in the fields entirely, however, but their labor was either in support of their own family or arranged by their husbands and fathers. This was a crucial distinction, Foner argues, as black males took their place as the heads of their families, a position formerly held by slave owners.

The church became the common social institution that unified free blacks and formed the basis for a black community, Foner explains. Prior to emancipation, slaves and free blacks were allowed to attend services in some southern churches, but were segregated to the back or to balconies. After emancipation, southern church organizations faced with the question of integrating black parishioners usually opted to form separate black congregations. Even so, most of these black churches were led by white pastors and the church buildings actually owned by white trustees. Some black congregations did manage to create independent churches led by black ministers of their own choosing. The church also motivated many illiterate former slaves to learn to read and write in order to be able to read the Bible.

In addition to autonomy in the areas of family and religion, freed blacks also sought to gain economic autonomy as a working class. This often put them at odds with plantation owners who expected their hired black workers to show them the same deference and submission as before emancipation. Blacks also saw freedom as an opportunity to develop political aspirations and organizations. Many labor and political leaders arose out of the church, Foner explains, which was a natural environment for leadership to be recognized and developed.

This new autonomy for freed blacks was often met with violence, Foner explains. White southerners beat and sometimes killed blacks who refused to show them the same

deference that had been expected from slaves. Black homes churches and schools were attacked and burned. Foner presents evidence that while blacks sometimes retaliated with violence, most of it was perpetrated by whites against blacks.

Ambiguities of Free Labor

Ambiguities of Free Labor Summary and Analysis

The Civil War devastated much of the South financially. Farmland had been left unplanted and southern plantation owners were ruined financially. Many of the largest cities were in ruins. Confederate bonds and currency became worthless.

Plantation owners were also faced with the loss of slave labor that had made it possible to profit from large scale agriculture. Former slaves now demanded to be hired at wages and women and children no longer worked in the fields, creating a labor shortage. White southerners occupied themselves with the question of whether blacks would work at all without the threat of punishment as they did under slavery. They found that blacks would work, but wanted to work at their own pace and to have some control over their own labor. Plantation owners pushed back with contracts that created strict conditions that were very similar to slavery.

Some northern planters came to the south with the intention of helping blacks learn to function in a free labor economy. As time passed, Foner explains, these northerners began to sound the same complaints as the southerners, that black laborers were not willing to work the long heavy hours required to make large plantations profitable. The labor shortage put black workers at an advantage in negotiating with landowners, but several bad years of crops following the war diminished this advantage.

As former masters and former slaves sought to redefine the new southern economy, another player was also at work. The Freedmen's Bureau was a federal department charged with overseeing the concerns of freed slaves in the South. Initially headed by former military men, the Freedmen's Bureau was in charge of making sure free black southerners received fair treatment, opening schools for blacks, resolving complaints, and helping former slaves in the transition to a free labor economy. In practice, the activities of the Freedmen's Bureau were inconsistent and sometimes contradictory depending on the attitudes of the local administrators. White southerners resented the presence of the bureau and saw it largely as an institution designed to support blacks who would not work.

Among blacks, the Freedmen's Bureau represented their best chance to receive justice before the law, and they frequently brought their disputes with white employers and landowners to the bureau for resolution. Black schools were founded with the mission that blacks were to be educated to take their proper place in this new social arrangement.

Initially the leaders of the Freedmen's Bureau sought to encourage the ownership of land by blacks. After the war, blacks had actually taken possession of much of the land they had worked as slaves and the Freedmen's Bureau helped them maintain their rights to the land. President Johnson, who succeeded President Lincoln after his

assassination, implemented a policy that sought to restore land to its white owners during the war. The bureau was put in the position of explaining to blacks that the land they had been working was to be given back to their former masters. There was simply no way that the interests of the former masters and the former slaves could be best served at the same time, Foner argues.

The realities of the labor market and demands of traditional crops like rice, cotton, and sugar eventually led to the development of the sharecropping system where black farmers were given charge of a piece of land in exchange for a portion of the crop being returned to the owner.

The Failure of Presidential Reconstruction

The Failure of Presidential Reconstruction Summary and Analysis

In Chapter 5, Foner describes the policies of President Andrew Johnson toward the south and how they affected the course of Reconstruction. Johnson came to the presidency after the death of Abraham Lincoln. Like Lincoln, he had come from humble beginnings and had achieved moderate success through hard work. He had risen through several elected positions before being elected Lincoln's Vice President.

At first, radical Republicans who favored more rights for blacks thought they had an ally in Johnson. He stated publicly his opinion that traitors to the country ought to be severely punished, which the radicals interpreted as in line with their opinion that the former slave owners of the South ought to be excluded from any influence in the reformation of southern state governments. Furthermore, radical Republicans called not only for the abolition of slavery in southern states that wanted to rejoin the Union, but also wanted to require the extension of voting rights to blacks.

Johnson did not apparently share this belief and in addition, he thought the federal government had no right to govern the voting laws of individual states. He did adopt a policy that southern states should consider allowing educated blacks and former soldiers the right to vote, but he had no way to enforce this.

Johnson however did adopt a policy regarding the return of former Confederates to citizenship that appeared at first to make it more difficult for the former large slave owners to rejoin. Despite his tough talk about punishing traitors, it was actually fairly simple for former Confederates to have their citizenship rights restored and even to be appointed to the thousands of vacant government posts throughout the South. The new state governments were elected from men who had largely opposed secession before the war, but who had followed their states into service. These new governments soon turned their attention to the perceived problem of blacks who were unwilling to work under conditions similar to slavery. States adopted "black codes" that excluded blacks from many areas of public life and dictated labor laws. Many of these were actually detrimental to the notion of free labor, Foner argues.

In the North, Johnson's policies in the South were popular with members of the Democratic party who saw in their implementation the ideals they included in their platform such as white supremacy and no voting rights for blacks. Members of Johnson's own Republican party were mostly pleased with the Reconstruction policies. Although some of them thought voting rights for blacks was desirable, they were not willing to make it a central issue. The only group that actively opposed Johnson's policies were the Radical Republicans who called for black voting rights. They felt that

Johnson had misled them with his tough talk about punishing traitors and granting rights to freed slaves. The stage was set for a showdown as the 39th Congress was seated in December of 1865.

The Making of Radical Reconstruction

The Making of Radical Reconstruction Summary and Analysis

In Chapter 6, Foner examines the rise of the influence of the Radical Republicans on Reconstruction policy. Led by prominent congressmen Representative Thaddeus Stevens and Senator Charles Sumner, the radical wing of the Republican Party saw reconstruction as a unique chance to extend their ideology of civil rights extended to all citizens under a strong national government.

The Radical Republicans introduced a series of bills in the 39th Congress, none of which passed both houses, which were controlled by more moderate Republicans. Although sympathetic to some of the radical ideals, the moderates did not endorse black voting rights. Two important bills did arise under moderate leadership, however, the Freedmen's Bill and the Civil Rights bill.

The Freedman's Bill proposed the continued operation of the Freedmen's Bureau in the South. The Civil Rights Bill guaranteed equal rights to black citizens before the law and made it a crime for anyone to not extend to them the same rights as were given whites. Congress was astonished when President Johnson vetoed both bills. Both vetoes were overridden by Congress, only narrowly in the case of the Freedmen's Bill. Johnson's actions set the stage for a bitter fight between the Republican president and congressional Republicans.

Without support from the president, congressional Republicans turned to the strategy of crafting a constitutional amendment that would embody the same ideals. The Fourteenth Amendment went through several drafts before taking its final form, which defined citizenship in a way that individual states could not challenge and guaranteed equal protect of the law to all citizens, giving power to the national government to enforce and legislate this protection. The amendment also set standards that barred former Confederates from serving in national government and prohibited the payment of any Confederate debts. Johnson did not support the amendment, however it was finally ratified in 1868.

The Fourteenth Amendment and the Civil Rights Bill angered many in the South, culminating in occasional race riots such as the one that arose in May, 1866 in Memphis. Northerners were shocked by the violence of whites against blacks in the South and blamed President Johnson for not responding strongly. Johnson, running for re-election, undertook a speaking tour to counter this impression that actually had the unintended effect of increasing support for the Radical Republican agenda in the elections of 1866, and Radical Republicans found themselves with a majority large enough to challenge any veto by Johnson.

In 1867, Congress passed the Reconstruction Act which imposed military control over the South, which was divided into five districts. Subsequent bills required that southern states extend voting rights to blacks, ratify the Fourteenth Amendment, and redraft their state constitutions before being allowed back into the Union. The Second Reconstruction Act placed Union troops in charge of protecting the voting rights of blacks. These bills were passed over the vetoes of President Johnson.

Blueprints for a Republican South

Blueprints for a Republican South Summary and Analysis

The Reconstruction acts and the extension of voting rights to black men mobilized blacks to become political active. Southern politicians, recognizing that they now relied on black votes, tried to gain their support. They were not very successful as they tended to portray themselves as always having been friends to the blacks.

Motivated by social as well as commercial concerns, some northern men moved to the South to take up government positions and run for political office. These men were called "carpetbaggers" by southerners, in reference to the common large piece of luggage used by travelers. While they had a reputation as coming from the lower class of northern whites, Foner claims many of them were actually young educated men looking for opportunity.

In addition to carpetbaggers, many southerners also condemned "scalawags," which were southerners who supported the Republican party. Their support came for different reasons, Foner explains. Some urban whites saw the party as a progressive force for economic development. In the "upcountry" many southern Republicans were former Unionists who sought to end their own oppression by the former rebels. Some were genuinely sympathetic to black southerners and wanted to see them extended the same civil rights as blacks, Foner explains, but for many the association with blacks was a "marriage of convenience." (p. 303)

The Southern Republicans gained influence throughout the South, and took a prominent role in the various state constitutional conventions that were held as required by the Reconstruction Acts. Black delegates also took part in these conventions, Foner explains, but their lack of experience in the workings of politics kept them mostly silent.

Congressional Republicans grew more and more dissatisfied with President Johnson. Congress had empowered the military to oversee its Reconstruction policies in the South, but as commander-in-chief, Johnson held control over the generals appointed, and had the power to remove generals he felt were too aggressive in enforcing the acts. Congress passed a law that no government official, including the generals in charge of Reconstruction, could be removed before a replacement was approved by Congress. This law was called the Tenure of Office Act, and Johnson violated it when he removed Secretary of War Edwin Stanton in 1867 and replaced him with General U.S. Grant.

When Congress objected, Grant resigned and Stanton was reinstated. Johnson was impeached for his actions, however, and narrowly escaped conviction in the Senate by one vote.

U.S. Grant won the nomination of the Republican Party in the 1868 election, and emerged victorious. He carried several southern states, even though the elections were marred by violence by the newly formed Ku Klux Klan and others aimed at keeping blacks from the polls.

Reconstruction: Political and Economic

Reconstruction: Political and Economic Summary and Analysis

Chapter 8 examines the ways in which Republican power shaped the transformation of the South during Reconstruction. Southern Republicans inherited an impoverished region devastated by war, and were also confronted by opponents who thought they lacked legitimacy. Southern Republicans sought to expand their acceptance by relaxing laws that barred former Confederates from regaining full citizenship. They realized that black votes were responsible for putting them in office, but that acceptance by white southerners was required to gain legitimacy.

While many local offices were held by blacks, it was not common for blacks to be elected to higher offices at first. White Southern Republicans relegated them to minor roles and positions once they were elected. Blacks soon grew dissatisfied with this arrangement and sought to take a larger role in government, Foner explains. Most blacks elected to higher offices were born free, Foner demonstrates. Free born blacks were also more likely to be literate and have some education.

Under the Southern Republicans, a public school system came into existence although it was segregated on racial lines. Programs arose that gave general assistance to blacks and regulated labor contracts, as well as land bureaus that promoted land ownership. The most pressing issue to the mostly white South Republicans, however, was economic development. State bonds in southern states had become depressed in value, but when Grant was elected and it became evident that Reconstruction policies would continue, their value increased. Railroads were encouraged to extend into agricultural regions and tax breaks were given to northern companies to entice them to come to the South. Cotton rebounded as a cash crop, aided by increased access to markets through the railroad and improvements in farming methods.

Southern Republican governments were also plagued by corruption, however. Bribery was common, as was the practice of most officials, even local officials, personally profiting from their political connections. This was not limited to Republicans, Foner explains. Democrats commonly accepted money in exchange for influence.

Southern Republicans preached a "gospel of prosperity" (p. 379). Northern capital however was not attracted to the South as much as was hoped. The political and economic conditions did evolve into something new under Southern Republicans, however, Foner argues, especially for former slaves who had a world of new opportunity, limited as it was by the still widespread belief that making blacks the political equals of whites did not make them social equals. Sharecropping became more and more prevalent as a way for many blacks to negotiate their own labor and have some economic autonomy in the new South. Increased opportunities for blacks in urban

centers gave rise to better organized political movements and the rise of a small but significant black elite.

The Challenge of Enforcement

The Challenge of Enforcement Summary and Analysis

Southern Democrats also adopted to the changing times during Reconstruction. One wing of the party called for accepting the fact that black citizens would retain their voting rights and to move on. These "New Departure" Democrats claimed a realistic perspective on the political situation and sought to restore voting rights to disenfranchised white confederates rather then return to the exclusion of blacks. There were still many Southern Democrats who looked forward to repealing black citizenship and voting rights, however. When the Fifteenth Amendment was ratified in 1870 guaranteeing the right to vote to all males regardless of race, southern areas under Democratic control adopted poll taxes which effectively prevented blacks from voting.

Democrats from across the spectrum agreed, however, that the key to their gaining power in the South was to portray the Republican governments as foreign and to drive them out in favor of "home rule." This opposition to the Republican Reconstruction policies took the form of violent protest, often led by the newly formed Ku Klux Klan and similar groups. Foner devotes a section of the chapter describing the actions of these groups.

By 1870, the Klan and groups such as the Knights of the White Camelia and the White Brotherhood had become well known for their violent raids against blacks and white Republicans. While the organization of the Klan was loose and actions were decided and undertaken at a local level, in general the Klan was "a military force serving the interest of the Democratic party, the planter class, and all those who desired the restoration of white supremacy" (p. 425). Foner notes that despite the frequent organized violence of whites against blacks, there were very few incidents of blacks organizing against whites. Blacks intimidated by the Klan would move, or leave their homes at night to band together and hide from the raiders.

The actions of the Klan, which often involved hanging blacks and burning black homes, churches and businesses, shocked the North. Congress demanded action in 1871 when they passed the Ku Klux Klan act outlawing the Klan's activities, but local officials did little to enforce the law. Northern Republicans were reluctant to extend federal power to make certain crimes federal offenses. The intimidation of the Klan weakened support for the Republicans in many local communities and the Republicans found themselves losing control of the border states and their more southern governments weakening. They began to move away from Reconstruction as a central issue, setting the stage for a more liberal movement of Democrats in years to come.

Republican U.S. Grant had been elected in 1868 with a slim margin over the anti-emancipation Democratic candidate Horatio Seymore ensuring that Republicans would retain control of Reconstruction. Grant, a Civil War general, had no political experience and was an unknown regarding his opinion on Reconstruction. Grant surrounded

himself with advisors from Congress and allowed them to direct Reconstruction efforts for the most part. Grant's presidency saw a significant step in the expansion of federal power over the states. The Fifteenth Amendment was one such expansion, overriding each state's right to define voting rights. The Amendment did little to prevent states from adopting other ways to limit participation by black voters however, such as poll taxes and literacy tests. The Ku Klux Klan Act was a similar expansion of federal power, but it was not truly effective until federal troops were sent into the South to enforce it. While only a few Klansmen were ever tried and convicted, the action sent a message that the federal government was serious about enforcing certain civil rights for southern blacks. It also resulted in weakened Southern Republicans looking to the federal government for protection of their shaky political positions. This "power from without" would last as long as the North continued to experience Reconstruction.

The Reconstruction of the North

The Reconstruction of the North Summary and Analysis

Like the South, the North also experienced a transformation during Reconstruction, Foner explains in Chapter 10. The industrial economy had received a great boost from wartime demand in the North. While this book slackened somewhat at the end of the war, it soon picked up again as railroads brought a new boom. Tracks had been laid through the North and West during under generous subsidies during the war. Afterwards, they became crucial links carrying products and commodities and supported American expansion westward of the Mississippi. In 1869, at Promontory Point, Utah, eastern and western railroads were connected for the first time to create a transcontinental network of railroads.

The rise of the railroads and other industries contributed to a transformation in northern politics. Corruption became common as wealthy industrialists influenced public officials with bribes and legislators and government appointees used their positions to enrich themselves. Several significant scandals emerged during the period of President Grant's first term.

On scandal involved a scheme by two wealthy businessmen, Jim Fisk and Jay Gould, to manipulate the price of gold. They bribed several officials, including some in Grant's cabinet. Grant himself was an unwitting part of the scandal.

Another scandal was the formation of a fake railroad construction company called Credit Mobilier which had been established by corrupt officials of the Union Pacific Railroad in the 1860s to profiteer from the war. The scandal was revealed in 1872. Two years later another scandal emerged where several federal employees were convicted of embezzling tax funds, including Grant's own personal secretary.

Corruption riddled Democratic party officials as well. The most notable example was probably Boss Tweed, leader of the Tammany Hall organization in new York City. Tweed was seen as a Robin Hood figure by many of the Irish immigrants he helped. He received millions of dollars from the city through bribery, extortion, and fraud.

The influence of the wealthy class in politics as well as the spread of political corruption led to a reform movement within the Republican party. These reform-minded Republicans called themselves Liberal Republicans and they called for the end of what they saw as class warfare between the rich and working classes. Although the Liberal Republicans held to the central Republican support for Reconstruction, Foner explains, Reconstruction had ceased to be the main focus of the party. The expansion of state activity in providing services to citizens such as education and public health had shifted the interest of senators and representatives to using their power in Washington to direct money to their own states.

Northern blacks made up only a very small percentage of the northern population at this time, but the policies of Reconstruction had given them hope for increased political and economic influence. They continued to support the Republican party and were generally discouraged from forming political organizations of their own.

The Fifteenth Amendment had guaranteed voting rights to black men, but women were still not allowed to vote. Foner explains that while women were among the strongest supporters of the abolition movement before the war, many split away from the issue when it became clear that they were going to be left out of the extension of civil rights under Reconstruction.

The Liberal Republicans and the Democrats nominated Horace Greeley to run against Grant in the election of 1872. Greeley, a newspaper editor from New York, called for the removal of troops from the South and for the end of Reconstruction. Grant was nominated by the remaining Republicans. Grant won a second term despite a first term tainted by corruption.

The Politics of Depression

The Politics of Depression Summary and Analysis

Grant's second term witnessed an economic colapse in the form of a national depression. The quick expansion of the railroads had been fueled by widespread speculation. When bonds in the Northern Pacific Railroad became worthless in 1872, the large bank that was trying to market them went under, crippling the banking industry. A panic ensued and thousands of business, including over half of the railroads, failed.

Workers and farmers were especially hard hit by the depression, which lasted through most of the 1870s and had effects that lasted until the turn of the century, Foner argues. Labor movements and agricultural organizations like the Grange gained in strength and several small political parties that emerged out of the dissatisfaction with economic policies found local success.

Part of the Republican response to the depression was to adopt monetary policies that kept down inflation, which helped in the long run but which increased hardships for the poor and working classes. Anger over these policies cost northern support for the Republicans in the elections of 1874, allowing Democrats to take control of the House of Representatives. The Democrats had been gaining power in the South, as well, helped partly by the violence of the Ku Klux Klan.

This shift made it difficult for Reconstruction efforts to survive in Congress. One of the final acts introduced by the Radical Republicans was the Civil Rights Act of 1875 which guaranteed equal rights to blacks in all public places and prohibited discrimination in places like hotels and restaurants. The act was ineffective for the most part as it fell to blacks to file discrimination cases on their own behalf in order to defend their rights. The time and money required to mount such a case was out of the reach of most blacks.

The shift away from the Republicans in the North was accompanied by a resurgence of the Democratic party in the South. Partly through violence and intimidation, the Democrats had gained control of all the southern state legislatures by 1877.

Along with the abandonment of the Radical Republican agenda for Reconstruction, the political climate during the depression also shifted away from the Republican-led expansion of federal power over the states. Three major court cases served to curtail federal power over the states and ushered in a resurgence of states rights.

The first of these cases occurred in 1873 out of a move by the state of Louisiana to regulate the slaughterhouse industry. Several independent butchers who were out of work by the regulations sued under the Fourteenth Amendment, claiming their civil rights had been violated. In a decision on the suits, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the Fourteenth Amendment did not apply to the actions of the state, only to the federal government.

In the second significant case, the court ruled in 1876 that prosecution of violations of the Ku Klux Klan Act could only be undertaken by the individual states and not the federal government. With the Klan most active in Democratic-controlled areas of the South, prosecution of the group effectively stopped.

Finally, the court found declared that the Civil Rights Act of 1875 was unconstitutional, claiming that the Fourteenth Amendment only protected citizens from discrimination by the government, not by other individuals.

By 1875, these new limits on federal power coupled by the decreased influence of the Radical Republicans and the resurgence of the Democrats in the South's "doomed" Reconstruction (p. 563).

Redemption and After

Redemption and After Summary and Analysis

1876 was the centennial celebration of the nation's founding as well as a presidential election year. Despite the continuing depression, a large exposition was held in Philadelphia to celebrate the technology and industry of the nation. The North had largely lost interest in supporting federal efforts to reconstruct the South, Foner argues, and the exposition made little reference to blacks or the war.

Split apart by factional differences, the Republican party nominated the unremarkable Rutherford B. Hayes for president in 1876. The Democrats elected Samuel Tilden. Meanwhile, campaigning in the South for state and local offices grew increasingly violent as political and racial tensions increased. South Carolina, Georgia and other southern states began to speak in terms of the "redemption" of their states by a return to white supremacy. Redemption became a rallying cry during the sometime violent racial conflict such as the Hamburg Massacre in South Carolina between armed black militia and white southerners which started when a white farmer insisted that black militia men parading on July 4th make way for his wagon.

The presidential election itself was very close. Tilden, from New York, and Hayes, from Ohio, split the northern states. Most of the southern precincts went for Tilden except where Republicans still controlled the election boards. In the end, Tilden had 184 of the 185 electoral votes needed to take office.

A bitter party battle ensued over the results in South Carolina, Florida and Louisiana. Negotiations between the parties failed, resulting in the Electoral Commission Law which formed a special committee to count the votes. The committee award the disputed votes to Hayes. The battle was not yet over, however, as Democrats in the House of Representatives refused to finalize the vote. Once again there was talk of war, but in the end a compromise was found and Hayes took office, appointing several reform-minded Republicans to his cabinet, a signal, Foner explains, that Hayes had no plans to continue Reconstruction. As a final gesture, Hayes ordered the troops surrounding the statehouses in Louisiana and South Carolina, where the governors' elections had not been recognized by President Grant, to stand down. This was the last time federal troops had been used in the South and has become a symbolic end to Reconstruction, Foner explains, and the beginning of the "Redemption" of the South.

While Hayes ended the use of federal troops in the South to defend the rights of blacks, he did use them elsewhere such as in fighting Native Americans in Oregon and to suppress labor rioting in the East. Federal troops were mobilized in response to the Great Strike of 1877, which started among railroad workers and quickly spread to include general strikes in other industries. The strike paralyzed industrial cities like Chicago and St. Louis. By this time, Foner explains, ties between the wealthy industrialists and the Republican Party had grown strong and the railroad and mining

company owners had a direct line to Hayes. The conservatism of the party grew as southern issues figured less and less in their politics. At the same time the Supreme Court expanded its influence over national law and used it to limit federal power over the state, such as when it found the Civil Rights Act of 1875 unconstitutional.

With the federal government no longer controlling the southern state governments and federal troops no longer defending the civil rights of southern blacks, the new South began to transform itself. Reconstruction era laws that suppressed the Ku Klux Klan were repealed. While black men were guaranteed voting rights under the Constitution, southern election laws, fraud and gerrymandering removed these rights by other means. Blacks did continue to hold some local and state offices and were even occasionally elected to Congress. However, Foner argues that these cases were mainly because of the support of white patrons rather than any successful black political organizations.

Southern states also restored plantation land to former white owners and restricted black labor. They instituted severe criminal penalties and vagrancy laws that made it possible to arrest blacks on small pretenses, then leased out convicts for labor. Labor contract laws were tightened to make it impossible for blacks to leave one employer for better pay elsewhere. Segregation was made official and black schools languished for lack of funding.

The end of Reconstruction and the increase in oppression led many southern blacks to look for ways to escape the South. Some took an interest in the colonization of Liberia in Africa, which had been set up as a colony for former American slaves. Economic prospects in Liberia were poor, however. Some looked to the west to Kansas, a territory that had been originally established as free and which offered land and the prospect of freedom from southern oppression.

Epilogue: the River Has its Bend

Epilogue: the River Has its Bend Summary and Analysis

In an epilogue to the book, Foner argues that if looked at in terms of its two main intentions, the establishment of equal civil rights for blacks and the spread of Republican influence into southern states, Reconstruction was a failure. Still, he claims, the conditions blacks found themselves in under the Redeemer governments were still better than under slavery. The situation was especially difficult as it came after the high hopes during Reconstruction that equality might be possible.

Foner also turns to the changing interpretation of Reconstruction among historians at the end of the 19th century. Led by a Columbia professor named William Dunning, historians of the time "rewrote" the history of Reconstruction to depict the blacks as being childlike and unready for the freedom that was thrust upon them and portrayed the southern whites as the sometimes tragic victims of northern insistence on black equality. Foner explains that this interpretation lasted well into the 20th century and fueled a resurgence in the Ku Klux Klan. Black southerners kept the true history of their experience alive among themselves, however, Foner writes, never forgetting what had actually happened.

In the 1930s, white northerners once again returned to the South to organize black laborers, Foner explains, in a movement that many blacks saw as the fulfillment of a promise left unkept by Reconstruction. Not until the 1950s and 1960s, however, was the social organization of the South truly challenged. It took nearly one hundred years, Foner writes, for Americans to once again turn to the ideals that had been first approached during reconstruction. In some ways, he concludes, the country has not yet come to terms with them.

Characters

Andrew Johnson

Andrew Johnson was elected as Abraham Lincoln's Vice President and became president after Lincoln was assassinated in 1865. A Republican, Johnson was known for his strong statements about severely punishing southerners who led the rebellion against the Union in the Civil War. His apparent hardline stance attracted the support of the Radical Republicans, a wing of his party that favored the extension of civil rights to blacks and strict conditions for allowing former Confederates back into the Union. In practice, however, Reconstruction under Johnson's administration was fairly lenient on southern landholders and he appointed generals to run the newly-formed Freedmen's Bureau who would not be too aggressive in their defense of black rights.

Johnson was seen by the Radical Republicans as betraying their cause, and he was impeached by the Senate after firing Edwin Stanton as Secretary of War and replacing him with U.S. Grant. Johnson narrowly escaped conviction in the impeachment. He lost the Republican presidential nomination in 1868 to Grant, who was elected president.

Ulysses S. Grant

U.S. Grant was a former Civil War general and briefly the Secretary of War under President Andrew Johnson. When controversy arose among the Republican Party over Johnson's dismissal of Secretary of War Edwin Stanton and the appointment of Grant to the position, Grant quickly resigned.

Grant was elected president in 1868 and again in 1872. He was inexperienced in politics and turned over control of Reconstruction largely to Congress. His first term in office was tainted by corruption in his cabinet when some of his secretaries were bribed in a plot to control the gold market. Other scandals touched Grant's office, including an embezzling scheme by some of his own staff. Grant's political reputation suffered from these scandals although he was not knowingly involved directly in any of them. Dissatisfaction with the scandals contributed to the formation of a liberal wing of the Republican Party.

Rutherford B. Hayes

After the contentious administrations of Johnson and Grant, Rutherford B. Hayes was nominated to run for president on the Republican ticket in 1876. He ran against the Democratic nominee Samuel Tilden, who had gained fame for his prosecution of the Tweed ring in New York. Hayes won the presidency only after a protracted battle over contested elections in Florida, South Carolina and Louisiana where Democrats had gained influence in state politics but where the Republicans controlled the voting commissions. After taking office, Hayes issued orders for the last federal troops in the

South to stand down, signaling the end of Reconstruction. He also ordered federal troops to fight Native Americans in Oregon and to suppress labor strikes in eastern states.

Edwin M. Stanton

Edwin M. Stanton was a Radical Republican who served as Secretary of War under Presidents Lincoln and Johnson. Stanton oversaw the military control of Reconstruction, but differed with Johnson's policies of leniency. When Johnson removed him from office, the Republican-controlled Senate objected fiercely. Johnson reinstated Stanton, but was nevertheless impeached for his actions by the Senate.

Thaddeus Stevens

Thaddeus Stevens was a leader of the Radical Republicans in Congress.

Lyman Trumbull

Lyman Trumbull was the congressman who introduced the legislation crating the Freedmen's Bureau.

Boss Tweed

William "Boss" Tweed was a political operator in New York City who defrauded the city of millions of dollars, some of which he directed to help immigrant families. Tweed controlled the appointment and elections of city officials. His influence was ended when he was prosecuted by Samuel Tilden, a prosecutor who later ran for president.

Samuel J. Tilden

Samuel Tilden was a New York prosecutor who gained fame for taking down Boss Tweed. He ran against Rutherford Hayes on the Democratic ticket in in 1876 and lost in a contested electoral college.

The Ku Klux Klan

A loosely organized group of southern whites who terrorized blacks and white Republicans throughout the south. Congress passed a law in 1871 outlawing their activities, but few were ever prosecuted in the South.

Horatio Seymour

The Democratic presidential nominee in 1868. He lost to U.S. Grant.

Jay Gould

Jay Gould was a wealthy industrialist who conspired to bribe presidential cabinet members in a scheme to control the price of gold.

Frederick Douglass

Frederick Douglass was a former slave and abolitionist who wrote and spoke widely against slavery.

Abraham Lincoln

Description

Carpetbaggers

Description

Scalawags

Description

Objects/Places

The Civil War

The war between northern and southern states that began after several southern states voted to secede from the Union. Union troops were eventually victorious after a long struggle in which many Americans were killed. Although often portrayed as a war to end slavery, Foner explains that the issue of slavery only became central after the war had started.

The Union

The United States. During the Civil War, the Union was made up of the "loyal" northern states.

The Confederacy

The nation formed by the southern states that seceded from the Union.

Emancipation Proclamation

A proclamation signed by President Lincoln on January 1, 1863 that declared southern slaves to be free. The proclamation did not apply to slaves in areas that had remained loyal to the Union.

Freedmen's Bureau

A federal department created by Congress to assist southern blacks in maintaining the new rights they were granted after the abolition of slavery.

Civil Rights Acts

Congress passed several civil rights acts during Reconstruction in an effort to exert national authority protecting blacks from the actions of the southern states. After Reconstruction, some of these acts were deemed unconstitutional by the Supreme Court.

Constitutional Amendments

Two important Constitutional Amendments were ratified during Reconstruction. The Fourteenth Amendment guaranteed the rights of citizenship to all men regardless of race. The Fifteenth Amendment granted the right to vote to black men.

Reconstruction Acts

Two significant reconstruction acts were passed by Congress dividing the south into five regions, each with a military administration overseen by a general.

Race Riots

Racial tension in the south sometimes emerged as race riots where whites and blacks fought violent battles.

Presidential Reconstruction

The period of Reconstruction between 1865 and 1867 is called "Presidential Reconstruction" by Foner. It refers to the period when President Andrew Johnson held control over Reconstruction efforts. Johnson, Foner argues, was lenient on white southern landholders in hopes of gaining reelection. He was also slow to enforce civil rights for southern blacks, resulting in a conflict with his party.

Radical Reconstruction

Foner calls the period after Presidential Reconstruction "Radical Reconstruction." It refers to the time when Radical Republicans in Congress assumed control over Reconstruction under the Grant administration.

Redemption

Redemption refers to the time after Reconstruction when the Republican state governments were run out of the South and the Democrats took control.

Republican Party

The dominant political party through the Reconstruction years. A radical wing of the Republican party that favored civil rights for blacks to control in 1867 but saw their influence diminish as the nation sank into economic depression and the Democratic party gained influence in the South.

Democratic Party

The minority party through most of the Reconstruction years. The Democrats were conservative and opposed emancipation and the abolition of slavery. They gained dominance in the South at the end of the Reconstruction years and formed state governments that oppressed and segregated blacks.

Themes

Expansion of Federal Authority

Even before the Civil War, Foner explains, the Republican party was in a period of expanding federal authority over the states. During the war and then Reconstruction a strong central authority was considered essential in order to define the terms on which the defeated southern states could return to the Union and to enforce these terms.

The expansion of federal authority was a radical idea at the time and the wing of the Republican Party that endorsed it was sometimes at odds with more moderate and conservative party members. President Andrew Johnson, for example, a Republican, was reluctant to exercise too much authority over the southern states and was slow to enforce the civil rights extended by Congress to southern blacks. Frustration with Johnson led the Radical Republicans to attempt to remove him from office, another expression of the power Congress felt it had the right to wield. Johnson stayed in office, but was replaced at the next election by U.S. Grant, who allowed the Radicals to take control of Reconstruction.

A series of civil rights acts and other legislation was issued by the Republican-controlled Congress aimed at providing federal protection to southern blacks who were still being intimidated and oppressed in the South. An act outlawing the activities of the Ku Klux Klan was passed in 1871. In addition, the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments were ratified, placing the guarantees of citizenship and voting rights in the Constitution where they could not be violated by any state law.

The tide shifted against this expansion of federal authority after the deep economic depression in the 1870s that reduced the influence of the Republican party as voters dissatisfied with their economic prospects removed them from office. The Democrats, who opposed federal authority over the states, took control of state legislatures in the South and worked to undo the advances made in civil rights by southern blacks. Federal authority was also curtailed when the Supreme Court deemed some of the Reconstruction era civil rights acts as unconstitutional and interpreted the Fourteenth Amendment as applying only to discrimination by the federal government and not to discrimination by individuals.

Transformation of the Republican Party

The Reconstruction era transformed the preavailing ideology of the Republican party, Foner explains, from moderate to radical, then conservative with a liberal reform wing. Prior to the Civil War, the federal government was a comparatively weak force in politics, with state governments holding most of the real power. Toward the end of the Civil War, however, as the Union gained control of portions of the conquered South, the question of how formerly rebellious states might be allowed to rejoin the Union. This

was an issue that could not be determined by the individual states. It was a national question, and it fell to the federal government to make the decision. The Republican party controlled Congress and the White House under Presidents Lincoln, Johnson, Grant and Hayes during the entire period of Reconstruction.

The party was hardly unified during this period and the internal struggles over Reconstruction and the rights of freed slaves contributed to the transformation of the party. Radical Republicans, led by congressmen such as Thaddeus Stevens, called for the extension of full citizenship rights, including voting rights, to freed slaves and the severe punishment of Confederate leaders. Other Republicans, such as President Johnson, wanted to establish Republican influence in the South by reconciling with southern whites and moving slowly on granting rights to blacks. The Radical wing became dominant under President Grant, expanding federal authority to enforce Reconstruction efforts in the south.

Meanwhile, the industrial boom in the North that followed the war made many men rich and this new class found a sympathetic party in the Republicans, who sought to bring economic prosperity to the country. This new wealth was built at the expense of the working class, however, and when labor movements and strike crippled the North, the Republicans were on the opposite side of the workers. President Hayes issued federal troops to suppress some of the labor strikes.

The economic transformation turned national legislators inward to focus on their own states, Foner argues, and national movements such as Reconstruction ceased to be central to their platform. As Reconstruction efforts ended, Democrats gained prominence in the South making a large dent in the Republican party's former influence.

Economic Transformation

The end of slavery was a major economic transformation in the South. While several smaller farmers owned slaves, it was the large plantation owners who relied most on salve labor to turn out cash crops like sugar and cotton. Without the cheap labor of slaves, these crops were often unprofitable. Following emancipation and the end of the war, states sought to restore this source of labor with a contract system that in many ways was like slavery. Workers signed a yearly contract with a landowner to provide work in exchange for a wage or a combination of wages and a place to live. Some contracts forbade workers from leaving the plantation and exacted various fines and penalties for infractions. While this was sometimes little better than slavery, Foner argues, the labor shortage gave blacks at least a small amount of leverage in negotiating their own wage contracts. A more attractive alternative that eventually became available to some blacks was sharecropping, where a family was given a portion of land to work as they wished in exchange for a portion of the crop. This switch to a free labor economy in the South was a difficult one, Foner explains, with whites still willing and able to take advantage of black workers and subject them to conditions similar to slavery.

Economic conditions changed drastically in the North as well. The war brought a boom in production and railroad expansion which made some industrialists very wealthy. It also created a larger working class who became increasingly dissatisfied with their work conditions. In 1873, excessive speculation in railroad bonds created a major collapse in banking and the country sank into a deep economic depression. Labor movements and strikes widened the gap between capitalists and workers in what was viewed by many as a class war.

Style

Perspective

Foner is writing from the perspective of an academic who intends to provide a factual account of events and to present an analysis that shows how they are interconnected and influential on one another as well as to subsequent events. The period he writes about is one of great transformation in American history as the nation tried to reconstruct itself after the hostile split of the Civil War. For the first time, national authority was used to try to extend civil rights to a group of people over the objection of the states. Foner's perspective is a modern one that rejects racism and oppression, and he presents a viewpoint sympathetic to the frustration of the southern blacks who were first enslaved, then promised equality, then thrown back into oppression as the North abandoned Reconstruction efforts.

Foner also holds a certain perspective within the academic community, which he addresses in the epilogue of the book. For many years in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, he explains, historians interpreted Reconstruction as a failed effort to elevate the childlike and simple black race to equality with superior whites at the expense of southern whites. Foner's history is an explicit attempt to repudiate this interpretation.

Finally, Foner concludes by suggesting that the efforts of Reconstruction to protect civil rights of citizens were noble in their motivations, but that the promises made to black Americans were not kept, implying that as a society we still have something to learn by studying Reconstruction.

Tone

Eric Foner is a professor of History and his book is presented as a work of academic research. The tone is straightforward and factual. It makes extensive use of quotations from the period he covers. Reconstruction was a time of great turmoil, and Foner expresses the highly emotional nature of the upheaval that many Americans experienced, particularly in the South. Much of this emotion is conveyed through the quotations he makes use of, including some from frustrated black southerners and sympathetic white northerners. He also expresses the frustration of the southern whites whose way of life has been transformed from outside by the expansion of federal authority.

In the epilogue to the book, Foner expresses his belief that Reconstruction failed in its two major goals to extend civil rights to the blacks and to spread Republican influence into the South. He puts aside the development of the Republican party for the moment and notes that the changes promised the blacks during Reconstruction had never been fully kept. He strikes a melancholic tone as he describes the resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan in the South in the early 20th century, and the intervening near century between

the end of Reconstruction and the rise of the Civil Rights movement when the nation returned to the same issues raised by Reconstruction.

Structure

"Reconstruction" is divided into 12 chapters with a brief introduction and epilogue. Each chapter addresses one significant aspect of the Reconstruction era. The first chapter called, "The World the War Made," sets the background for the book by describing the conditions near the end of the war as President Lincoln signs the Emancipation Proclamation. The next three chapters examine the implications of the shift from slavery to a free labor market. Chapters 5 and 6 describe the troubled administration of President Andrew Johnson, whose efforts to control the course of Reconstruction were taken over by the Radical Republicans in Congress. Chapters 7 through 9 look at the actual changes that took place in the South during the 1870s as federal authority expanded in an effort to protect the rights of blacks. Chapters 10 and 11 look at the changes taking place in the North as the nation experiences an industrial boom followed by a deep depression. Chapter 12 describes the end of Reconstruction as the Radical Republicans lose influence in the North and Democrats push Republicans out of the South. In an epilogue, Foner describes the lasting effects of Reconstruction on the nation and addresses the different ways historians have interpreted the period. The book contains several illustrations and has footnotes throughout.

Quotes

"At the White House, Abraham Lincoln spent most of the day welcoming guests to the traditional New Year's reception. Finally, in the late afternoon, as he had pledged to do 100 days before, the President retired to his office to sign the Emancipation Proclamation" (Chapter 1, p. 1).

"Of the many questions raised by emancipation, none was more crucial to the future place of both blacks and white in Southern society than how the region's economy would henceforth be organized" (Chapter 2, p. 50).

"Long after the and of the Civil War, the experience of bondage remained deeply etched in blacks' collective memory. As one white writer noted years later, blacks could not be shaken from the conviction 'that the white race has barbarously oppressed them'" (Chapter 3, p. 78).

"Northern journalists who hurried south at the end of the Civil War telegraphed back reports of a devastated society. Where the great armies had fought and marched, vast scenes of desolation greeted the observer" (Chapter 4, p. 124).

"Throughout his Presidency, Johnson held the view - not uncommon among Southern yeomen - that slaves had in some way joined forces with their owners to oppress non-slaveholding whites" (Chapter 5, p. 181).

"In both Houses, Republicans outnumbered Democrats by better than three to one. Clearly a united party would have no difficulty enacting a reconstruction policy, and, if necessary, overriding Presidential vetoes. but American parties are not tightly organized, ideologically unified political machines..." (Chapter 6, p. 228).

"Like emancipation, the passage of the Reconstruction Act inspired blacks with a millennial sense of living at the dawn of a new era." (Chapter 7, p. 281).

"Unprecedented challenges confronted the Southern Republicans who came to power between 1868 and 1870. Bequeathed few accomplishments and nearly empty treasuries by their predecessors, they faced the mammoth problems of a society devastated by warfare, new public responsibilities entailed by emancipation, and the task of consolidating an infant political organization." (Chapter 8, p. 346).

"By 1870, the Ku Klux Klan and kindred organizations like the Knights of the White Camelia and the White Brotherhood had become deeply entrenched in nearly every Southern state." (Chapter 9, p. 425).

"Like the South, the victorious north experienced a social transformation after the Civil War. And if the North's reconstruction proved less revolutionary than the South's, the process of change catalyzed by the war continued to accelerate in peacetime." (Chapter 10, p. 460).

"The intoxicating economic expansion of the Age of Capital came to a wrenching halt in 1873. In September, Jay Cooke and Company, a pillar of the nation's banking establishment, collapsed after being unable to market millions of dollars in bonds of the Northern Pacific Railroad. Within days, a financial panic engulfed the credit system." (Chapter 11, p. 512).

"Among other things, 1877 marked a decisive retreat from the idea, born during the Civil War, of a powerful national state protecting the fundamental rights of American citizens." (Chapter 12, p. 582).

Topics for Discussion

Why in Foner's opinion was Reconstruction a failure?

Foner Defines Reconstruction as the period between 1863 and 1877. Why does he choose these dates?

What effect did the abolition and emancipation movements have on women's rights?

How did the Republican party transform during Reconstruction?

How do the ideals of the present Republican and Democratic parties differ from their ideals during Construction?

How does Foner address the way other historians have interpreted Reconstruction?

What motivated northern politicians to push Reconstruction efforts?