



Smithsonian American Art Museum

A House Divided: Reconstruction

Essential Question: How might history have been different if alternate plans for the Reconstruction of the South had been put into practice?

Brief Introduction: Political leaders and parties in the tense time after the Civil War proposed various plans for Reconstruction. By observing artwork of this period, students will learn how these plans affected the South (and North) and relationships between people of different races and geographic regions.

Primary Subject and Grade Level: U.S. History, 8th and 11th grades

National Standards:

National History Standard Era 5: Civil War and Reconstruction (1850--1877)

Standard 5-3: How various Reconstruction plans succeeded or failed

Components:

- Lesson Plan
- Images
- Student Activity

Materials:

- American Art Museum Reconstruction images:
 - *Lee Surrendering to Grant at Appomattox* by Alonzo Chappel
http://americanart.si.edu/images/1981/1981.139_1a.jpg
 - *Taking the Oath and Drawing Rations* by John Rogers
http://americanart.si.edu/images/1882/1882.1.1_1a.jpg
 - *A Visit from the Old Mistress* by Winslow Homer
http://americanart.si.edu/images/1909/1909.7.28_1a.jpg
- Handout on Reconstruction Plans

Keywords: Civil War, Reconstruction, Abraham Lincoln, Andrew Johnson, Republican, Congress, radical, composition, pose, and body language

Procedure:**Visual Analysis Exercise**

Use the images from the American Art Museum's collection listed above.

1. Review key differences in plans for Reconstruction proposed by Abraham Lincoln, the Radical Republicans, and Andrew Johnson.
2. Display one image at a time. Ask students to “read” each one as they would a written story then analyze it as an interpretation of history.

3. Ask the students which Reconstruction plan each image most closely represents, especially in terms of mood and the physical relationship between the figures.

Suggested Questions*Lee Surrendering to Grant at Appomattox*

- How are the winning and losing sides depicted in this painting? Is it clear which is which?
- How do you think the two generals feel toward one another?
- Why do you think the artist decided to depict a scene without much celebration?
- How do you think this representation compares with the real event?

Visit from the Old Mistress

- What is going on in this scene?
- If you were to divide these people into two groups, how would you divide them? Why? How does this artist divide the two groups? What is the relationship between them?
- What do you think each character might be thinking/feeling?
- What do you think the women hope for the child?

Taking the Oath and Drawing Rations

- Who do you think these people are? Compare their clothing.
- Describe each person and his or her actions to form an idea of the individual. How does each person feel about the other?
- What has brought them together in this scene?

Hands-on Activity

1. Ask students to recreate and restage the scenes from the two paintings and sculpture to reflect the various plans for Reconstruction. For example, they could change the location, arrangement of figures, inclusion of figures, etc.

Possible scenarios include:

Lee Surrendering to Grant at Appomattox

Scenario: North has no desire to reconcile with the South

Prompts:

- How can you make the scene less equal?
- How can you make the scene less respectful?

Visit from the Old Mistress

Scenario: Before the Civil War

Prompts:

- What rules did slaves have to follow in the presence of their mistress?
- How might the attitudes or expressions be different?
- Where would interaction between the two groups typically have taken place?

Taking the Oath and Drawing Rations

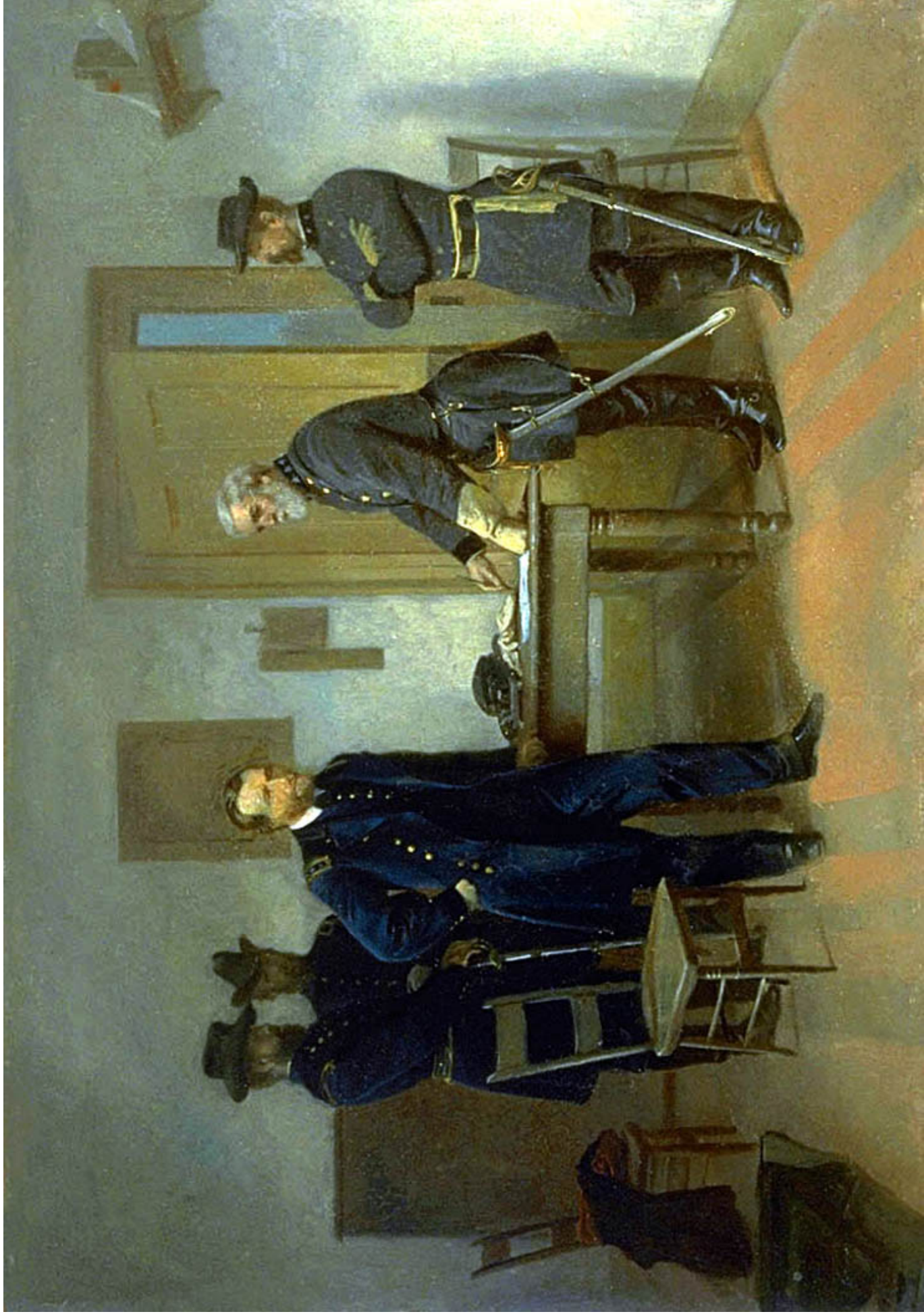
Scenario: Radical Reconstruction is in effect

Alternate Scenario: Johnson's Plan is in effect

Prompts:

- How would the mood of the scene change? How can you show the change?
- Who would be swearing the oath?

2. As students make changes to each scene, discuss their significance.
3. Offer students the opportunity to suggest and stage additional scenarios.



Alonzo Chappel, *Lee Surrendering to Grant at Appomattox*, ca. 1870, oil on paperboard, Smithsonian American Art Museum. Gift of Nancy L. Ross in memory of Patricia Firestone Chatham, 1981.139



John Rogers, *Taking the Oath and Drawing Rations*, modeled 1865, patented 1866, painted plaster, Smithsonian American Art Museum, Gift of John Rogers and Son, 1882.1.1



Winslow Homer, *A Visit from the Old Mistress*, 1876, oil on canvas, Smithsonian American Art Museum, Gift of William T. Evans, 1909.7.28

Three Plans for Reconstruction

Lincoln's Plan

President Lincoln was never able to carry out his plan for reconstruction, which was referred to as the Ten Percent Plan. From the beginning of the Civil War and his first inaugural address, Lincoln was focused on returning all regions of the country peacefully to the Union. He reiterated this concern in his second inaugural address: "*With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation's wounds; to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and for his orphan--do all which may achieve and cherish a just, and a lasting peace, among ourselves, and with all nations.*"

Under Lincoln's Ten Percent Plan (outlined in his 1863 Proclamation of Amnesty and Reconstruction), 10 percent of residents in former Confederate states would need to sign an oath of loyalty to form a new government and rejoin the Union. A full pardon (or amnesty) would be offered to all Southerners, even those who supported the Confederacy. States would then need to accept Emancipation.

Radical Reconstruction

Many Republicans in Congress felt Lincoln's plan was too lenient on those they considered traitors to the Union. Led by a group known as the Radical Republicans, members of Congress passed the Wade-Davis Bill in 1864. In this plan, 50 percent of state residents would need to swear an oath to the United States, and that number excluded any known supporter of the rebellion. It did not ask states to ratify Emancipation, but left it up to the courts to enforce.

Johnson's Plan

Andrew Johnson, a Southern Democrat with a disdain for the Southern privileged class, took over after Lincoln's assassination. Under Johnson's plan for Reconstruction, any high-ranking Confederate official or wealthy plantation owner had to obtain a presidential pardon before he would be allowed to vote or hold office. The new state government needed to ratify the Thirteenth Amendment, which outlawed slavery. His plan did not provide much protection for the newly freed slaves and would allow Jim Crow Laws and Black Codes to exist for decades. Under Johnson's plan, many former Confederate leaders were re-elected after their pardons.

Sources:

Divine, Robert A., et al. *America: The People and the Dream*. Teachers' Edition. Glenview, Illinois: Scott, Foresman, 1994

Viola, Herman, J. *Why We Remember United States History through Reconstruction*. Menlo Park, California: Addison-Wesley, 1997