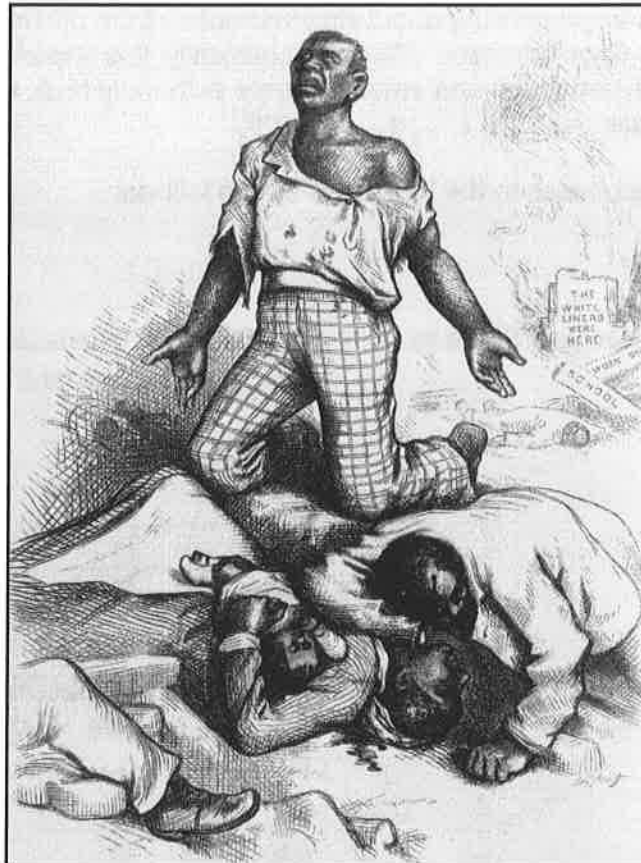


# North or South: Who Killed Reconstruction?

"Is *This* A Republican  
Form of Government?  
Is *This* Protecting Life,  
Liberty, or Property?"



*Harper's Weekly*,  
September 2, 1876

**Overview:** The twelve years after the Civil War proved to be a difficult time for America. Called *Reconstruction* by historians, this era saw an increase of freedom for former slaves. However, there was also great resistance to change. In 1877 attempts to reconstruct the South officially ended, leaving white-only governments in power. This Mini-Q asks you to decide who, North or South, was most responsible for the failure of Reconstruction.

## The Documents:

Document A: Terrorizing “Carpetbaggers” and “Scalawags”

Document B: Targeting African-American Voters and Government Officials

Document C: Problems and Scandals in the North

Document D: Popular Opinion and Racism in the North

A Mini Document Based Question (Mini-Q)

## Hook Exercise: Reconstruction

**Directions:** Below are several groups that played a key role in the Reconstruction period. With a partner, read the descriptions of each group, and then read the headlines at the bottom of the page. Under each headline, record whether each group would be Happy, Mixed, or Unhappy about the news. Be prepared to explain your answers.

**Freedmen (F):**

African Americans who were freed from slavery during and after the Civil War

**Carpetbaggers (CB):**

Northerners who went south after the Civil War to help Freedmen and Reconstruction

**Scalawags (S):**

Southern whites who supported Reconstruction

**Radical Republicans (RR):**

Northern Republican Congressmen who supported African-American citizenship and punishment for former Confederates

**Ku Klux Klan (KKK):**

A white supremacist group that opposed Reconstruction and equal rights for freed slaves

**Headline A:** “Federal Troops Sent South to Enforce Reconstruction”

**Freedmen:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Carpetbaggers:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Scalawags:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Radical Republicans:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Ku Klux Klan:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Headline C:** “Financial Panic of 1873. Fear Loss of 3 Million Jobs”

**Freedmen:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Carpetbaggers:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Scalawags:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Radical Republicans:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Ku Klux Klan:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Headline B:** “Hiram Revels Elected Senator From Mississippi in 1870 — First Black Man to Enter Congress”

**Freedmen:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Carpetbaggers:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Scalawags:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Radical Republicans:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Ku Klux Klan:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Headline D:** “Rutherford B. Hayes Elected President in 1876 — Agrees to Remove Federal Soldiers from Louisiana and South Carolina”

**Freedmen:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Carpetbaggers:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Scalawags:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Radical Republicans:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Ku Klux Klan:** \_\_\_\_\_

## North or South: Who Killed Reconstruction?

*...the slave went free; stood a brief moment in the sun; then moved back again toward slavery.* W.E.B. Dubois

1876 was an exciting year for America. It was the 100th anniversary of The Declaration of Independence and America was on the move. Homesteaders and ranchers were filling up the land west of the Mississippi River. Railroads were being built at an astounding rate. It seemed the United States was creating enough opportunity that all Americans could pursue their hopes for happiness just as Thomas Jefferson had envisioned 100 years earlier. So it is a great irony of history that the election of 1876 officially crushed the American dream for millions of black Americans living in the South.

In the aftermath of the Civil War, the policy of Reconstruction was developed for the purpose of reconnecting the eleven states that had left the Union and welcoming the millions of freedmen (former slaves) as full American citizens. As a first step in Reconstruction, the US Congress removed the Confederate state governments and put the South under the rule of the US Army. The army then held new elections. Three groups – **freedmen**, **carpetbaggers**, and **scalawags** – worked together to form new state governments. Carpetbaggers were recent arrivals from the North, and scalawags were white Southerners who supported Reconstruction.

For a while, it seemed that the dream of Reconstruction might come true. The **13th Amendment** ended slavery. The **14th Amendment** gave blacks American citizenship and civil rights. A Military Reconstruction Act was passed to make sure African Americans' new rights were protected. Black churches were

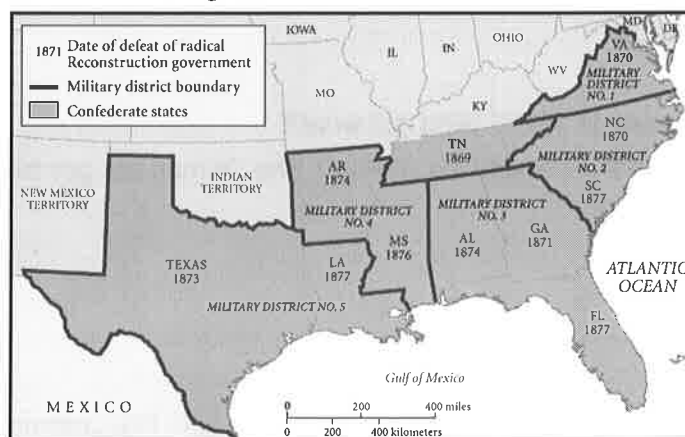
founded, public schools were built for black children, and universities like Howard, Fisk, Morehouse, and Hampton were established for black students seeking higher education. Sixteen African Americans were elected to Congress and numerous others served at state and local levels. Finally, the **15th Amendment** was ratified making it illegal to deny someone the right to vote based on race. Indeed, real progress was made.

However, in the early 1870s, the tide shifted. Southern states began to elect governments dedicated to whites-only rule. Between 1870

and 1876 all but three Southern states turned back Reconstruction efforts. Then, with the presidential election of 1876, Reconstruction was dealt a death blow. The election saw Rutherford B. Hayes,

the Republican candidate, square off against Samuel J. Tilden, the Democratic nominee. This was one of the most controversial presidential elections in American history. The close election placed the nation on edge. There was even talk of a new Civil War. To avoid a crisis, an informal agreement – now called the Compromise of 1877 – granted Hayes the Presidency. In return, and this was a huge point, Hayes promised to remove the last federal soldiers from the South. This almost guaranteed that all-white governments would reclaim power in the South.

When Rutherford B. Hayes agreed to remove federal soldiers, he was simply putting an end to an already dying effort. But dying or dead, what had gone wrong? Your job is to read the documents that follow and answer the question: *North or South: Who killed Reconstruction?*



## Background Essay Questions

1. Why was 1876 an important year for America?
2. Who ran for President in 1876? What were their political parties?
3. An “irony” is something you don’t expect, something that doesn’t seem to fit. What was the irony of history that occurred in 1876?
4. What was the Compromise of 1877? Who got what?
5. Describe each of the following:
  - freedmen
  - carpetbaggers
  - scalawags
  - 13th Amendment:
  - 14th Amendment:
  - 15th Amendment:
6. After reading the essay, reread W.E.B. Dubois’ quote at the top. Restate his famous summary of Reconstruction in your own words.

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### Timeline

- 1865** – Civil War ends.
- 1867** – South placed under military rule.
- 1869** – First college football game between Princeton and Rutgers
- 1870** – Hiram Revels is elected first black Senator.
- 1877** – Last federal troops leave South.
- 1877** – First Easter egg hunt on White House lawn

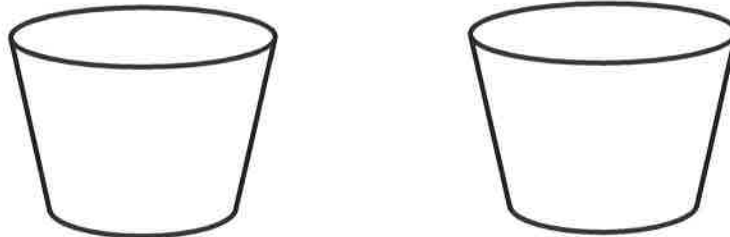
## Understanding the Question and Pre-Bucketing

1. What is the analytical question asked by this Mini-Q?
2. What term in the question needs to be defined?
3. Rewrite the question in your own words.

EV

### Pre-Bucketing

**Directions:** Using clues from the Mini-Q question, think of logical analytical categories and label the buckets.



## Document A

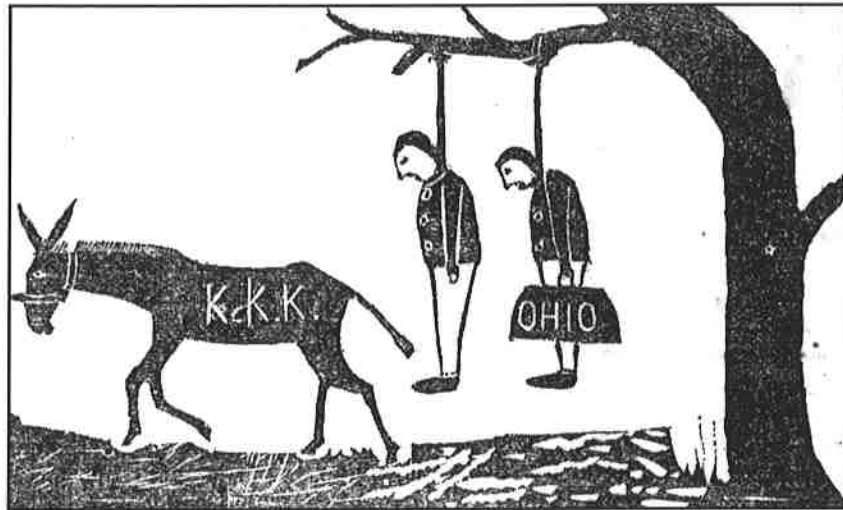
**Source:** Albion Tourgee, Letter on Ku Klux Klan Activities. *New York Tribune*, May 1870.

**Note:** Tourgee was a white, Northern soldier who settled in North Carolina after the War. He served as a judge during Reconstruction and wrote this letter to the North Carolina Republican Senator, Joseph Carter Abbott.

It is my mournful duty to inform you that our friend John W. Stephens, State Senator from Caswell, is dead. He was foully murdered by the Ku-Klux in the Grand Jury room of the Court House on Saturday.... He was stabbed five or six times, and then hanged on a hook in the Grand Jury room.... Another brave, honest Republican citizen has met his fate at the hands of these fiends....

... I have very little doubt that I shall be one of the next victims. My steps have been dogged for months, and only a good opportunity has been wanting to secure to me the fate which Stephens has just met.... I say to you plainly that any member of Congress who, especially from the South, does not support, advocate, and urge immediate active and thorough measures to put an end to these outrages ... is a coward, a traitor, or a fool.

**Source:** *Independent Monitor*, September 1, 1868. Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama.



### Document Analysis

1. In the image above, what group or groups is the KKK threatening?
2. According to Tourgee, what types of people are being attacked by the KKK? Why would the KKK attack these people?
3. How does the way that John Stephens was killed support the idea the Ku Klux Klan was a terrorist organization?
4. How does this document help answer the DBQ question?

## Document B

**Source:** Abram Colby, testimony to a joint House and Senate Committee in 1872.

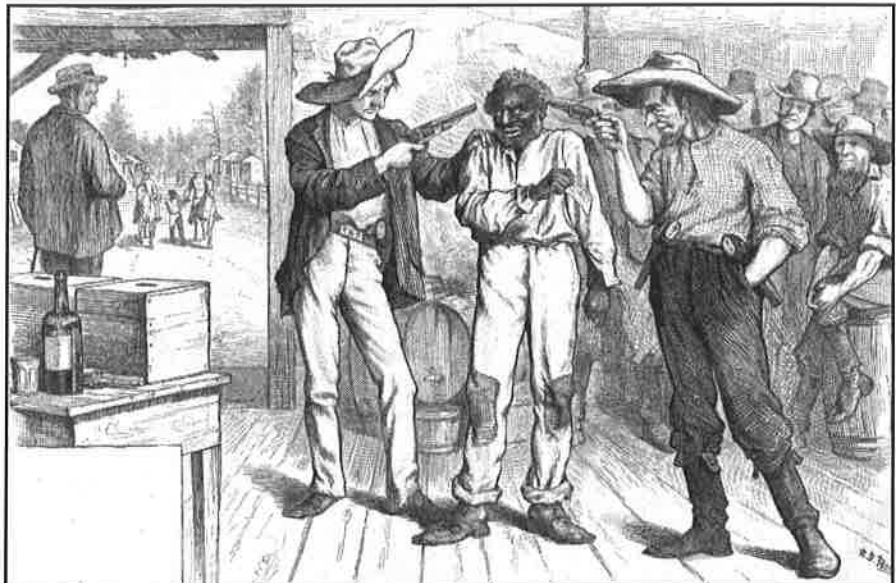
**Note:** Colby was a former slave who was elected to the Georgia State Legislature during Reconstruction.

**Colby:** On the 29th of October 1869, [the Klansmen] broke my door open, took me out of bed, took me to the woods and whipped me three hours or more and left me for dead. They said to me, "Do you think you will ever vote another damned Radical ticket?" I said, "If there was an election tomorrow, I would vote the Radical ticket." They set in and whipped me a thousand licks more, with sticks and straps that had buckles on the ends of them.

**Question:** What is the character of those men who were engaged in whipping you?

**Colby:** Some are first-class men in our town. One is a lawyer, one a doctor, and some are farmers.... They said I had voted for Grant and had carried the Negroes against them. About two days before they whipped me they offered me \$5,000 to go with them and said they would pay me \$2,500 in cash if I would let another man go to the legislature in my place. I told them that I would not do it if they would give me all the county was worth.... No man can make a free speech in my county. I do not believe it can be done anywhere in Georgia.

**Source:** *Harper's Weekly*,  
October 21, 1876.



Caption: "Of Course he wants to vote the Democratic ticket"

### Document Analysis

1. Why did the KKK attack Abram Colby?
2. According to Colby, what types of people make up the KKK?
3. What seems to be the ultimate goal of the KKK?
4. What is the main idea of the cartoon?

## Document C

Source: Gerald Danzer et al., *The Americans*, McDougal Littell, 1998.

“...in the 1870s, Northern voters grew indifferent to events in the South. Weary of the ‘Negro Question’ and ‘sick of carpet-bag’ government, many Northern voters shifted their attention to such national concerns as the Panic of 1873 and corruption in Grant’s administration.... Although political violence continued in the South ... the tide of public opinion in the North began to turn against Reconstruction policies.”

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Source: *Harper's Weekly*, 1876



President U.S. Grant: "I hope I shall get to the bottom soon."

### Document Analysis

1. Explain the phrases “weary of the ‘Negro Question’” and “‘sick of carpet-bag’ government.”
2. What is a “ring”?
3. What is President Grant trying to find in the barrel?
4. If President Grant was busy with scandals, what is likely to happen to his focus on Reconstruction efforts in the South?
5. What is a possible connection between government corruption in the North and the end of Reconstruction in the South?



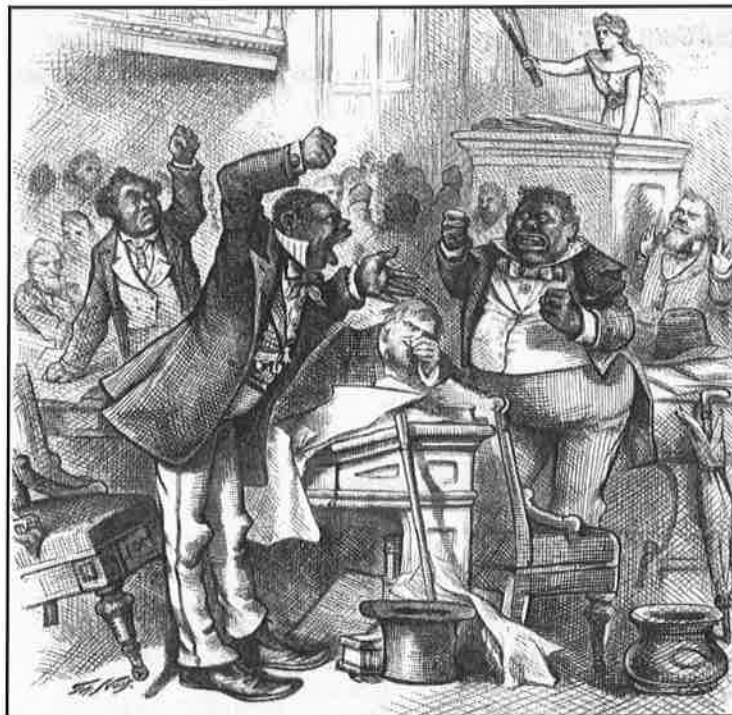
## Document D

**Source:** Heather Cox Richardson, *The Death of Reconstruction: Race, Labor and Politics in the Post-Civil War North, 1865-1901*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2001.

In the fall of 1873, even the staunchly [firmly] pro-Grant and pro-freedman *Boston Evening Transcript* ran a letter ... arguing that “the blacks, as a people, are unfitted for the proper exercise of political duties.... The rising generation of ... blacks needed a period of probation and instruction; a period ... long enough for the black to have forgotten something of his condition as a slave and learned much of the true method of gaining honorable subsistence and of performing the duties of any position to which he might aspire.”

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Northern artist's portrayal of the South Carolina State Legislature during Reconstruction.



**Source:** The cover of *Harper's Weekly*, March 14, 1874.

### Document Analysis

1. According to the letter from the *Boston Evening Transcript*, why did some people believe blacks were unfit to be government officials?
2. How does the letter from the *Boston Evening Transcript* show that racism existed in the North?
3. How does the *Harper's Weekly* cover depict black politicians in the South?
4. How do this cartoon and letter help explain why Northerners lost interest in Reconstruction?