

2

The Civil War, Reconstruction and Jim Crow 1861–1900

POINTS TO CONSIDER

From 1861 to 1865, the Northern states fought to keep the Southern states within the Union of the United States in a Civil War that many believed was fought over slavery. The Northern victory ensured the end of slavery and a period of 'Reconstruction' of the defeated South. Initially, freed slaves gained benefit from Reconstruction, but, after 1877, the North left the South to its own devices and white racists became dominant. They introduced the Jim Crow laws, which kept blacks inferior. This chapter looks at:

- Slavery and the Civil War
- The post-war South and the start of Reconstruction
- The situation of blacks from Reconstruction to segregation
- How Southern blacks responded to their deteriorating situation after 1877
- A summary of American race relations in 1900

Key dates

1820	Missouri compromise
1857	Dred Scott case
1862	Emancipation proclamation
1861–5	Civil War between Southern and Northern states
1865	13th Amendment abolished slavery
	'Reconstruction Confederate style'
1866	Civil Rights Act
	Establishment of Ku Klux Klan
1867	Military Reconstruction Act
1868	14th Amendment said blacks were citizens
1870	15th Amendment said vote was not to be denied on account of race
	Force Acts
1872	Amnesty Act
1875	Civil Rights Act
1877	End of Reconstruction
1890s	Southern states (e.g. Mississippi in 1890) disqualified black voters
1894–8	North Carolina 'experiment in biracial democracy'
1896	Supreme Court (PLESSY v. FERGUSON) approved 'Jim Crow' segregation laws

Key question
How important were slavery and racism in causing the Civil War?

1 | Slavery and the Civil War

(a) Events leading up to the Civil War

From the early nineteenth century, as white Americans moved Westwards, new land was acquired and new states created. The question of whether to allow slavery in the new states was hotly debated. Many Northerners were opposed to the extension of slavery:

- Some had been turned against slavery by abolitionists.
- Some objected to the presence of non-whites in new territories to which Northerners might want to migrate.
- Some felt that cheap slave labour would make it harder for whites to gain employment.
- Some feared that more slave states would increase the political power of the South within the union.

In 1819 Missouri applied for admission as a state of the union. Northerners said no new state should be allowed in with slavery. Southerners were furious. Northerners appeared to be claiming moral superiority and threatening to decrease Southern influence in Congress. The answer was the Missouri Compromise (1820): Congress allowed Missouri in as a slave state but balanced it with the creation and admission of Maine as a free state.

North/South tensions over whether new territories should become slave states continued. The fact that some states were non-slave states led to the Dred Scott case in which the Supreme Court said that blacks were not US citizens and that Congress lacked the constitutional authority to exclude slavery from new states. This ruling antagonised Northerners.

(i) The Dred Scott case 1857

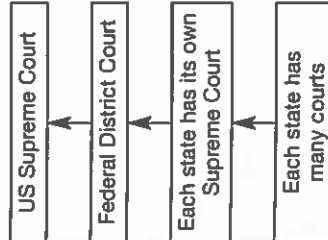
Dred Scott (c1800–58) was the slave of a Missouri army surgeon. When his master worked in the free state of Illinois and the free territory of Wisconsin, Scott went with him. After they returned to Missouri, the surgeon died (1843) and Scott became the slave of the surgeon's heir. In 1846, helped by anti-slavery lawyers, Scott went to court claiming freedom, as he had resided in a free state and free territory. This case went through the US court hierarchy, right to the US Supreme Court (see diagram opposite). A Missouri state court declared Scott to be free (1850) but the Missouri Supreme Court ruled (1852) against Scott. His lawyers took the case to the federal courts. In 1857, the Supreme Court ruled that black Americans were not citizens, so Scott could not go free. Scott's embarrassed owners freed him anyway. He worked as a hotel porter for 18 months, dying in 1858.

(ii) The outbreak of the Civil War

North/South tension was increased by extremism on both sides. The Republican Party opposed the extension of slavery. To Southerners, the election of the Republican President Abraham Lincoln seemed to threaten the existence of slavery. So, in

Key dates
Missouri
Compromise: 1820
The Dred Scott case:
1857

US Court Hierarchy



1860–1, the Southern states formed a new nation, the Confederate States of America (**the Confederacy**). When President Lincoln raised Northern armies to bring the South back into the United States, the Civil War began. After four years of bitter fighting, the North won.

(b) Was the Civil War a war to end slavery?

(i) Lincoln's views on slavery and race

Lincoln declared slavery 'the greatest wrong inflicted on any people', but had been willing to accept its continued existence in the South. He had spoken in favour of colonisation (see page 14) and the departure of all blacks. 'There must be the position of superior and inferior,' he said in a political debate in 1858. He favoured 'having the superior position assigned to the white race.' He told a black audience that, unalterably and undeniably, 'not a single man of your race is made the equal of a single man of ours.' 'It is,' he said, 'better for us to be separated.'

Lincoln opposed the extension of slavery to new states, but was willing to protect it where it existed. He did not want to alienate his supporters in the slave states of Kentucky, Maryland, Missouri and Delaware, which fought on the Northern side. 'We did not go to war to put down slavery', he told Congress in December 1861. One infuriated abolitionist said Lincoln was 'a wet rag' on the slavery issue, 'halting, prevaricating [delaying], irresolute [indecisive], [and] weak'. In September 1862, however, Lincoln issued his Emancipation Proclamation.

(ii) The Emancipation Proclamation

Generations of black people felt grateful to the President who issued the **Emancipation Proclamation**. However, that proclamation was so cautious that Britain's Prime Minister described Lincoln's government as 'utterly powerless and contemptible'. The proclamation said slaves in Confederate States were free, but allowed slavery to continue in the slave-owning Union states and in any other state that had been occupied by Union armies or that would return to the Union before January 1863. In practice, the proclamation did not liberate a single slave, suggesting military rather than idealistic motivation. The London *Spectator* said the proclamation's philosophy was 'not that a being cannot justly own another, but that he cannot own him unless he is loyal to the United States'. So why had Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation?

- Some **Radical Republicans** believed slavery was immoral and made a mockery of the Declaration of Independence. Lincoln agreed with them.
- Most Republicans blamed slave owners for the Civil War, and many believed that if slavery was not abolished, North/South divisions could not be resolved and the bloody Civil War would have been pointless.

Key terms

The Confederacy
When the Southern states left the Union, they became the Confederate States of America, known as the Confederacy for short. Supporters of the Confederacy were called Confederates.

Emancipation
In this context, freedom from slavery.

Radical Republicans
Members of the Republican Party who were most enthusiastic about ending slavery.

Key question
What motives lay behind Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation?

Key dates

The North successfully fought the slave-owning South in the American Civil War: 1861–5

Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation declared that slaves in the Confederate States were free: 1862



Profile: Abraham Lincoln 1809–65

- 1809 – Born in a log cabin in Kentucky
- 1831 – Moved to Illinois; worked as store clerk, postmaster, surveyor
- 1834 – Elected to Illinois state legislature
- 1837 – Became a lawyer
- 1842 – Married Mary Todd, whose Kentucky family owned slaves
- 1846 – Elected to the House of Representatives
- 1856 – Joined new Republican Party. Increasingly focused on the slavery issue
- 1860 – Elected President in November
- In December, the first Southern state seceded (withdrew) from the Union of the United States
- 1861 – The Confederate States of America established in February
- Confederate forces fired on a federal fort in April. Lincoln declared the South in rebellion; issued a Call to Arms
- 1862 – Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation
- 1864 – Re-elected President
- 1865 – Confederacy surrendered. Lincoln assassinated by actor and Confederate sympathiser John Wilkes Booth

Lincoln is important in any history of American race relations because he began freeing the slaves with his Emancipation Proclamation of 1862. Subsequent generations of blacks revered him as the Great Emancipator, but historians argue over the relative importance of political calculation and genuine idealism in his actions, and over the extent of his racism. He was certainly vital to the defeat of the pro-slavery Confederacy, after which the South and race relations would never be the same again.

- It was thought that once Lincoln committed the North to emancipation, the Confederacy would find it impossible to receive help from foreign nations such as Britain any more.
- Army commanders had a problem with the half a million refugee slaves who came to Northern army camps situated in Southern states. By law, the slaves should have been returned to their masters, but that seemed inhumane (their masters would punish them) and unintelligent (their masters would use them to help beat the North). Evading the issue by calling slaves 'contraband of war' was tried in 1861–2, but Radical Republicans preferred outright condemnation of the institution of slavery, as that would give the North the moral high ground in the war.
- Military necessity was probably Lincoln's main motive. The North was struggling in 1862 (for example, the defeat at the Second Battle of Bull Run). This proclamation aimed to hamper the Southern war effort. In 1863, Lincoln wrote that

black soldiers were 'a resource which, if vigorously applied now, will soon close the contest. It works doubly, weakening the enemy and strengthening us.' Nearly a quarter of a million blacks served in the Northern army, entering it just when the North's forces were becoming dangerously depleted.

In January 1863, because the Confederacy continued to fight, Lincoln said that the freedom of slaves in rebellious states was now a Union war aim, 'an act of justice', not just 'military necessity'. Finally, after Lincoln had died, in 1865, the 13th Amendment abolished slavery throughout the United States.

For Lincoln then, as for most Northerners, the Civil War was a war not for racial equality but for preservation of the Union. Even so, for the electorate in the 1864 presidential election, one of the Democrats' most effective anti-Lincoln criticisms was that he was a 'Negro lover' plotting **miscegenation**. However, Lincoln's views were slightly modified during the war. Initially he had not wanted Indians and blacks in the Union army. However, impressed by the performance of black soldiers, he considered giving the vote to 'the very intelligent' and most gallant.

(c) The Northern view of black people during the Civil War

Although the extension of slavery was possibly the major cause of the Civil War (1861–5), that war was not fought to end slavery. Most Northerners thought they were fighting to save the Union (of the United States) and not to free Southern slaves. Northerners feared that freed slaves would migrate to the North and flood the labour market and cause racial tension.

There was considerable hostility towards blacks in the North before and during the Civil War. Some newspapers claimed that Lincoln got America into a Civil War to help undeserving blacks. When Southern slaves first rushed to join Union forces the latter were highly suspicious. White conservatives in the North disliked the idea of arming Northern blacks whom they considered inferior and unreliable. However, by 1865, 10 per cent of Union troops were black. They came from the South as well as the North. Nearly half a million Southern slaves joined the Union army.

Black troops, although brave and enthusiastic, were given the worst and most dangerous tasks. They were usually paid less than whites. In 1863 an Irish mob had attacked black soldiers in New York, but in 1865 black soldiers were given an affectionate farewell parade there. The *New York Times* thought that signalled 'a new epoch'. The new epoch, however, did not mean that blacks attained equality. Although amendments to the Constitution from 1865 to 1870 gave rights of citizenship to the ex-slaves, real equality was far away.

Key terms

Amendment
Under the Constitution, Congress could add 'Amendments' (changes or new points) to the Constitution. Amendments needed ratification (approval) by 75 per cent of states.

Miscegenation
Sexual relationships between blacks and whites.

Key question
Were Northerners and Southerners equally racist?

Key date

13th Amendment ended slavery: 1865

Key question
What caused the US Civil War?

(d) Key debate

Historians find it hard to agree on what the Civil War was all about and have debated the following questions:

Was slavery the cause of the Civil War? and what was Lincoln's position on race?

Abraham Lincoln (1861) said that 'all knew' that slavery 'was somehow the cause of the war'.

Jefferson Davis, President of the defeated Confederacy, put the blame for the Civil War on Northern violators of states' rights and rabble-rousing abolitionists (1881).

Arthur Schlesinger Sr (1922) said that the South only used the principle of states' rights as a protection and argument for the preservation of slavery, which he saw as the main cause of the conflict.

Karl Marx saw the war as a struggle between two economic systems, between free labour and slave labour. By the 1920s, progressive historians such as Charles Beard (1927) followed Marx in believing that history was the record of clashes between interest groups and classes. Beard saw the war as an economic struggle, between the industrial North and agricultural South – slavery was not central to Beard's interpretation.

In the 1930s, many revisionist historians such as James Randall blamed abolitionist fanatics and blundering politicians for the Civil War.

In 1945, Arthur Schlesinger Jr blamed the Civil War on slavery. That has been the dominant interpretation ever since, as with Eric Foner (1980).

Given that Lincoln's ideas on slavery and race seemed to change and develop in different circumstances, it is not surprising that historians disagree over his position on race. Kenneth Stampp (1957) pointed out the irony that the president who became known as the 'Great Emancipator' emancipated reluctantly. Stampp was influenced by James Randall, who had stressed Lincoln's caution on racial issues. According to Hugh Tuloach (1999), Lincoln personally 'loathed slavery', but the majority of the Northerners whom he represented believed in white supremacy, so Lincoln had to move cautiously on the slavery issue. Stephen Oates (1977) believed that under pressure of war Lincoln became increasingly convinced of the need for racial equality.

Some key books in the debate

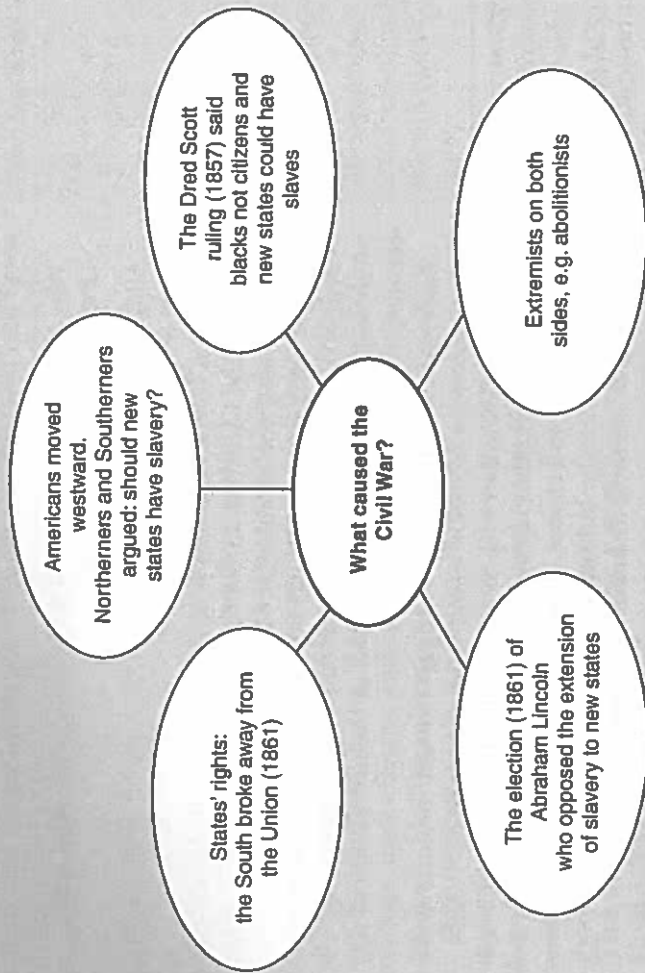
Charles and Mary Beard, *The Rise of American Civilisation* (1927).
Eric Foner, *Politics and Ideology in the Age of the Civil War* (1980).
Stephen Oates, *With Malice Towards None* (1977).
James Randall, *Civil War and Reconstruction* (1937).
Arthur Schlesinger Sr, *New Viewpoints in American History* (1922).
Arthur Schlesinger Jr, *The Age of Jackson* (1945).
Kenneth Stampp, *The Peculiar Institution* (1957).
Hugh Tuloach, *The Debate on the American Civil War Era* (Manchester, 1999).

Key terms

Progressive
A historian who is an advocate of political policies that bring about rapid progress or social reform.

Revisionist
A historian who changes a well-established interpretation.

Summary diagram: Slavery and the Civil War



2 | The Post-war South: Starting Reconstruction

(a) 'Reconstruction Confederate style'

In April 1865 the Confederate army surrendered at Appomattox. Within days, President Lincoln was assassinated. His successor President Andrew Johnson faced the problem of what to do with the defeated Southern states. These states, with their old political system obsolete, ruined economies and changed societies (blacks were now free), had to be reincorporated into the Union. The whole process of introducing and managing change was known as **Reconstruction** (the years 1865–77 are often called the 'Age of Reconstruction').

In 1865, many Southern blacks demanded equality, and particularly the right to vote. President Johnson, however, moved to conciliate the traditional white Southern élite. Once any Southern state accepted the end of slavery and rejected the Confederacy, it was readmitted into the Union. White officials who had served the Confederacy were now elected to govern the Southern states. The ex-Confederate states introduced 'Black Codes' to ensure that blacks did not gain economic, social, political or legal equality. This was 'Reconstruction Confederate style'.

Key questions

How was the defeated South treated during Reconstruction?
What did President Johnson do with the defeated South in 1865?

Key date
Reconstruction Confederate style: 1865

Key term
Reconstruction
The process of rebuilding and reforming the 11 ex-Confederate states and restoring them to the Union.

Black codes – examples of inequality

- Economic inequality – blacks were not allowed to buy or rent land.
- Social inequality – blacks were banned from schools.
- Political inequality – blacks were not allowed to vote.
- Legal inequality – of the roughly 500 white men indicted by Texas courts for murdering blacks in 1865–6, not one was convicted.

(b) Congress (1865–6)

When Congress met in December 1865, Northern members were dissatisfied with 'Reconstruction Confederate style'. When newly-elected Southern Congressmen included the vice-president of the Confederacy, 58 Confederate Congressmen, and four Confederate generals, the Republican majority in Congress refused to let them sit in Congress. The Republican Congress also refused to recognise the new state governments in the South. The Republican majority clashed with President Johnson and the Democrats in Congress over issues relating to the rights of black Americans. They clashed over **bills** to improve the Freedmen Bureau (set up by Congress in 1865 to help ex-slaves, particularly through education) and to give blacks civil rights.

Both bills became **acts** in 1866, despite Johnson's veto.

Congress then adopted the 14th Amendment, which struck down the Black Codes, guaranteed all citizens equality before the law, and declared that the federal government could intervene if any states tried to deny rights of citizenship to any citizen. The Amendment banned most of the old Confederate élite from holding office.

However, this 14th Amendment was rejected by all the old Confederate states (except Tennessee) and therefore under the Constitution could not become law.

Northerners were now exasperated with the defeated South because:

- The Southern states did not seem to recognise that they had been defeated, as in their rejection of the 14th Amendment.
- There were race riots in Southern cities such as Memphis and New Orleans in summer 1866, in which white groups attacked blacks.
- Secret organisations such as the Ku Klux Klan (see page 28) had been set up to terrorise blacks.

Congress therefore decided it had to enforce its own version of Reconstruction on the South.

Key question
Why did Congress impose its own version of Reconstruction on the South?

Key terms
Bills, Acts and Vetoes
If a member of Congress or the President wanted a law to be made, he introduced a bill into Congress. If the bill was passed by Congress and accepted by the President, the bill became an Act or law. Under the Constitution, the President had the power to veto (reject) a bill, although if Congress persevered, it could override that veto.

Key date
Civil Rights Act: April 1866

(c) Congressional or Radical Reconstruction

In 1867, Congress passed the Military Reconstruction Act, which said:

- No Southern state (except Tennessee) had a legal government.
- The South could not send representatives to Congress unless Congress said they could.
- The ex-Confederate states should be divided into military districts and governed by military commanders.
- In order to return to the Union, Southern states had to draw up new constitutions that would (a) allow blacks to vote, (b) ratify (accept) the 14th Amendment, and (c) disqualify Confederate office holders from political participation.

Southerners felt the Act was vicious. President Johnson thought it gave Southern blacks too much power and would 'Africanise' the South. However, there were important things that the Act did not do. It did not:

- Create any federal agencies to protect black rights.
- Give economic aid to the freed slaves.
- **Disfranchise** Southern whites.

In the 1868 presidential election General Grant (Republican) achieved a narrow victory. The Republicans wanted the black vote, so in 1869 they introduced the 15th Amendment, which said the 'right to vote should not be denied on account of race, colour or previous conditions of servitude'. Given that only eight of the Northern states allowed blacks to vote, it was revolutionary to grant all black males the right to vote. However, once again, important things were left unsaid. The Amendment did not:

- Guarantee all men the right to vote.
- Forbid states to introduce literacy, property and educational tests for would-be voters.

The 14th and 15th Amendments were ratified in 1868 and 1870, respectively, and by the next year all the Southern states had been readmitted to the Union. Southern Republicans dominated the new state governments. This was the era of **Radical or Black Reconstruction**.

Key question
How was Congressional Reconstruction introduced?

Key dates

The Military Reconstruction Act ended 'Reconstruction Confederate style' and initiated Congressional Reconstruction: 1867
The 14th Amendment said blacks were citizens with equal rights: 1868
The 15th Amendment said the vote was not to be denied on account of race: 1870

Key terms

Disfranchise
Deprive someone of their vote.
Black Reconstruction
The phrase was coined by the early twentieth-century white historian Dunning, who sympathised with Southern whites 'suffering' when blacks gained political power during Reconstruction.

Summary diagram: Starting Reconstruction

1865: First Reconstruction

President Johnson
+
Traditional Southern élite
= Reconstruction
Confederate style

1866: Second Reconstruction

Congress rejected Reconstruction Confederate style
= Congressional Reconstruction also known as Radical Reconstruction also known as Black Reconstruction

3 | From Reconstruction to Segregation**(a) The economic position of blacks**

Reconstruction failed to bring great economic gains to blacks. Freed black slaves had acquired freedom of movement but because they lacked wealth most remained in the South and farmed. Most remained trapped in poverty, working as tenant farmers (**sharecroppers**) for the white élite in the economically backward South. Most sharecroppers produced cotton, but with the world glut in the 1870s, prices fell. Not surprisingly, Southern income was less than half that of the North. The lack of economic power kept Southern black progress slow.

(b) The political position of blacks**(i) Black voters and black officials**

After the Civil War, 700,000 blacks were registered to vote in the South, compared to 600,000 eligible whites. Radical Republicans had long advocated equal voting rights for blacks, so Lincoln's Republican Party acquired the black votes.

Southern Democrats and some historians criticised Republican rule in the South as corrupt and dominated by blacks. Black politicians were particularly blamed for the corruption, but they were neither more nor less corrupt than their white contemporaries who still dominated politics in the South and in the North.

Although outnumbered by black Republicans, white Republicans dominated the Southern states during

Key questions

How did Reconstruction affect blacks?
Did the Civil War and Reconstruction bring economic equality for blacks?
Did Reconstruction bring political equality for blacks?

Key term

Sharecropper
A white landowner provided the land, seed, tools and orders, while a black worker (the sharecropper) provided the labour. The crop produced was usually divided between the two men.

Reconstruction. Scores of black Republicans were elected to local and state office, but there was no black Southern governor during Reconstruction, nor any black majority in any state senate. Only South Carolina (65 per cent black) had a black majority in the lower house. There were only two black US senators, both from Mississippi (over 50 per cent black). One of them (Senator Charles Caldwell) was shot by whites in a tavern. When he begged them to let him die out in the fresh air, they took him out to the street and pumped him full of 30 extra bullets.

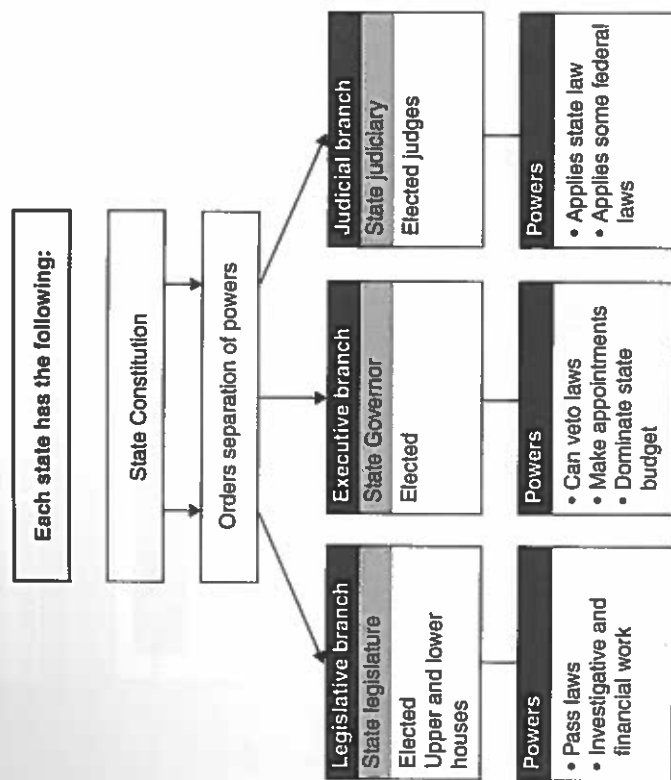


Figure 2.1: The structure of state government in the United States.

(ii) Why were blacks unable to dominate Southern politics?

There were several reasons why blacks were unable to dominate political life in the South:

- Blacks lacked education, organisation and experience.
- Blacks were accustomed to white leadership and domination.
- The black community was divided. Ex-slaves resented free-born blacks who saw themselves as superior.
- Blacks were a minority in most states.
- Sure of the black vote, the Republican Party usually put forward white candidates in the hope of attracting more white votes.
- White Republicans usually considered blacks to be less able to govern than whites.
- Southern black leaders were usually moderates who had no desire to exclude ex-Confederates from office.

(iii) How and why black voting was stopped by the 1890s

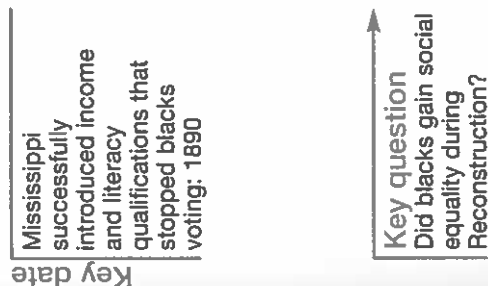
Although slavery had been abolished, Southerners still believed in the arguments that had justified it. Southern whites, frightened and resentful of the supposedly racially inferior blacks, depicted Reconstruction as an era of black rule, rape, murder and arson. They made this an excuse to call for the disfranchisement of blacks. Some whites claimed that blacks were immature, irrational, open to corruption, and therefore unfit to possess voting rights. One Mississippi man said that even an educated black like Booker T. Washington (see Chapter 3) was no more fit to vote than 'the coconut-headed, chocolate-coloured, typical little coon' who 'blacks my shoes' and was not 'fit to perform the supreme function of citizenship'.

White supremacist groups such as the Rifle Clubs and the Red Shirts used violence to stop blacks voting. In Louisiana, the White League assassinated several Republican officials in 1874. In the 1890s the Southern state legislatures followed the successful 1890 example of Mississippi and introduced income and literacy qualifications for voting, which penalised more blacks than whites. Illiterate whites were often allowed to vote through notorious 'grandfather clauses', by which a man could vote if it were proved that an ancestor had voted before Reconstruction. White Southern registrars connived at the disqualification of literate blacks by manipulating the literacy test. By 1900, only 3 per cent of Southern blacks could vote. Reconstruction thus failed to bring lasting political gains for blacks.

(c) Reconstruction and the social position of blacks

(i) Gains

Reconstruction brought some social gains for blacks. Their new freedom of movement enabled those who so desired to move to Southern cities (between 1865 and 1870 the black population of the South's 10 largest cities doubled) or to the North or West. Reconstruction gave some blacks the confidence and opportunity to build and benefit from their own institutions. Black churches and the federal Freedmen's Bureau (1865–72) (see page 23) made education more widely available to blacks, and a few black political leaders, businessmen, teachers, lawyers and doctors emerged. The percentage of illiterate blacks was falling, from 90 per cent in 1860, to 70 per cent in 1880. Some of the educational institutions founded during Reconstruction, including colleges such as Howard (Washington DC) and Fisk (Tennessee), provided some of the leaders of the mid-twentieth-century civil rights movement. Black churches became immensely popular and influential, although naturally they served to perpetuate racial divisions, as whites attended separate churches. In many ways, both blacks and whites preferred to be separate.



(ii) Losses

Although blacks came nowhere near attaining social acceptance and equality after the Civil War, whites remained fearful and hostile. One white Georgian said 'Sambo' should stay in his place, as the United States did not want the 'arrogant, aggressive, school-spoilt African American' who, the Georgian was convinced, 'wants to live without manual labour.' Future President Theodore Roosevelt said, 'A perfectly stupid race [blacks] can never rise to a very high plane'.

A group of white Southern politicians created an anti-Negro crusading group in the 1890s. They depicted blacks as characterised by 'barbarism, voodooism, human sacrifice', and 'contaminated by venereal disease'. Some white politicians advocated deportation, others wanted mass black castration or even, as one Georgian congressman said in 1908, 'utter extermination'.

Social divisions or segregation became enshrined in law. The powers given to individual states under the Constitution facilitated the introduction of **Jim Crow** laws that discriminated against blacks. Individual states controlled not only voting but education, transport and law enforcement. The segregation of schools, housing and public facilities spread quickly after 1865.

Between 1881 and 1915 many Southern states passed laws that insisted upon the separation of white from black in trains, streetcars, stations, theatres, churches, parks, schools, restaurants and cemeteries. Whites were not to use black prostitutes. Textbooks for use in white schools were not to be stored in the same place as those for black schools. Blacks and whites were forbidden to play checkers (draughts) together.

(d) Blacks and the law

The Ku Klux Klan, lynchings and Jim Crow demonstrated black legal inequality.

(i) The Ku Klux Klan

In 1866 armed white racist groups were set up in most states of the old Confederacy. The most famous was the Ku Klux Klan, established in Tennessee by war hero General Nathan Bedford Forrest. The Klan grew rapidly between 1868 and 1871. Forrest estimated 40,000 members in Tennessee alone, and roughly half a million across the South. Southern Democrats encouraged and colluded in Klan terrorism, which was targeted at black officials, schools and churches. Laws introduced by Republican state governments to try to stop the Ku Klux Klan proved hard to enforce. Klansmen gave each other alibis and were frequently jurors. Governor Holden of North Carolina used the state militia against the Klan. He was condemned by the state legislature for 'subverting [the] personal liberty' of the Klansmen.

In 1870, in response to appeals for help from several state governors, Congress passed three Force Acts, which gave President Grant legal and military power to crush the Klan. These Acts ended most of the Klan violence. However,

Key question
How and why were black civil rights eroded in the South?

Key term

Jim Crow
An early 1830s' comic, black-faced, minstrel character developed by a white performing artist that proved to be very popular with white audiences. When, after Reconstruction, the Southern states introduced laws that legalised segregation, these were known as 'Jim Crow laws'.

Key question
Were blacks equal under the law during and after Reconstruction?

Key dates

Establishment of the Ku Klux Klan: 1866
Force Acts gave President Grant powers that successfully crushed the Klan: 1870

Key term
Lynching
Unlawful killing (usually by hanging) of blacks.

Key date
PLESSY v. FERGUSON: 1896

ex-Confederate soldiers continued to use violence (particularly **lynching**) and intimidation against Republicans and blacks.

(ii) Lynchings

Lynchings were common. Between 1885 and 1917, 2734 blacks were never brought to justice, indicating widespread support for their actions. Blacks had no legal protection.

(iii) The Supreme Court and blacks

The Supreme Court did nothing about the so-called 'Jim Crow' laws that legalised segregation. Indeed, in **PLESSY v. FERGUSON** (1896), the Supreme Court said separate but equal facilities were not against the 14th Amendment. The Supreme Court neither prevented Southern states spending 10 times as much on white schools as on black, nor upheld the 15th Amendment, which said blacks should be able to vote. Thus the South ignored the US Constitution with the collusion of the Supreme Court.

Who was Homer Plessy?

Born in New Orleans, Plessy (c1862–1925) was a shoemaker and carpenter who looked white. However, one of his great grandparents was black, which made him 'Negro' in the state of Louisiana. In 1892, Plessy volunteered to be a 'guinea pig' for a group of New Orleans black activists who wanted to test the constitutionality of the 1890 Louisiana Separate Car Law. Plessy bought a first-class railroad ticket and boarded a 'white' carriage. The activists had told the conductor Plessy was legally black, so the conductor asked Plessy to obey the law and get out of the carriage. Plessy refused and the conductor handed him over to the law. Plessy was put in jail, for violating a state racial ordinance. Plessy's lawyers argued that his arrest violated the 13th and 14th Amendments, but the judge ruled in favour of states' rights. The Louisiana Supreme Court upheld the decision approving separate carriages, as did the Supreme Court in **PLESSY v. FERGUSON** (1896). The remainder of Plessy's life was relatively quiet and trouble-free, but his name, if not his story, remains one of the most famous in American history.

(e) The federal government's attitude

Although President Grant ended most of the Klan's violence against blacks, he was keen to end the North's concentration upon the South and to effect a reconciliation with white Southerners. His 1872 Amnesty Act returned voting and office-holding rights to 150,000 ex-Confederates. Also indicative of the loss of Northern interest in Southern blacks was the collapse of the Freedmen's Bureau.

Key question
When and why did the federal government 'abandon' Southern blacks?

What is black?

Each state's definition of how much 'Negro' blood made a person 'black' varied. In 1910, Virginia switched from the 'single-grandparent' definition that had made Homer Plessy 'black' in 1890s Louisiana, declaring that a black great-great-grandparent made a person black. In 1930, Virginia said anyone with 'any Negro blood at all' was black – the so-called 'one-drop' measure. Louisiana had become more moderate by then: anyone who *looked* black, *was* black. Ida B. Wells (see page 42) wrote in 1887 about a Tennessee white man who could not get a licence to marry a black woman, so he cut her finger and sucked her blood so he could say he had 'Negro blood'.

The 1875 Civil Rights Act was the last federal attempt to help Southern blacks. The act aimed to prevent discrimination in public places such as railroads, hotels and theatres but had little effect on the South. Several Supreme Court decisions indicated that civil rights were the responsibility of individual states. In 1877 President Hayes (Republican) withdrew all federal troops from the Southern states. While the Republicans concentrated on the North, the South, left to the Democratic Party, became in effect a one-party state. The main unifying factor amongst Southern white Democrats was white supremacy. Democratic politicians such as Ben Tillman of South Carolina and James K. Vardaman of Mississippi specialised in white supremacist rhetoric, and were known as 'demagogues'.

(f) Erosion of black freedoms in the South

It proved relatively easy to erode Southern black freedoms after 1877:

- Southern whites used violence and intimidation against blacks.
- Blacks were insufficiently well educated and organised to put up effective opposition.
- The Constitution gave the Southern states power over voting, education, transport and law enforcement, which enabled segregation to spread and work.
- The federal government in Washington wanted to concentrate on the North rather than racial problems in the South.
- Republican voters were predominantly Northerners and Northerners were tired of the South's 'black question'.
- Most Southerners and some Northerners believed that blacks were inferior and did not deserve equality.
- Most Southerners either resented blacks as possible rivals for jobs or wanted to exploit blacks as cheap labour.
- The Supreme Court did nothing to ensure that the 14th and 15th Amendments were made a meaningful reality.

Summary diagram: From Reconstruction to segregation

Black situation	Improvement?
Economic	Free, but without land and good education, stuck in poverty trap
Social	Freedom of movement, more education, growth of black churches, but still considered inferior, and inferiority confirmed in Jim Crow laws
Political	Got the vote, some black officials elected, but then lost the vote
Legal	Supposedly citizens, but Klan violence, lynchings and no Supreme Court aid

4 | Key Debates

Historians are frequently prisoners of their own preconceptions and assumptions, especially where race is concerned. The history of historians on Reconstruction illustrates this.

Early interpretations

President Grant's Vice-President Henry Wilson (1877) naturally exonerated Grant and the Republicans from blame for the failure of Reconstruction. Wilson blamed Southern white racists for the fact that black political participation did not last long. Recent historians have confirmed that Grant was more dedicated to black improvement than was once thought. However, Wilson omitted that most Republican voters were Northern, tired of the black question and the South, which forced President Grant to decrease federal protection for Southern blacks.

In an interesting example of black class divisions, black historian George Washington Williams, who had fought for the North, blamed the failure of Reconstruction on 'an ignorant [black] majority, without competent leaders' who had been unable to rule 'an intelligent Caucasian minority' (1883).

W.E.B. Du Bois and a Marxist interpretation

Between the late 1870s and the mid-1940s, Northern and Southern historians wrote about Reconstruction with the underlying presumption of black racial inferiority, for example, James Ford Rhode (1928). Black historians such as W.E.B. Du Bois (see page 55) naturally disagreed with Rhode's view that Reconstruction represented a foolish attempt to give blacks political power and equality. As a **Marxist historian**, Du Bois saw class struggle as well as racial tension behind white efforts to keep Southern blacks down during and after Reconstruction (1935). Du Bois showed how whites had distorted the history of Reconstruction by selectivity in their use of sources (failing to use black eye witnesses) and events (failing to mention when Congress was supportive of blacks).

Key term
Marxist historian
 Believes that history has been deeply shaped by economic circumstances. Influenced by the ideology of philosopher Karl Marx.

Key dates

Amnesty Act helped to restore political power to ex-Confederates: 1872
 Civil Rights Act tried to prevent discrimination in public places: 1875
 The end of Reconstruction: 1877
 President Hayes withdrew all federal troops from the South: 1877

Key question
 How and why were Southern black freedoms eroded after 1877?

Contemporary white historians such as William Dunning were contemptuous of Du Bois. Dunning was the leading pro-Southern interpreter of Reconstruction (1907), for whom the 'reckless enfranchisement of the [black] freedmen and their enthronement in power' was a disaster. Later historians writing in the Cold War era disliked the Marxist emphasis in Du Bois' work. However, one of the currently most respected historians of the period, Eric Foner (1982), found Du Bois 'replete with insights', if 'flawed'.

Influence of historical fiction

Sometimes historical fiction has a massive influence on public opinion, and this was the case with Thomas Dixon's *The Clansman: The Historical Romance of the Ku Klux Klan* (1905), which was made into a movie by D.W. Griffith, son of a ruined Confederate colonel. Dixon feared racial mixing, for 'one drop of Negro blood makes a Negro. It kinks the hair, flattens the nose, thickens the lip, puts out the light of intellect, and lights the fire of brutal passions.' President Woodrow Wilson (see page 51) loved the pro-Ku Klux Klan movie. A historian himself, Wilson had written in praise of the Klan (1901).

Changing interpretations

As always, standard interpretations were slowly challenged, and by 1939, Vernon Wharton was giving due credit to black participation in good government in Reconstruction Mississippi. By the 1960s, black historian John Hope Franklin (1961) and Kenneth Stampp rejected the traditional idea that Reconstruction was tragic because greater equality was attempted, and contended that the tragedy of Reconstruction lay in its failure to sustain that promise of equality.

Was Reconstruction successful?

Eric Foner (1988) said yes, because blacks participated in Southern politics. Richard Ranson said yes, because blacks did much better economically than most historians have thought. James McPherson (1998) saw Reconstruction as a worthy experiment by the federal government.

Was Reconstruction a failure?

W.A. Dunning (1907) said yes, because Southern whites suffered at the hands of incompetent black politicians and corrupt, hard Northern politicians. Kenneth Stampp and John Hope Franklin, writing in the 1960s, said yes, but from the black viewpoint, as blacks remained second-class citizens.

Some key books in the debate

W.E.B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860–1880* (New York, 1969).
William Dunning, *Reconstruction: Political and Economic, 1865–1877* (New York, 1907).
Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863–1877* (New York, 1988).
Hugh Tulloch, *The Debate on the American Civil War Era* (Manchester, 1999).

5 | Blacks' Response to Their Deteriorating Situation

Many blacks never gave up hoping for equality, even as their freedoms were eroded. The black response to the deterioration of their situation varied.

Response 1: co-operation

Blacks responded positively on the rare occasions when white politicians offered co-operation and hope. The People's Party, or Populists, established in 1892, asked blacks to join with them to work in their mutual economic interest. The Populists made electoral pacts with the Republicans in order to oppose the Democrats. This was known as 'Fusion'.

In North Carolina in 1894, Populist-Republican co-operation got 1000 blacks elected to office. According to the historian Adam Fairclough (2001), this Populist-Republican government of North Carolina between 1894 and 1898 was a revolutionary 'home-grown experiment in biracial democracy', the only such experiment ever attempted in the South. However, in 1898, Red Shirts from the Democratic Party used intimidation and racist slurs to end the Fusion experiment. Blacks were depicted as rapists. Whites rioted in North Carolina's chief city, Wilmington, and ensured that some blacks were expelled and all blacks were disfranchised. President McKinley (Republican) rejected appeals from North Carolina Republicans to send help.

Response 2: emigration and migration

It was hard for blacks to leave the South. Their very basic agricultural skills and illiteracy made migration to Northern cities a frightening prospect, especially as Northern employers and unions excluded black labour. However, Northward migration was popular. Between 1880 and 1900 Chicago's black population rose from 6480 to 30,150.

Some Southern blacks moved West: black migrants founded 25 all-black towns in the new state of Oklahoma.

Other blacks advocated emigration to Africa, to 'establish our own nation', but that was prohibitively expensive and impractical for the vast majority of Southern blacks.

Response 3: political protest

The historian Adam Fairclough describes how throughout the South, blacks held 'indignation meetings', formed equal rights leagues, filed lawsuits to combat discrimination, and boycotted newly-segregated public transport in 25 states. However, Fairclough says the protests were 'sporadic and uncoordinated'.

The elderly Frederick Douglass, ex-slave, abolitionist and universally recognised pre-eminent black leader, urged blacks to stick with the Republican Party. However, campaigning black journalist T. Thomas Fortune said that no white man could be trusted to help blacks, so he established the Afro-American League in 1890. The League had two aims:

Key question
How did Southern blacks respond to their deteriorating situation after 1877?

North Carolina
'experiment in biracial democracy': 1894–8
Key date

- To promote black economic and educational progress.
- To unite blacks in protest against injustice.

The League's inaugural meeting in Chicago attracted 100 delegates from 23 states. Thirty-five-year-old Joseph C. Price, a Bishop of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church and President of Livingstone College in North Carolina, was elected League, and the establishment of a biracial rival organisation (the National Citizen's Rights Association or NCRA) combined to kill off the League by 1893. NCRA soon followed it.

Not surprisingly, in the face of uncompromising white solidarity, some blacks felt that accommodationism was better than protest.

Profile: Frederick Douglass 1818–95

- 1818 – Born in Maryland, the son of a black slave mother and a white father
- 1830 – Learnt to read and write, despite laws against slave literacy
- 1838 – Escaped from slavery. Settled in the Northern state of Massachusetts
- 1841 – Joined and became prominent speaker for anti-slavery movement. White abolitionists told him to speak less intelligently, as people could not believe that he had been a slave
- 1845 – Wrote his autobiography, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, Written by Himself*, which made him 'the most famous black person in the world' (David Blight, 1993)
- 1847 – Edited weekly reform journal, *North Star*
- 1852 – Wrote the novel *The Heroic Slave*, which showed his conviction that slaves should rebel for freedom
- 1856 – Endorsed the Republican Party
- 1863 – Spoke widely in favour of Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation in 1863, but scolded Lincoln about discrimination against black troops in the Union army
- 1865 – Campaigned for equal citizenship for blacks
- 1877 – Criticised by other blacks for failing to criticise the Republicans' abandonment of the Reconstruction experiment
- 1877–81 – US Marshal for the District of Colombia
- 1882 – When his first wife died in 1882, he married a white woman, which antagonised blacks and whites
- 1890s – Denounced lynching, disfranchisement and segregation in the South



Douglass illustrates the changing situation of blacks in the nineteenth century, but his importance lies in the fact that he was the most influential African American of that century. He never stopped agitating for equal rights for blacks.

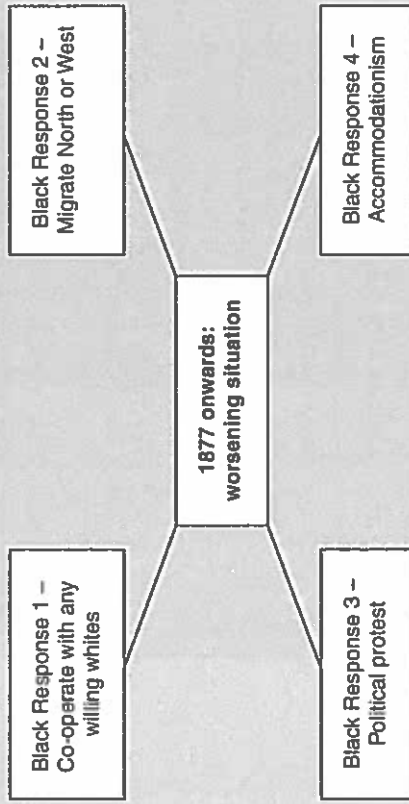
Response 4: accommodationism

Accommodationists believed that the best way for blacks to survive was to accept the status quo and make the most of their economic opportunities. Blacks should develop their educational and vocational skills. The black middle class, especially teachers and ministers, were the strongest supporters of accommodationism. Teachers were motivated by the need for continued white support for black schools and colleges. Black ministers often interpreted white supremacy as God's punishment on blacks for their failure to concentrate upon religion.

The accommodationists and those who favoured protest disagreed with increasing bitterness. Two outstanding black spokespersons of the 1890s stood on these opposing sides. Ida B. Wells favoured protest, while Booker T. Washington championed accommodationism (see Chapter 3).

Key term
Accommodationists
Those who favoured initial black concentration upon economic improvement rather than upon social, political and legal equality.

Summary diagram: Blacks' response to their deteriorating situation



Key question
What was the situation of non-whites in 1900?

6 | American Race Relations in 1900: Summary

The USA thus entered the twentieth century with multiple racial problems. A large black minority and small Indian, Hispanic and Chinese minorities were faced with a white majority who feared racial mixing and were convinced of the supremacy of the white race. Early twentieth century anthropologist Joseph Le Conte asserted that scientific study had 'thoroughly established' that blacks were 'totally incapable of development'.

Fearful whites retreated to segregated educational institutions and residential areas, away from those whose skin was black, red or yellow.

Why did non-whites apparently accept this position of inferiority?

- Blacks had to overcome *de jure* (legal) discrimination in the South, and *de facto* (actual) discrimination in the North.

Key terms
De jure
Legal, in law.
De facto
In fact if not in law.

- The end of slavery had left Southern blacks with freedom of movement but without material resources. Most blacks were in a poverty trap. Without good educational opportunities, it was difficult for blacks to better themselves.
- Education for blacks became available in the South only after the Civil War. The new black schools and colleges depended upon Northern white funding.
- With so little and such poor quality education available, it was difficult to organise any mass black movement for equality.
- Indians were divided amongst themselves, because of tribal rivalries and disagreements as to the wisdom of rejecting their traditional culture in favour of the white man's.
- Deprived of their traditional lands, Indians were locked in a poverty trap.
- Most Indians lacked both organisation and understanding of the white man's laws and concepts such as private property.

However, while in the nineteenth century whites had virtually unchallenged domination over other races in America, in the twentieth century there were attempts to alter the balance.

Study Guide: AS Questions

In the style of OCR

1. 'In reality, the position of blacks in the South was little better in 1877 than it had been in 1863.' How far do you agree?

Source: OCR, May 2002

2. To what extent was Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation (1863) the result of a genuine desire to free blacks?

Source: OCR, January 2003

3. How far were the civil rights of blacks eroded in the period after 1877?

Source: OCR, January 2003

Exam tips

The cross-references are intended to take you to some of the material that will help you to answer the questions.

1. Questions that ask you about the 'position of blacks' can usually be approached through the following paragraphs:
 - Their political situation – do blacks have the vote? In theory? In practice? Are there any elected black officials (pages 25–6)?
 - Their social situation – are they looked upon/treated as equals? Can they use the same facilities (e.g. schools, transport) as whites (pages 27–8)?
 - Their economic situation – are there opportunities for blacks to have as wide a variety of jobs as whites? Are they confined to lower paid jobs (page 25)?
 - Their legal situation – do they have equal protection before the law? Are they proportionately represented amongst law enforcement officials and agencies (pages 28–9)?

These topical paragraphs provide you with your essay organisation. Within each paragraph, you need to look first at the position in 1863, then in 1877, mentioning crucial dates in between that brought about change.

'How far' is examiner-speak for 'give arguments for and against this proposition in your answer'.

Take, for example, the economic situation paragraph: in 1863 many blacks were still slaves, despite the Emancipation Proclamation. As slaves, they earned no money for their labour, but their masters provided food and shelter. By 1877, they were theoretically free to do any work in any place they wanted, but in practice, lacking property, education and any experience other than farming and domestic service, most were scraping a living sharecropping on some white-owned land. In terms of material goods, they often remained as poor, if not poorer than in 1863, and just as subject to white landowners. In that sense, things