

## **Topic: The Failure of Reconstruction**



11<sup>th</sup> Grade U.S. History

### **Goals:**

Students will be able to answer the following question: “Is the failure of Reconstruction the inability to allow the African American economic independence?” They will investigate the primary source documents before forming their own opinion.

### **Learning Objectives:**

- Students will be able to evaluate Lincoln’s interpretation of the Emancipation Proclamation
- Students will be able to analyze primary and secondary sources relating to the topic.
- Students will be able to identify bias in evaluating primary and secondary sources.
- Students will be able to work cooperatively in completing the task.
- Students will be able to develop a position paper based on a specific historical perspective.

### **Connections/Standards Addressed:**

## NCSS:

Through the use of both primary and secondary sources students will answer the essential question “Can a group achieve equality when that group is so dependent on the group that oppressed them?”

### **Standards addressed**

|                            |   |
|----------------------------|---|
| NCSS 1 A – G               | Culture                                   |
| NCSS 2 A – F               | Time, Continuity, and Change              |
| NCSS 3 A, D, E, G, H, I, K | People, Places, and Environments          |
| NCSS 5 A, C, D, F, G,      | Individuals, Groups, and Institutions     |
| NCSS 6 E, F, I             | Power, Authority and Governance           |
| NCSS 7 A, D, H, J          | Production, Distribution, and Consumption |
| NCSS 8 A, C, D, E          | Science, Technology and Society           |
| NCSS 9 B, C, D E, F, G     | Global Connections                        |
| NCSS 10 A                  | Civic Ideals & Practices                  |

### Context:

Can a group achieve equality when that group is so dependent on the group that oppressed them?

### The Bureau’s Failings

Despite the bureau’s success in education, it was unable to alleviate many problems, especially in regard to land management. When the Bureau gave 850,000 acres of abandoned and confiscated land to freedmen, President Andrew Johnson returned the land to confederate owners. Without the resettlement of land, the bureau instead focused on helping freedmen gain work. They encouraged them to work on plantations, but this eventually led to oppressive sharecropping and tenancy arrangements.

### Materials/Technology/Web Resources Needed:

- **PowerPoint Presentation: Emancipation Proclamation and Civil Rights**
- **Handouts: Background/ Note taking matrix/Rubrics**

### Procedure:

After an introduction to the Emancipation Proclamation and President Lincoln:

1. Students will be grouped heterogeneously.
2. Each group will be given a series of documents and a grid chart to analyze the information.
3. Each group will research the essential question by reading the informational student handout and analyzing the primary sources.
4. After researching the information, the group will discuss the essential question within their group and come to a group consensus on the answer to the question.
5. Each group read the editorials.
6. Each group will then construct your own Letter to the Editor.

**Student Assessment:**

Evaluation based on level of participation, peer evaluations and the attached rubrics. Students will be able to support and defend their answer to the essential question.

1. Each group researches the essential question by reading the student handout and looking at the websites provided for their group. Students take notes using the graphic organizer 1.
2. After researching the information, the group needs to discuss the essential question within their group and come to a group consensus on the answer to the question.
3. Each group needs to create a letter to the editor answering the question, using the graphic organizer 2.

*Essential Question:*

Can a group achieve equality when that group is so dependent on the group that oppressed them?

*Your Task:*

1. Each group will be given a series of documents and a grid chart to analyze the information.
2. Each group will research the essential question by reading the informational student handout and analyzing the primary sources.
3. After researching the information, the group will discuss the essential question within their group and come to a group consensus on the answer to the question. This is the MOST difficult part! Can you all agree?
4. After reading the letters to the editor regarding Andrew Johnson's returning land to former rebels together as a group. Each group will construct their own Letter to the Editor.
5. Be sure to use the graphic organizer and refer to the rubric for assessment criteria.

Student Handout Note Taking Matrix

| <i>Document</i>  | <i>Summary<br/>Your own<br/>Words</i> | <i>So What, Why<br/>is this<br/>important?</i> | <i>Your Reaction</i> | <i>Questions you<br/>still have</i> |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|----------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <i>Historical<br/>Background<br/>Freedman's<br/>bureau</i>   |                                       |  |                      |                                     |
| <i>Final report of<br/>the American<br/>Freedmen's<br/>Inquiry<br/>Commission to<br/>the Secretary of<br/>War.</i> |                                       |  |                      |                                     |
| <i>The<br/>Freedmen's<br/>Bureau Act of<br/>1865</i>   |                                       |  |                      |                                     |
| <i>President<br/>Johnson's<br/>Amnesty<br/>Proclamation</i>  |                                       |  |                      |                                     |



## Historical Background Freedman's bureau

Freedmen was the term given to those slaves who became free men after the U.S. Congress passed the Confiscation Act of 1862. Under this act, Confederates who did not surrender within 60 days of the act's passage were to be punished by having their slaves freed. It also dealt with a problem that had plagued field commanders occupying Southern territory. As troops advanced, slaves sought refuge in Union camps, and Federal commanders were confused over their obligations to the refugees. Some freed the slaves, other sent them back to their master for lack of means to care for them. The Confiscation Act declared all slaves taking refuge behind Union lines captives of war who were to be set free. The Act essentially paved the way for the Emancipation Proclamation and solved the immediate dilemma facing the army concerning the status of slaves within its jurisdiction.

After this act was passed, thousands of Southern slaves became "freedmen. Though they had eagerly awaited their liberators, freedom was accompanied by frightening uncertainties.

Homeless, with few possessions, blacks fleeing to Union lines for protection found themselves as dependent on the Federal government for their existence as they had been on their masters. But Washington issued no concrete policy concerning their welfare, and field commanders saddled with caring for the refugees resorted to various means of providing them with food, shelter, and clothing.

Many freedmen, herded into contraband camps, were hired out to loyal Unionist plantation owners for low wages, and others in the Western theater were assigned parcels of confiscated lands for subsistence farming. Still others rendered service to the army.

Unaccustomed to administering refugee relief, the army generally managed to maintain freedmen at a subsistence level. But many died of disease in overcrowded stockades, and some voluntarily returned to their homes because of deplorable conditions. Supplemental aid arrived from Northern relief societies that collected food and clothing for the freedmen and by 1862 began sending teachers to educate them. That year the New England Freedman's Aid Society was operating schools in South Carolina, and before war's end blacks in Mississippi and Georgia had founded schools for their own people.

Not all freedmen dared trust whites professing friendship. Abuses of slavery were fresh in their minds, and many suffered injustices at the hands of invading white soldiers. Knowing the war was not over, unsure of what or whom to believe, many preferred to stay with their masters, whose power over them would remain after Union forces moved on. Others joined the Federal army after 1863, or followed it aimlessly, not knowing what else to do.

In 1863 the war department created the "American Freedmen's Inquiry Commission" to suggest methods for dealing with emancipated slaves. The commission's key conclusion was that no bureau or agency set up to help the ex-slaves should become a permanent institution but should instead encourage the negroes to become self-reliant as quickly as possible.

Out of this commission's report, was born, on March 4, 1865, the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, also known as the "Freedmen's Bureau." Despite its official title its main purpose was to help the more than four million former slaves, most with any resources or education populating the South after the war. Congress created the Freedman's Bureau, with a life span of just one year, to distribute clothing, food, and fuel to destitute freedmen and to oversee "all subjects relating to their condition" in the South. The bureau was not granted a separate budget for its work, but instead drew funds from the Department of War. Heading the bureau was none other than General Oliver O. Howard, a graduate of Bowdoin and West point and a very distinguished Civil War veteran. A devout churchgoer and fervent civil rights advocate, Howard helped manage the bureau's approximately 900 agents.

One of the most difficult challenges of the bureau was instituting a judicial system that would be fair to both blacks and whites. At first, the bureau established its own judicial authority, with local agents setting up temporary three-man courts to hear individual disputes between white employees who were dealing for the first time with black employees demanding fair wages.

Without adequate manpower or financial resources for such an enormous undertaking, however, the bureau instead worked to persuade the Southern states to recognize racial equality in their own judicial proceedings. Bureau agents monitored state and local legal affairs and often intervened on behalf of blacks.

Introducing a system of free labor economy was another of the bureau's responsibilities. The bureau's goal in this respect was to return the ex-slaves to plantation labor, which was still essential to the Southern economy, but to do so under conditions that would allow blacks to work their way up and out of the labor class. One way to accomplish this was to distribute lands confiscated or abandoned during the war-some 850,000 acres in 1865-to newly freed slaves. "Forty acres and a mule" was the slogan for the Reconstruction land-grant plan, but in the end only about 2,000 South Carolina and 1,500 Georgia freedmen actually received the land they had been promised-less than one percent of the four million ex-slaves populating the South.

Another challenge facing the negro in the South was the abysmal lack of health care services. The bureau attempted to strengthen existing medical care facilities as well as expand services into rural areas through newly established clinics.

Perhaps the most important contribution the bureau made to Reconstruction efforts involved expanding educational opportunities to emancipated African-Americans. Lacking adequate resources, the bureau did not establish new schools itself, but instead acted as a catalyst between Northern relief societies and local governments and individuals. By 1869, about 3,000 new schools serving more than 150,000 pupils, as well as dozens of evening and private schools, had been established. Working with the American Missionary Association and the American Freedman's Union Commission, the bureau also founded and staffed the first black colleges in the South, all of which were initially designed to train black teachers who would teach black students.

Also, despite inadequate funding and a shortage of facilities, the bureau enabled an estimated 500,000 freedmen to receive medical attention in more than 100 hospitals.

Despite its accomplishments, the Freedmen's Bureau was also known to be a corrupt and often inefficient organization. Although Howard himself was above reproach, the agents in the field, usually left completely to their own devices, used their positions to



exact money and power from the very people they were meant to serve.

In December 1865, the Radical Republicans in Congress managed to pass a strengthened Freedman's Bureau Act, but were disappointed when President Andrew Johnson vetoed it.

Officially existing for just one year, plagued by corruption, and lacking enough funding and manpower to complete what was indeed a Herculean task, the bureau nonetheless made great strides in providing newly emancipated negroes with access to equal justice, fair labor practices, land, and education.

In order to fully understand the plight of the freed slaves and what brought about the Freedmen's Bureau one must fully examine the slavery issue as it existed in the country at the time. To do that, both the Preliminary and the Final reports of the Freedmen's Inquiry Commission are provided. These are extracted in their entirety from the "Official Records of the War of the Rebellion." On April 15, 1861, President Lincoln proclaimed a blockade of Confederate ports. A *blockade* is the use of ships and force to close hostile ports to prevent any maritime commerce. Five days after the attack on Fort Sumter, President Jefferson Davis authorized privateers to prey on the Union's commercial ships. A *privateer* is an armed ship that is privately owned and manned but commissioned by a government to fight and harass enemy ships. Many foreign ships engaged with commerce were in southern ports as well Union ports. It was inevitable that clashes would come, and mistakes made, in blockading the southern ports and in the taking of prize. *Prize* is cargo or booty seized from enemy ships. As a rule, a blockade is an instrument of war between two belligerent powers or nations. Supposedly, if Lincoln believed the Confederacy did not exist, he would simply close all southern ports so they could not be supplied by the other nations. Lincoln was convinced that an order closing the ports would be repeatedly tested by foreign vessels and that conflict with the European naval powers would result, so he ordered the blockade, with enforcement by the Union Navy.

Primary Document to consider: Final report of the American Freedmen's Inquiry Commission to the Secretary of War.

OFFICE OF THE AMERICAN FREEDMEN'S  
INQUIRY COMMISSION,  
*New York City, May 15, 1864.*

To the Hon. EDWIN M. STANTON,  
*Secretary of War:*

Praying reference to our preliminary report heretofore made, we have now the honor to submit to you the final report of our Commission.

Observations on portions of the country which had not been visited at the date of our former report, and on the free colored population of Canada West, are contained in supplemental reports A and B. The present report embraces considerations of a more general character--some historical, some legal, some prospective--all connecting themselves with the well-being and destiny of the race now in a state of transition among us from slavery to freedom.

The terms of your order which created the Commission demanding an inquiry as to the measures which may best contribute to the protection and improvement of the recently emancipated freedmen of the United States, and to their self-defense and self-support, involve not alone the question whether a system of provisional or permanent guardianship be necessary or proper to effect these objects, and (in case that should appear to be so) the further question what the details of such a system should be, but also, incidentally, the prior inquiry whether the protecting freedom of these people is reliably founded, and whether it can endure unless emancipation become universal throughout the Union, extending to the border as well as to the rebel States. There is involved yet another question, inseparably connected with the future destiny of the Nation--the great question whether, in the course of human events, with or without the aid of precautionary measures, it be likely that the two races hitherto the dominant and subordinate shall be able, when both shall be free, persistently to endure side by side, and to live together in one common country harmoniously and with mutual advantage. And, in connection with the preceding subjects of inquiry, lying, indeed, at the base of the whole matter, it has seemed to the Commission proper briefly to review the history, in this Western Hemisphere, of these two races so far as they have been connected with each other, the character and effect of that connection, and the results that have sprung and are yet to spring from it. Guided by this view of our duties, we offer on the general subject some prefatory observations.

**The Freedmen's Bureau Act of 1865**

**March 3, 1865**

CHAP. XC.—An Act to establish a Bureau for the Relief of Freedmen and Refugees. Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That there is hereby established in the War Department, to continue during the present war of rebellion, and for one year thereafter, a bureau of refugees, freedmen, and abandoned lands, to which shall be committed, as hereinafter provided, the supervision and management of all abandoned lands, and the control of all subjects relating to refugees and freedmen from rebel states, or from any district of country within the territory embraced in the operations of the army, under such rules and regulations as may be prescribed by the head of the bureau and approved by the President. The said bureau shall be under the management and control of a commissioner to be appointed by the President, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate, whose compensation shall be three thousand dollars per annum, and such number of clerks as may be assigned to him by the Secretary of War, not exceeding one chief clerk, two of the fourth class, two of the third class, and five of the first class. And the commissioner and all persons appointed under this act, shall, before entering upon their duties, take the oath of office prescribed in an act entitled "An act to prescribe an oath of office, and for other purposes," approved July second, eighteen hundred and sixty-two, and the commissioner and the chief clerk shall, before entering upon their duties, give bonds to the treasurer of the United States, the former in the sum of fifty thousand dollars, and the latter in the sum of ten thousand dollars, conditioned for the faithful discharge of their duties respectively, with securities to be approved as sufficient by the Attorney-General, which bonds shall be filed in the office of the first comptroller of the treasury, to be by him put in suit for the benefit of any injured party upon any breach of the conditions thereof.

SEC. 2. And be it further enacted, That the Secretary of War may direct such issues of provisions, clothing, and fuel, as he may deem needful for the immediate and temporary shelter and supply of destitute and suffering refugees and freedmen and their wives and children, under such rules and regulations as he may direct.

SEC. 3. And be it further enacted, That the President may, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate, appoint an assistant commissioner for each of the states declared to be in insurrection, not exceeding ten in number, who shall, under the direction of the commissioner, aid in the execution of the provisions of this act; and he shall give a bond to the Treasurer of the United States, in the sum of twenty thousand dollars, in the form and manner prescribed in the first section of this act. Each of said commissioners shall receive an annual salary of two thousand five hundred dollars in full compensation for all his services. And any military officer may be detailed and assigned to duty under this act without increase of pay or allowances. The commissioner shall, before the commencement of each regular session of congress, make full report of his proceedings with exhibits of the state of his accounts to the President, who shall communicate the same to congress, and shall also make special reports whenever required to do so by the President or either house of congress; and the

assistant commissioners shall make quarterly reports of their proceedings to the commissioner, and also such other special reports as from time to time may be required.

SEC. 4. And be it further enacted, That the commissioner, under the direction of the President, shall have authority to set apart, for the use of loyal refugees and freedmen, such tracts of land within the insurrectionary states as shall have been abandoned, or to which the United States shall have acquired title by confiscation or sale, or otherwise, and to every male citizen, whether refugee or freedman, as aforesaid, there shall be assigned not more than forty acres of such land, and the person to whom it was so assigned shall be protected in the use and enjoyment of the land for the term of three years at an annual rent not exceeding six per centum upon the value of such land, as it was appraised by the state authorities in the year eighteen hundred and sixty, for the purpose of taxation, and in case no such appraisal can be found, then the rental shall be based upon the estimated value of the land in said year, to be ascertained in such manner as the commissioner may by regulation prescribe. At the end of said term, or at any time during said term, the occupants of any parcels so assigned may purchase the land and receive such title thereto as the United States can convey, upon paying therefor the value of the land, as ascertained and fixed for the purpose of determining the annual rent aforesaid.

SEC. 5. And be it further enacted, That all acts and parts of acts inconsistent with the provisions of this act, are hereby repealed.

APPROVED, March 3, 1865.

U.S., Statutes at Large, Treaties, and Proclamations of the United States of America, vol. 13 (Boston, 1866), pp. 507-9.

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Source: <http://www.history.umd.edu/Freedmen/fbact.htm>

Freedmen – ex-slaves

Insurrectionary – rebellious

Aforesaid – said or named before or above

***PRESIDENT JOHNSON'S AMNESTY PROCLAMATION***

***MAY 29, 1865***

Whereas the President of the United States, on the 8th day of December, A.D. eighteen hundred and sixty-three, and on the 26 day of March, A.D. eighteen hundred and sixty-four, did, with the object to suppress the existing rebellion, to induce all persons to return to their loyalty, and to restore the authority of the United States, issue proclamations offering amnesty and pardon to certain persons who had directly or by implication participated in the said rebellion; and whereas many persons who had so engaged in said rebellion have, since the issuance of said proclamations, failed or neglected to take the benefits offered thereby; and whereas many persons who have been justly deprived of all claim to amnesty and pardon thereunder, by reason of their participation directly or by implication in said rebellion, and continued hostility to the government of the United States since the date of said proclamation, now desire to apply for and obtain amnesty and pardon:

To the end, therefore, that the authority of the government of the United States may be restored, and that peace, order, and freedom may be established, I, ANDREW JOHNSON, President of the United States, do proclaim and declare that I hereby grant to all persons who have, directly or indirectly, participated in the existing rebellion, except as hereinafter excepted, amnesty and pardon, with restoration of all rights of property, except as to slaves, and except in cases where legal proceedings, under the laws of the United States providing for the confiscation of property of persons engaged in rebellion, have been instituted; but upon the condition, nevertheless, that every such person shall take and subscribe the following oath, (or affirmation,) and thenceforward keep and maintain said oath inviolate; and which oath shall be registered for permanent preservation, and shall be of the tenor and effect following, to wit:

I, \_\_\_\_\_, do solemnly swear, (or affirm,) in presence of Almighty God, that I will henceforth faithfully support, protect, and defend the Constitution of the United States, and the union of the States thereunder; and that I will, in like manner, abide by, and faithfully support all laws and proclamations which have been made during the existing rebellion with reference to the emancipation of slaves. So help me God.

The following classes of persons are excepted from the benefits of this proclamation:

- 1st, all who are or shall have been pretended civil or diplomatic officers or otherwise domestic or foreign agents of the pretended Confederate government;
- 2nd, all who left judicial stations under the United States to aid the rebellion;
- 3d, all who shall have been military or naval officers of said pretended Confederate government above the rank of colonel in the army or lieutenant in the navy;
- 4th, all who left seats in the Congress of the United States to aid the rebellion;
- 5th, all who resigned or tendered resignations of their commissions in the army or navy of the United States to evade duty in resisting the rebellion;
- 6th, all who have engaged in any way in treating otherwise than lawfully as prisoners of war persons found in the United States service, as officers, soldiers, seamen, or in other capacities;
- 7th, all persons who have been, or are absentees from the United States for the purpose of aiding the rebellion;

8th, all military and naval officers in the rebel service, who were educated by the government in the Military Academy at West Point or the United States Naval Academy;  
9th, all persons who held the pretended offices of governors of States in insurrection against the United States;

10th, all persons who left their homes within the jurisdiction and protection of the United States, and passed beyond the Federal military lines into the pretended Confederate States for the purpose of aiding the rebellion;

11th, all persons who have been engaged in the destruction of the commerce of the United States upon the high seas, and all persons who have made raids into the United States from Canada, or been engaged in destroying the commerce of the United States upon the lakes and rivers that separate the British Provinces from the United States;

12th, all persons who, at the time when they seek to obtain the benefits hereof by taking the oath herein prescribed, are in military, naval, or civil confinement, or custody, or under bonds of the civil, military, or naval authorities, or agents of the United States as prisoners of war, or persons detained for offenses of any kind, either before or after conviction;

13th, all persons who have voluntarily participated in said rebellion, and the estimated value of whose taxable property is over twenty thousand dollars;

14th, all persons who have taken the oath of amnesty as prescribed in the President's proclamation of December 8th, A.D. 1863, or an oath of allegiance to the government of the United States since the date of said proclamation, and who have not thenceforward kept and maintained the same inviolate.

Provided, That special application may be made to the President for pardon by any person belonging to the excepted classes; and such clemency will be liberally extended as may be consistent with the facts of the case and the peace and dignity of the United States.

The Secretary of State will establish rules and regulations for administering and recording the said amnesty oath, so as to insure its benefit to the people, and guard the government against fraud.

In testimony whereof, I have hereunto set my hand, and caused the seal of the United States to be affixed.

Done at the City of Washington, the twenty-ninth day of May, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-five, and of the Independence of the United States the eighty-ninth.

ANDREW JOHNSON

By the President: WILLIAM H. SEWARD, Secretary of State

Source:

[http://www.legislature.state.al.us/misc/history/constitutions/1865/1865amnesty\\_proc.htm](http://www.legislature.state.al.us/misc/history/constitutions/1865/1865amnesty_proc.htm)

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Object – goal

Amnesty – the act of an authority (such as a government) by which pardon is granted to a large group of individuals

Pardon – and official forgiveness for an offense

Question: "Can a group achieve equality when that group is so dependent on the group that oppressed them?"



SEA-ISLAND SCHOOL, No. 1.—ST. HELENA ISLAND, ESTABLISHED APRIL, 1862.

TEACHERS ( MISS LARSEN V. TORRE,  
J. L. S. SUGLEY,  
MRS. MARGRET N. EDWARDS.

Supported by the Pennsylvania Branch.

## EDUCATION AMONG THE FREEDMEN.

Pennsylvania Branch of the American Freedman's Union Commission.

PENNSYLVANIA FREEDMEN'S RELIEF ASSOCIATION,

No. 711 Sanson Street.

TO THE FRIENDS OF EDUCATION AMONG THE FREEDMEN.

As we enter upon our work for another year, we wish to present a statement of our plans and wants to the people.

The various organizations throughout the country having the education of the Freedmen in charge, have provided schools for 150,000 persons, in care of fourteen hundred teachers. The expense of supporting these schools has been borne by voluntary contributions.

It is frequently asked, Does not the Government accomplish this work through the "Freedmen's Bureau?" The simple answer is, No! The "Bureau" has no authority to employ teachers. The representatives of the "Bureau," from the honored Commissioner

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*Editorial*

*Harper's Weekly, March 10, 1866, page 146*

**The Freedmen's Bureau**

In our remarks last week upon the Veto Message we assumed from the President's remarks that he proposed to leave the freedmen to the care of the States in which they live. We did so because he spoke of some of those States as in his opinion entitled to resume their normal relations with the Union, and consequently to the right of caring for all their people. He spoke of the present Freedmen's Bureau as still existing; but as that is to expire a year after the end of the war, and as he told us war was now ended, it was fair to assume that the present arrangement would end by the first of May. Moreover, he did not say that he approved such a Bureau, and by insisting that the freedmen were not so forlorn as has been represented, and might emigrate if they were dissatisfied or appeal to the courts, he very plainly intimated, as we inferred, that their rights were not to be defended by the United States. We therefore said nothing of his objections to the particular bill presented to him, but simply expressed our profound sorrow that, in his judgment, the emancipated slaves ought to be abandoned homeless, houseless, landless, and at an inconceivable disadvantage to those who are peculiarly hostile to them.



**Kicking Freedmen's Bureau April 5, 1866** – by *Thomas Nast HarpWeek Commentary: On April 14, 1866, Thomas Nast drew a cartoon of "The Grand Masquerade Ball" featuring large sketches of many of the celebrities of the day. Andrew Johnson is pictured kicking out the Freedmen's Bureau with his veto, with scattered black people coming out of it.*

That our view was not singular was proved by the universal excitement that followed the Message. The party of hostility to human rights, the "Democracy," whose sole article of faith is contempt of negroes, fired their loudest guns at the pleasing prospect that the loyal people of South Carolina who had fought for the Union were now to be turned over to the revengeful hands of those who had fought against it. The extreme opponents of this party, true friends of the people and of equal rights also generally hung their heads in speechless sorrow and amazement. But the *Evening Post*, which is edited by men as faithful to justice and equal



rights as man can be; Henry Ward Beecher, whose tongue flames and sparkles against the enemies of man; and many a private citizen not less constant in the good faith, openly asserted that they did not understand the President to be opposed to any bill, but only to the present one, and for reasons which were in some points very weighty. But such was the doubt of the President's position arising from the want of precision of statement, and from the mixed discussions of his Message, that it was immediately announced that the Secretary of State would come to New York and speak upon the subject. Under such circumstances a speech could only be an explanation, and we waited patiently the Secretary's coming.

Mr. Seward's reception was deserved. It was a tumult of enthusiasm. Every man in the audience remembered his services and his sufferings, and forgot every thing else. The important part of his speech was this plain declaration:

"Both the President and Congress agree that during the brief transition which the country is making from civil war to internal peace the freedmen and refugees ought not to be abandoned by the nation to persecution or suffering. It was for this transition period that the Bureau of Freedmen was created by Congress, and was kept and is still kept in effective operation. Both the President and Congress, on the other hand, agree that when that transition period shall have been fully passed, and the harmonious relations between the States and the Union fully restored, that bureau would be not only unnecessary, but unconstitutional, demoralizing, and dangerous, and therefore that it should cease to exist."

He added that the President thought the transition period was nearly passed, and that the original provision is sufficient for the end desired. That provision is for a year after the end of the war; but the war does not end, he said, until a proclamation is issued by the Government; and if, as the year closes, it is found necessary to continue the provision, it is for Congress to continue it. Mr. Seward confirmed our view that in the President's judgment the war of the rebellion is "not yet fully closed."

General Howard was equally uncertain of the President's meaning, and asked an explanation. The General subsequently issued a letter to the agents of the present bureau informing them that the President regards the law as continuing "at least a year from this time;" and Senator Wilson, who has wisely maintained pleasant relations with the President, has introduced a bill extending the operations of the present bill for two years.

We are sincerely glad that this is the truth. The national disgrace of an abandonment of the freedmen in their present condition to those who lately held them as slaves would be overwhelming. They are our wards, and we have no moral right to relinquish their hands until we leave them as fully secure in every civil right as every other citizen. Upon this point there is no difference of opinion among Union men. It is the "Democracy" only which would abandon them. The President, in his conversation with Governor Cox, of Ohio, speaks of his resolution to see justice done with a distinctness which we should have been glad to find in his Message. The case is unprecedented, and we must treat it accordingly.

## Task: Letter to the editor

- ✓ After reading the letters to the editor regarding Andrew Johnson's returning land to former rebels.
- ✓ You will construct your own Letter to the Editor.

### Tips on Writing Letters to the Editor

Letters to the editor are great advocacy tools. After you write letters to your members of Congress, sending letters to the editor can achieve other advocacy goals because they:

- reach a large audience.
- are often monitored by elected officials.
- can bring up information not addressed in a news article.
- create an impression of widespread support or opposition to an issue.

**Keep it short and on one subject.** Many newspapers have strict limits on the length of letters and have limited space to publish them. Keeping your letter brief will help assure that your important points are not cut out by the newspaper.

**Make it legible.** Your letter doesn't have to be fancy, but you should use a typewriter or computer word processor if your handwriting is difficult to read.

**Send letters to weekly community newspapers too.** The smaller the newspaper's circulation, the easier it is to get your letter printed.

**Be sure to include your contact information.** Many newspapers will only print a letter to the editor after calling the author to verify his or her identity and address. Newspapers will not give out that information, and will usually only print your name and city should your letter be published.

**Make references to the newspaper.** While some papers print general commentary, many will only print letters that refer to a specific article. Here are some examples of easy ways to refer to articles in your opening sentence:

- I was disappointed to see that The Post's May 18 editorial "School Vouchers Are Right On" omitted some of the key facts in the debate.
- I strongly disagree with (author's name) narrow view on women's reproductive rights. ("Name of Op-Ed," date)
- I am deeply saddened to read that Congressman Doe is working to roll back affirmative action. ("Title of Article," date)

If you get published, [please let us know](#).

## **Editorial Rubric**

### **4 points**

- This editorial is written with an interesting lead to bring the reader into the story.
- This story contains an abundant amount of background information about the issue.
- This article has a clearly stated opinion toward the beginning of the article.
- This article contains at least 3 different, but logical reasons for the stated opinion.
- All of the reasons are written to convince the appropriate audience.
- Each reason is written in a topic sentence of separate paragraphs.
- The writer uses effective words throughout the article to make transitions between ideas.
- The ending of the story restates all the reasons in one sentence.
- The writer ends the article giving at least 3 specific recommendations for the reader to take action.
- The writer uses all correct grammar and spelling.

### **3 points**

- This editorial is written with an interesting lead to bring the reader into the story.
- This story contains some background information about the issue being debated.
- This article has an opinion that could be stated more clearly using better wording.
- This article contains at least 3 reasons for the stated opinion with 2 being very distinct from each other and logical for the argument.
- Two of the reasons would concern the intended audience.
- Each reason is written in separate paragraphs, but not necessarily in the topic sentence.
- The writer uses some transitions between each idea.
- The ending of the story restates most of the reasons.
- The writer ends the article giving at least 2 specific recommendations for the reader.
- The article contains mostly correct grammar and spelling.

### **2 points**

- This editorial is written with a lead but it needs to be more interesting.
- This story contains very little background information about the issue at hand.
- This article has an opinion which is somewhat confusing.
- This article contains only one really valid reason for the opinion given, and 2 debatable reasons.
- One of the reasons would concern the intended audience.
- The reasons are not necessarily written in distinct paragraphs.
- The writer uses only a couple transitions between ideas.
- The ending of the story restates one of the reasons.
- The writer ends the article giving at least 1 recommendation for the reader.
- The article contains several grammar and spelling mistakes.

### **1 point**

- This article contains an issue which impacts only a few people in the society.
- This editorial is written with a boring lead which does not encourage the reader to continue.
- This story contains no background information about the issue being discussed.
- The writer is very confusing about his/her opinion on the issue.
- This article does not contain any valid reasons for the given opinion.
- None of the reasons address the intended audience.
- The reasons are not written in good paragraphs and have no logical order.
- The writer does not use any transitions between ideas.
- The ending of the story does not summarize any of the reasons.
- The ending of the story does not give any clear recommendations for the reader to take action.
- The article contains many grammar and spelling mistakes

# Editorial Graphic Organizer

**T** Topic Sentence

**R** Reasons with Support

1

2

3

**A** Answer opposition

1

2

**C** Conclusion