

Lesson 23:

The Reconstruction Era

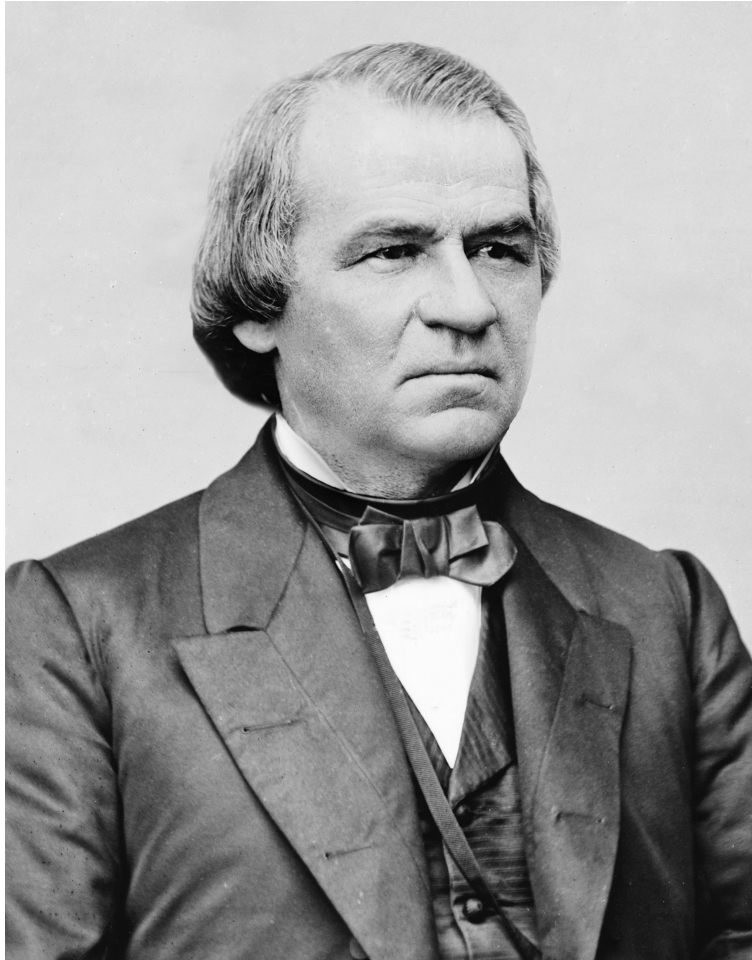
To what extent did Reconstruction bring African Americans closer to full citizenship?

Lesson 23: Section 1 – Presidential Reconstruction



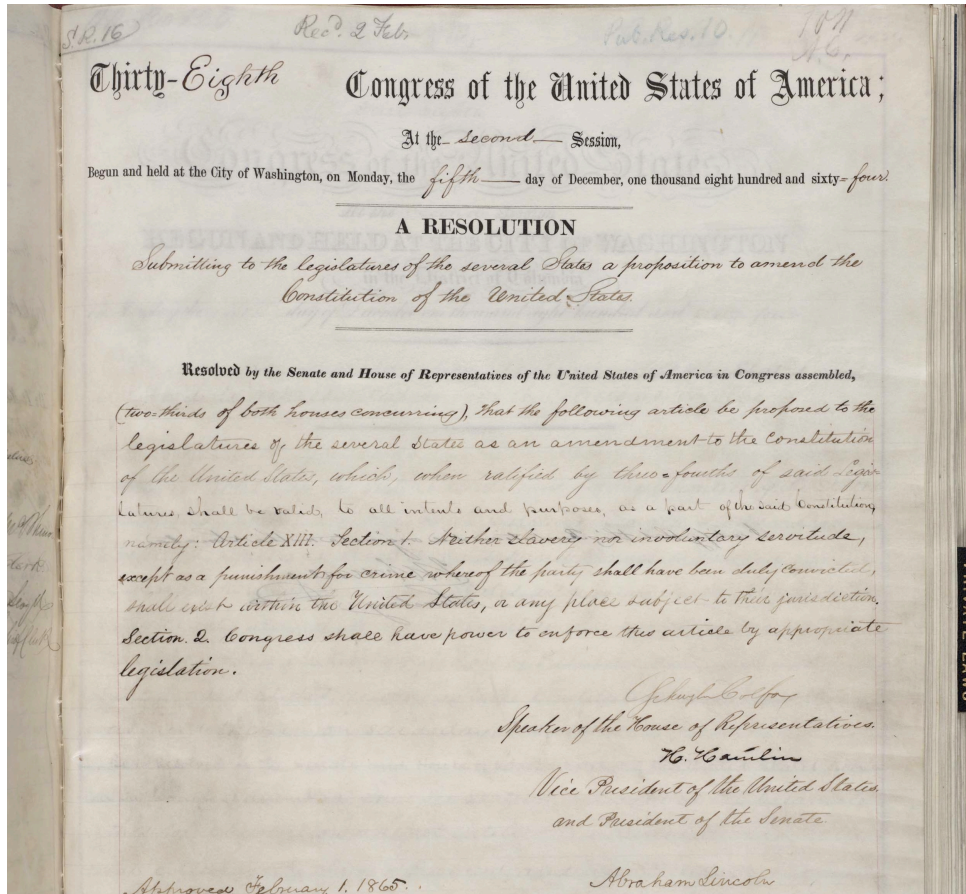
- As the Civil War ended, people in the United States had sharply different views about how to rebuild the Southern states and bring them back into the Union. This period came to be called **Reconstruction**.

Lesson 23: Section 1 – Presidential Reconstruction



- For President Andrew Johnson, a Southerner from Tennessee, Reconstruction had two major aims.
 - First, Southern states had to create new governments that were loyal to the Union and that respected federal authority.
 - Second, slavery had to be abolished once and for all.

Lesson 23: Section 1 – Presidential Reconstruction



- In May 1865, President Johnson announced his Reconstruction plan.
 - A former Confederate state could rejoin the Union once it had written a new state constitution, elected a new state government, repealed its act of secession, and canceled its war debts.
 - Every Southern state had to ratify the **Thirteenth Amendment**, which abolished slavery throughout the United States.

Lesson 23: Section 1 – Freedmen's Bureau



- To assist former slaves, Congress established the Freedmen's Bureau in March 1865.
- Over the next four years, the bureau provided:
 - food and medical care to both blacks and whites in the South
 - helped freedmen arrange for wages and good working conditions
 - distributed some land in 40-acre plots to “loyal refugees and freedmen.”

Lesson 23: Section 1 – Freedmen's Bureau



- The most lasting benefit of the Freedmen's Bureau was in education.
- Thousands of former slaves, both young and old, flocked to free schools built by the bureau.
- Long after the bureau was gone, institutions such as Howard University in Washington, D.C., continued to provide educational opportunities for African Americans.

Lesson 23: Section 1 – Black Codes



- As new state governments took power in the South, many Republicans in Congress were alarmed to see that they were headed by the same people who had led the South before the war—wealthy white planters.
- Once in office, these leaders began passing laws known as black codes to control their former slaves.

Lesson 23: Section 1 – Black Codes



- The black codes served three purposes. The first was to limit the rights of freedmen.
- Blacks, for example, could not vote or serve on juries in the South.

Lesson 23: Section 1 – Black Codes



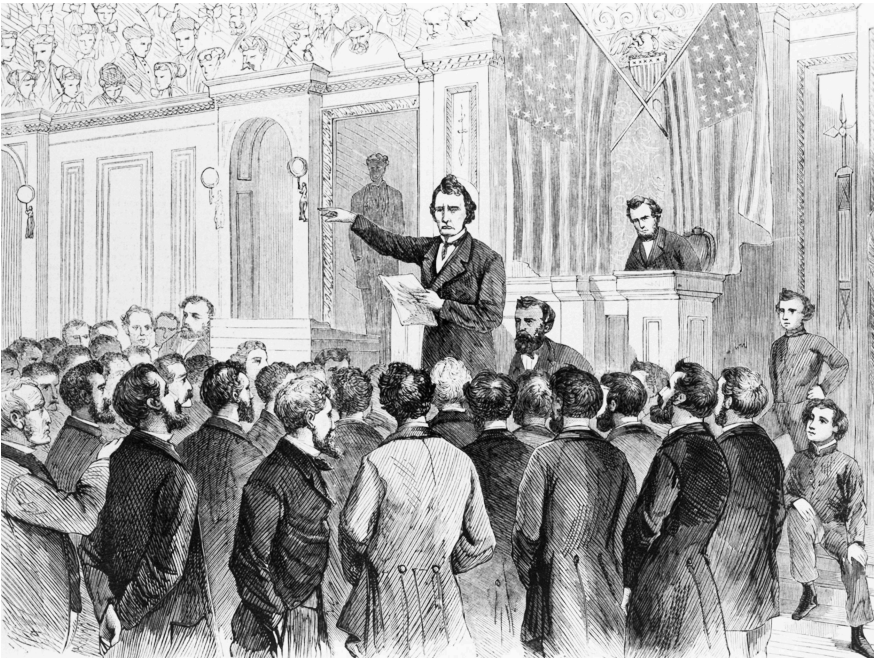
- The second purpose of the black codes was to help planters find workers to replace their slaves.
- The codes required freedmen to work, and those without jobs could be arrested and hired out to planters.

Lesson 23: Section 1 – Black Codes



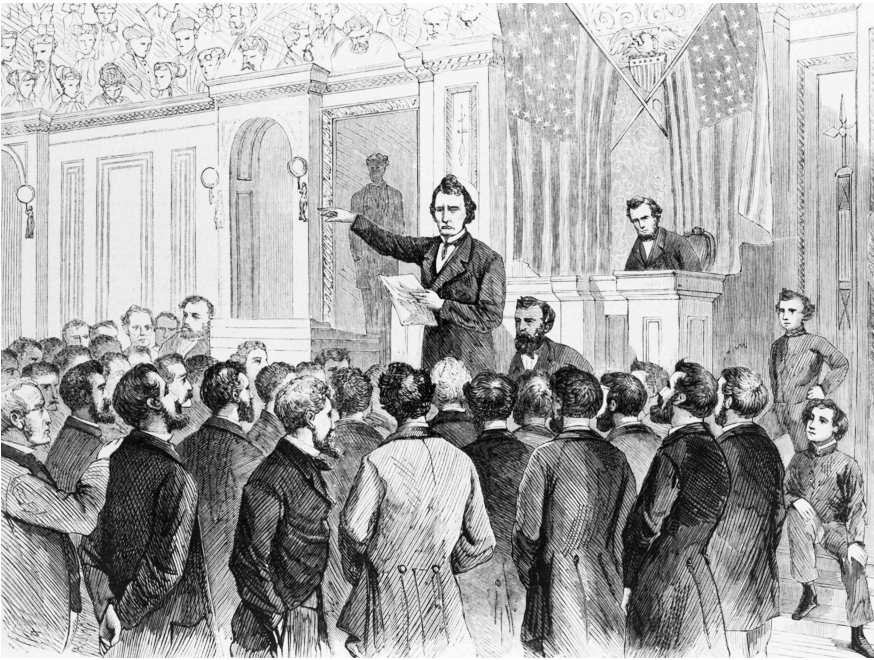
- The third purpose of the black codes was to keep freedmen at the bottom of the social order in the South.
- Most codes called for the segregation of blacks and whites in public places.

Lesson 23: Section 2 – Congressional Reconstruction



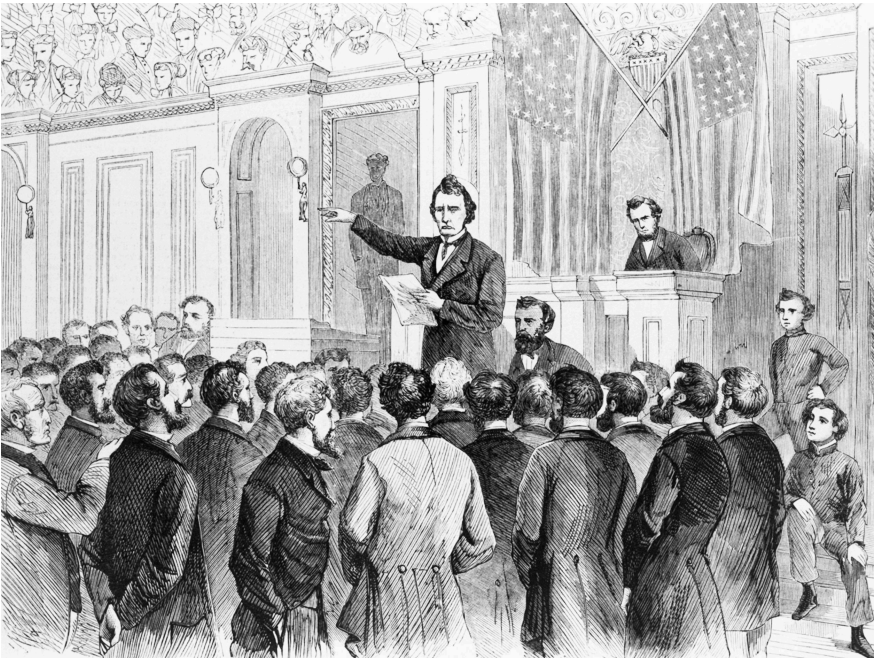
- As 1865 came to a close, President Johnson announced that Reconstruction was over.
- The Southern states were ready to rejoin the Union.

Lesson 23: Section 2 – Congressional Reconstruction



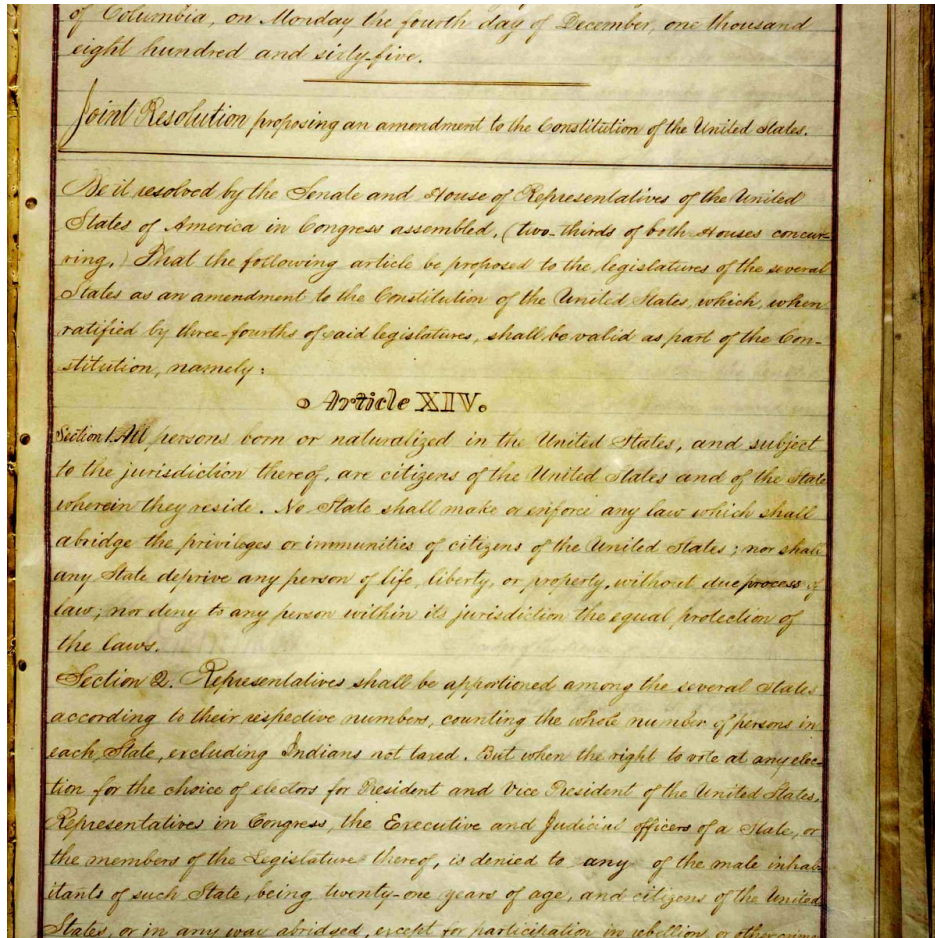
- The Radical Republicans, did not agree with Johnson and had an additional goal for Reconstruction.
- They believed that the South would not be completely rebuilt until freedmen were granted the full rights of citizenship.

Lesson 23: Section 2 – Congressional Reconstruction



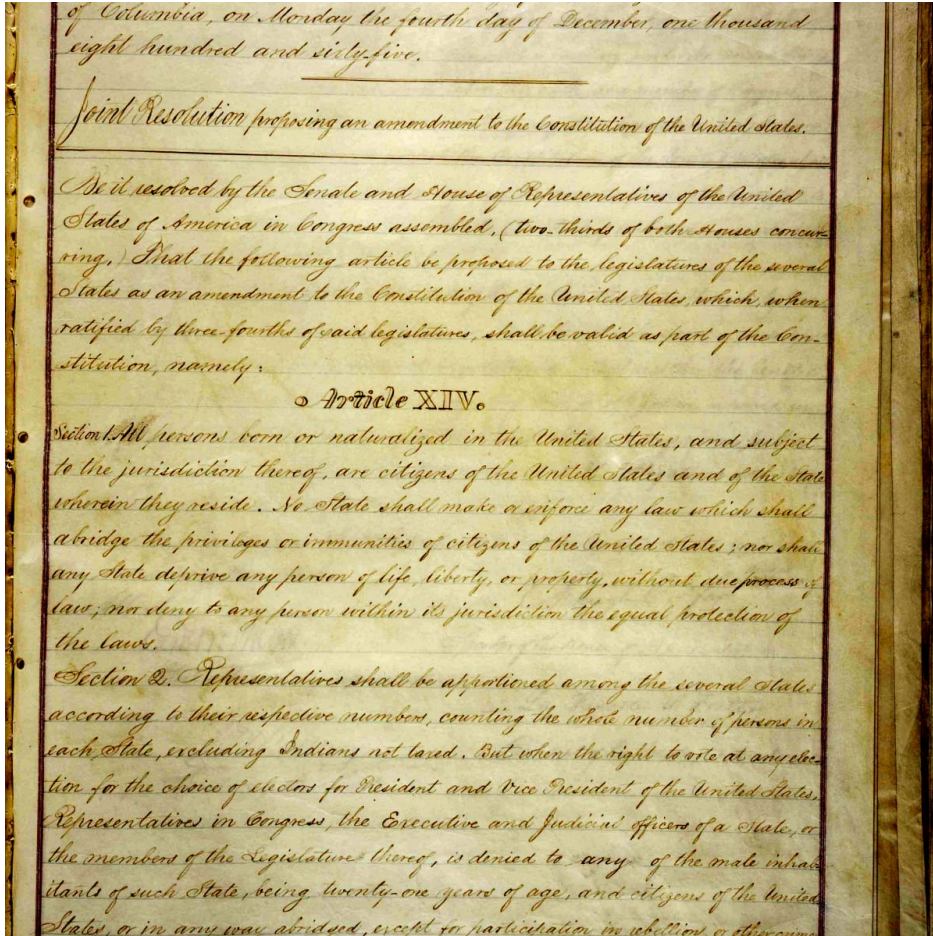
- Early in 1866, Radical Republicans joined with more moderate lawmakers to enact two bills designed to help freedmen. The first extended the life of the Freedmen's Bureau.
- The second was the Civil Rights Act of 1866, which struck at the black codes by declaring freedmen to be full citizens with the same civil rights as whites.
- Johnson declared both bills unconstitutional and vetoed them, but an angry Congress overrode his vetoes.

Lesson 23: Section 2 – Fourteenth Amendment



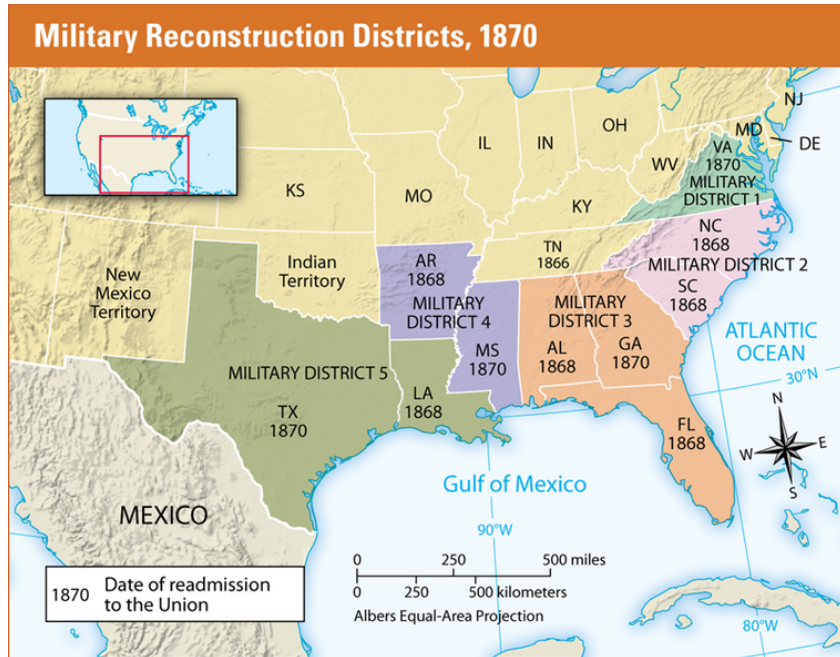
- To further protect the rights of African Americans, Congress approved the Fourteenth Amendment, which granted citizenship to “all people born or naturalized in the United States.”
- It also guaranteed all citizens “the equal protection of the laws,” which meant that state governments could not treat some citizens as less equal than others.

Lesson 23: Section 2 - Fourteenth Amendment



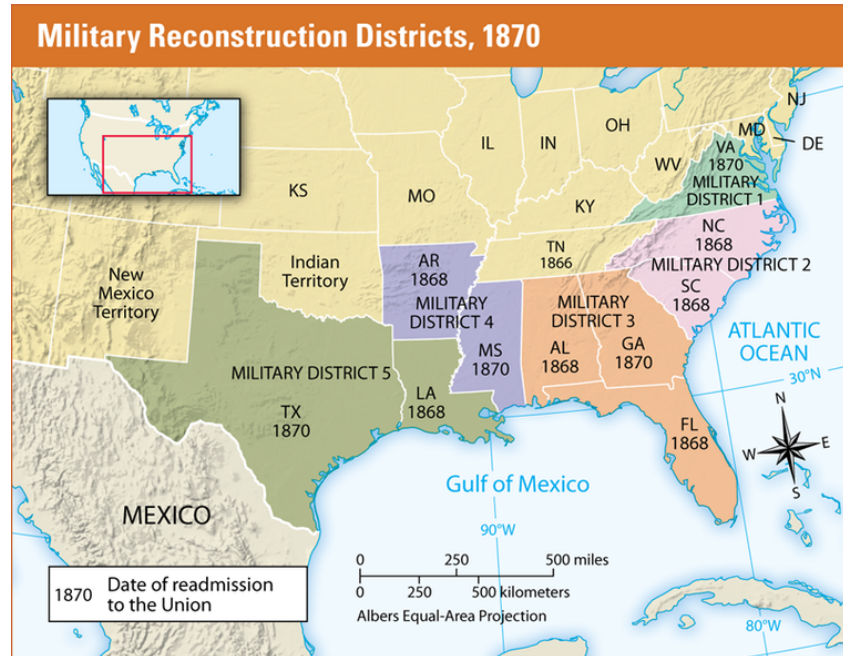
- President Johnson opposed the Fourteenth Amendment and called on voters to throw Republican lawmakers out of office.
- Instead, Republican candidates won a two-thirds majority in both houses of Congress in the 1866 election. From then on, Congress controlled Reconstruction.

Lesson 23: Section 2 – Military Reconstruction Act



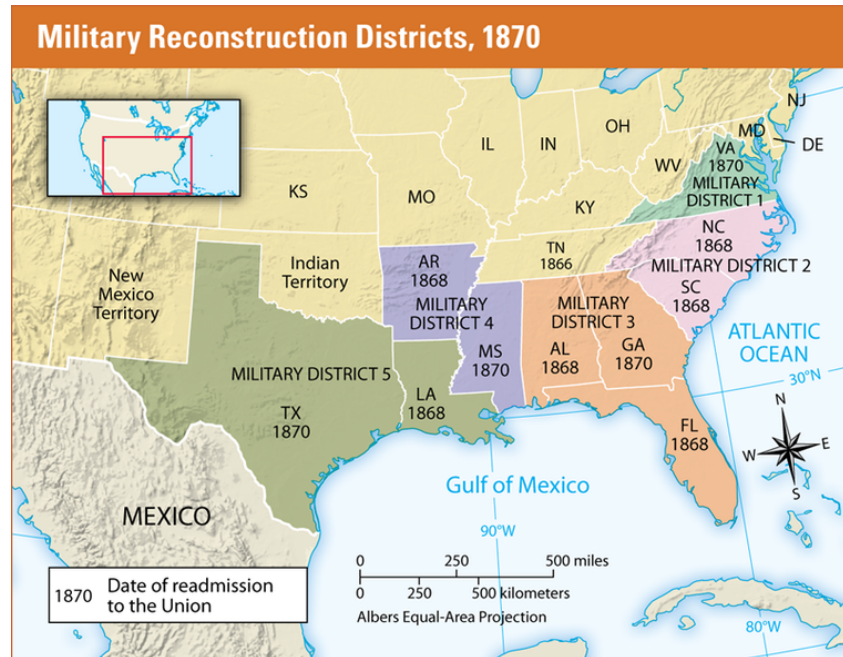
- Early in 1867, Congress passed the Military Reconstruction Act.
- Once again, it did so over Johnson's veto.
- This plan divided the South into five military districts, each governed by a general supported by federal troops.

Lesson 23: Section 2 – Military Reconstruction Act



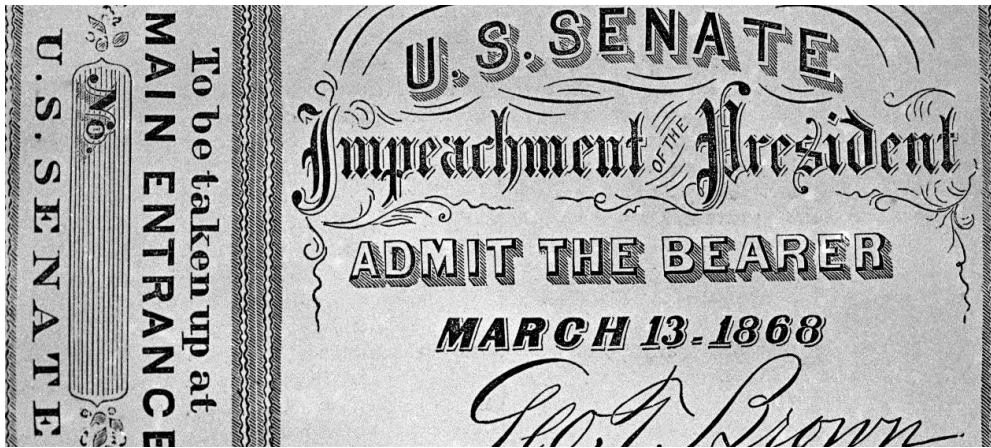
- The state governments set up under Johnson's Reconstruction plan were declared illegal.
- New governments were to be formed by Southerners loyal to the United States—both black and white.
- Southerners who had supported the Confederacy were denied the right to vote.

Lesson 23: Section 2 – Military Reconstruction Act



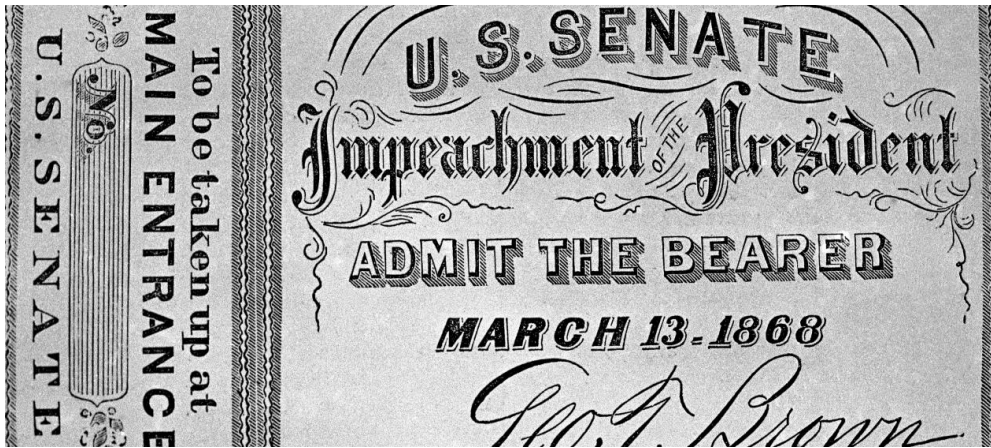
- Congress also passed two acts designed to reduce Johnson's power to interfere with congressional Reconstruction.
- The Command of the Army Act limited his power over the army.
- The Tenure of Office Act barred him from firing certain federal officials without the Senate's consent.

Lesson 23: Section 2 – President Johnson Is Impeached



- President Johnson blasted both laws as unconstitutional, and to prove his point, he fired one of the officials protected under the Tenure of Office Act.
- The House of Representatives responded to Johnson's challenge by voting to impeach the president.
- Besides violating the Tenure of Office Act, the House charged that Johnson had brought "the high office of the President of the United States into contempt, ridicule, and disgrace, to the scandal of all good citizens."

Lesson 23: Section 2 – President Johnson Is Impeached



- Two-thirds of the Senate had to find the president guilty to remove him from office.
- Despite heavy pressure to convict him, 7 Republicans and 12 Democrats voted “not guilty.”
- Johnson escaped removal from office by one vote, but he had lost his power.

Lesson 23: Section 2 – Sharecropping



- While Congress and the president battled over Reconstruction, African Americans in the South worked to build new lives.
- Most former slaves desperately wanted land to farm but had no money to buy it.

Lesson 23: Section 2 – Sharecropping



- Planters who turned to sharecropping divided their land into small plots and then rented these plots to individual tenant farmers—farmers who paid rent for the land they worked.
- A few tenants paid the rent for their plots in cash, but most paid their rent by giving the landowner a portion of what they raised.
- This payment of crops was called a share and was usually about a third or a half of the tenant's crop.

Lesson 23: Section 2 – Sharecropping



- Sharecropping looked promising to freedmen at first. They liked being independent farmers who worked for themselves.
- In time, they hoped to earn enough money to buy a farm of their own.

Lesson 23: Section 2 – Sharecropping



- However, most sharecroppers had to borrow money from planters to buy the food, seeds, tools, and supplies they needed to survive until harvest.
- Few ever earned enough from their crops to pay back what they owed.
- Rather than leading to independence, sharecropping usually led to a lifetime of poverty and debt.