

one would prevent African-Americans from voting. 5. Southerners disliked carpetbaggers because they felt that the northerners didn't understand southern culture.



TRANSCRIPT OF THE VIDEO

(Underlined words may be used for vocabulary lessons.)

LILLY: Gosh, Mr. Beanbody! The Civil War really was terrible, wasn't it?

MR. BEANBODY: Oh, yes. Indeed it was, Lilly. During those four long years of conflict, more than 620,000 soldiers died.

And of course, there was all that destruction – of homes, farms and businesses.

JEFFREY: Not to mention the soldiers who were injured for life!

MR. BEANBODY: Yes, Jeffrey. The war's aftermath presented huge difficulties for millions of Americans – for soldiers, former

slave owners and African-Americans who had recently received their freedom.

The lives of many people had been destroyed in the conflict. The big question was, “would come next?”

Well, the 10-12 year period after the Civil War saw a great deal of rebuilding – of burned homes, collapsed bridges and shattered transportation facilities.

This period, called “the reconstruction,” also saw a great deal of new government activity and an expansion of educational opportunities.

The reconstruction period, in short, was a time of great change in the United States. But it was also a time of unrest as Americans tried to figure out exactly what kind of country they wanted to have after the war.

JEFFREY: I bet the one thing they tried to figure out was what to do with the states that left the union.

MR. BEANBODY: Exactly right, Jeffrey! In fact, in President Lincoln’s last public speech, he talked about how hard it would be to reunite the country.

LINCOLN: It is fraught with great difficulty. We simply must begin with – and mold from – disorganized and conflicting parts. So new and unprecedented is this situation, that no plan can safely be prescribed in detail.

MR. BEANBODY: Even so, one thing was clear. President Lincoln didn’t want to punish the South. Instead, he said, there should be...

LINCOLN: ...malice toward none and charity for all.

MR. BEANBODY: Keeping that in mind, he devised what was called “The Ten Percent Plan.”

The plan would pardon all ex-Confederates, except high-ranking officials, those who resigned judgeships or congressional memberships, or mistreated African-American soldiers.

And it would take effect when 10 percent of the voting population

of the South took a loyalty oath to the United States. When that happened, the states, according to President Lincoln's plan, could rejoin the union.

But many in congress didn't like the plan – especially a group in Lincoln's own party. They were called "Radical Republicans."

SENATOR ONE: The Confederate states should once again become territories and should be treated as a conquered foreign land!

SENATOR TWO: A majority of white male citizens needs to vote for re-entry and they will have to take an ironclad oath that they had never participated in the war as a confederate soldier, or helped the Confederacy in any way.

SENATOR ONE: And only congress – not the president – can authorize re-admittance.

SENATOR TWO: Furthermore, all Confederate military officers above the rank of lieutenant should not be pardoned nor should they be permitted to vote ever again!

MR. BEANBODY: So there were two very different ideas about what to do with the South (and southerners) after the war – one harsh, the other lenient.

Despite those great differences, President Lincoln wanted to make sure that slavery would never again be allowed in the United States. So he and others proposed the 13th Amendment to the constitution in 1864. The Senate passed it in April of that year.

It stated that slavery would never again exist in the United States.

After President Lincoln was assassinated at Ford's Theater on April 14th, 1865, the Radical Republicans took control of reconstruction.

They were responsible for passing the First Reconstruction Act of 1867, which created five military districts, each commanded by a general who would regulate elections in his region.

For the first time, African-Americans in the South were granted a

legal right to vote. Furthermore, the Reconstruction Act provided for soldiers who made certain that no one would prevent Blacks from voting.

And perhaps even more importantly, the soon-to-be passed 14th Amendment said that all people born in the United States (including African-Americans) were legal citizens and no state could deny them their rights -- including the right to vote, without due process of law (that is, a court order).

Congress also passed a law creating the Freedmen's Bureau, an agency that set up schools, established medical clinics and created food distribution centers for former slaves.

It was the first time that the federal government undertook so many large programs aimed at protecting people's rights and improving their lives.

LILLY: So everybody was happy about that, right?

MR. BEANBODY: Well, not everybody, Lilly. Many white southerners became very resentful when their traditional political party – the Democratic Party – no longer won elections for many state and local offices.

JEFFREY: Because now African-Americans could vote – and they voted for Republicans?

MR. BEANBODY: Exactly right, Jeffrey! Many former plantation owners were embittered by all these changes.

They were also upset because, with no more slaves, they appeared to have no way to farm their lands.

PENELOPE: It's those dreadful carpetbaggers! They're the ones causing all our misery.

JEFFREY: What's a carpetbagger, Mr. Beanbody?

MR. BEANBODY: Carpetbaggers were, Jeffrey, people from the North who came to the South after the war. It's said that many carried their belongings in a carpetbag. So that's how they got their name.

Many southerners intensely disliked the carpetbaggers, saying they didn't understand the South's culture.

While there were some northerners who did come to the South after the war, most were former union soldiers who came to the South *during* the war and decided to stay there because of the region's warm climate and inexpensive land.

ALBERT: Well, as far as I'm concerned, carpetbaggers are nothing more than low-down scoundrels. But I do declare, scalawags are even worse!

LILLY: What were scalawags? Were they from the North, too?

MR. BEANBODY: No, no, Lilly. Scalawags were southerners who, after the war, decided to support the northern victors, often for personal gain.

LILLY: Why were they called scalawags?

MR. BEANBODY: Well, a scalawag was a small horse – a runt. It didn't do any work, so it was useless.

To southerners, the term was used to show their absolute disdain for what they saw as a useless, loathsome traitor.

MARCUS: All I know is that we have to do something, and do it now!

MR. BEANBODY: What some southerners did was both terrible and unlawful. Knowing that one way to regain their power was to prevent African-Americans from voting, they threatened them with bodily harm or even death if they went to the polls.

The threats worked in many cases. For instance, in the 1868 elections, there were 9,300 African-American men registered to vote in Georgia, but only 87 went to the polls.

So the 15th Amendment to the constitution was written and approved. It guaranteed the right of black men to vote with these words: "...the right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude."

While many whites in the South may not have wanted African-

Americans to vote, they did want them as agricultural workers. In fact, they *needed* them on their farms after the war.

But white farmers didn't have enough money to pay blacks for their work. So a system called "tenant farming" or "sharecropping" was used.

Under this system, two-thirds of the tenant farmer's harvest was given to the landowner – who was usually white – but that amount was later reduced to one half.

The tenant farmer (or share cropper) kept the rest.

Of course, former slaves wanted their own farm, but they didn't have the education needed to get into the farming business, nor did they have enough money to buy tools and land.

African-Americans felt that the only way to get their own land, or start a business, was to get an education.

With the help of the Freedmen's Bureau schools, black Americans increased their literacy rate from five percent at the end of the Civil War, in 1865, to 25 percent in 1900 – about the same percentage as white Americans at that time.

Even so, at the beginning of the 20th century, only 15 percent of black farmers owned the land they worked on.

In fact, despite the 13th, 14th, and 15th amendments and many civil rights laws passed in congress after the war, the reconstruction period did not bring as much freedom to African-Americans as many had hoped.

LILLY: Gosh, Mr. Beanbody! After all the terrible things that came with slavery and after four long years of civil war, very little changed for African-Americans!

MR. BEANBODY: Regrettably so, Lilly. But you could say the reconstruction period set the stage for much larger, more important developments that would come later.

Important changes can take a very long time. In fact, it took about 100 years until many in our country took up the cause of African-American rights once again.

The 13th, 14th and 15th amendments, the civil rights laws, and government programs such as the Freedmen's Bureau – all started during the reconstruction period.

And all helped America become the country it is today!



Web Resources

Reconstruction

<http://www.ushistory.org/us/35.asp>

An brief, yet excellent overview of the period

The Freedmen's Bureau Online

<http://freedmensbureau.com>

Excellent, detailed material on the bureau

The KKK in the Reconstruction Era

<http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/history-archaeology/ku-klux-klan-reconstruction-era>

Detailed information on the topic