

Economic Restrictions and Opportunities of Freed People

Bernadette McHenry
Bartram High School

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Overview

This is a 3-4 week unit designed for high school students in an African-American History or a U.S. History class. This unit asks the essential question, “What is freedom?” by examining economic facets of emancipation—particularly those of land, labor and education—during the Reconstruction Era.

In this unit, students will be required to read primary sources from the beginning of this era. Primary source readings will include government documents as well as letters written by and interviews with African-Americans expressing their reactions to these events and policies. Students will analyze and evaluate these documents to draw conclusions on the economic meaning of emancipation. They will use the documents to establish an understanding of the development of the system of sharecropping that created a dependency of African-Americans on the white landowners who continued to exploit black labor even after the abolition of slavery. Furthermore, students will research the foundation of public schools for African-Americans and use this research in conjunction with their study of the primary source documents to draw conclusions about the economic opportunities freedmen created and used to establish themselves as independent of agricultural labor. Finally, they will create relevancy to their personal lives and economic issues of today through free writing responses to daily prompts.

This unit is written with a flexible structure. Teachers using this unit are encouraged to tailor it to fit their own classes in terms of timeframes needed to complete reading and writing assignments based on the skill levels of entire classes or individual students. The unit is divided into subtopics: each can be used as a week of lessons, or can be adapted

easily to fit irregular school calendars, block periods, or for skill-level differentiation. Finally, each subtopic can be used independently as a mini-unit or as incorporated into a more standard U.S. History Reconstruction unit.

Rationale

I am interested in developing in my students an understanding of the emergence of the free black community in America as autonomous and active individuals with different economic and personal needs and goals. This topic is relevant to Philadelphia students because the pervasiveness of poverty in racially isolated neighborhoods frames for many young, African-American Philadelphians an understanding of black as synonymous with poor and disenfranchised. I believe a historical analysis of the actions of black communities can help to engender in students a sense of personal and political empowerment. In a larger sense, too, our current political environment weighs an individual's political empowerment and enjoyment of American freedom and democracy on his or her economic status. Therefore, I have decided to focus the topic of African-Americans in the Reconstruction Era on through the lens of economic restriction and opportunity.

I believe this unit is useful in any classroom, not just in public schools with a large African-American population. Too often Black History presents the majority of African-Americans as objects, rather than as subjects, of history. Outside of the Civil Rights movement of the 1950s-60s, and the singular accomplishments of individual African-Americans such as Martin Luther King, Rosa Parks, Booker T. Washington, Frederick Douglass, and Harriet Tubman, American history tends to look on the black community as a group of powerless individuals ushered from slavery to segregation to urban poverty with no autonomy that took no action on its own behalf, but only suffered the dictates of government. I believe that focusing this unit on the story of the way every day African-Americans reacted to and interacted with social structures and government policies during the Reconstruction Era is important to all students of all races and socioeconomic backgrounds. As modern America imagines itself as moving toward post-racialism, it is essential that all Americans begin to rediscover not only the forces that shaped the freedom of the larger black community in its nascence, but the internal and collective actions the larger black community took in shaping itself.

If students have previously studied slavery, then they must be aware that there existed varying classes and types of enslaved people in the antebellum South. Students should be aware that there existed agricultural workers, skilled workers, and domestic servants among enslaved people. They must also be aware that some slaves were educated and literate. This may be a good place to begin. I would like them to read the account of the meeting of W.T. Sherman with the black ministers of Savannah to ensure their understanding of the latter point, and to acknowledge pre-existing leadership in the enslaved black community. Next I think it would be useful to visit the question of land

ownership as it applied to emancipation and reconstruction, and the related topic of labor on the land. Finally I feel it is logical and relevant to visit the question of education as it related to economic empowerment and consequently, racial discord in the Reconstruction South.

Background

In September of 1862, after one of the most destructive battles of the American Civil War, Abraham Lincoln declared his intent to issue an Emancipation Proclamation to free the enslaved people within the rebellious states in the so-called Confederacy. The simplistic way of dealing with this historical moment is to teach and learn that Lincoln freed the slaves. Additionally, I find that many history teachers are eager to teach the equally simplified narrative that the Proclamation did not actually free a single slave, as it applied only in states that no longer considered Lincoln the president of the government under which they existed. In its contemporary setting, emancipation was not so cut and dry on either account, and created infinitely more questions than it answered, all of which can be summed up with the question: what does freedom mean?

Emancipation begged the immediate question of how to restructure the terms of agricultural labor in the South's cotton economy. Northern abolitionists and federal officials, who traveled to the South as early as 1862 to administer the needs of occupied lands and emancipated or abandoned slaves, were sharply divided in their visions for the transformation of the enslaved population into a free labor force. When the rebel garrisons and white planters fled the South Carolina Sea Islands in late 1861, thousands of enslaved African Americans were left unsupervised. In March 1862, 53 Northern abolitionists were granted permits to live and work on the Sea Islands. The federal government wanted to reap the profits of the cotton crops on the islands, while the abolitions were eager to demonstrate the social and economic potential of emancipation. The succeeding division and appropriation of the land to the African Americans who peopled it became known as the "Port Royal Experiment" (Ochiai 94-96). A series of executive and Congressional acts over the course of the next several months made it possible to confiscate land holdings from rebellious planters and to make that land available for lease and purchase by its African American residents, or by loyal land managers. Most of these acts were passed as war strategies, but the African Americans and their Northern white advocates took them seriously and acted on them in good faith (97-98).

The two diverging visions on the economic status of freed people were established within this Port Royal Experiment. The first, represented by Edward Philbrick, a Boston abolitionist, was based on the economic culture of the urban North. Philbrick bought 7,000 acres of cotton plantation from the government and hired the resident African Americans to work the land for low wages (99). As wage labor had begun to become the prevalent system of production in the North, this seemed a reasonable system for

maintaining the cotton economy based on free labor in the South. However, as members of the Southern agrarian society, the African-Americans viewed wage labor as an extension of slave labor, and some Northern abolitionists agreed with them, most notably, General Rufus Saxton. Saxton, though a Northerner, “and his allies believed that if freed slaves were enabled to acquire land, they would establish themselves as a self-supporting yeomanry, empowered to exercise and enjoy the rights and liberties guaranteed to all American citizens by their Constitution” (104).

Thus, the question of the meaning of emancipation was rooted in an economic juxtaposition of free labor values in a plantation society. The confiscation and re-appropriation of rebellious planters’ lands continued through the course of the war. The Wade-Davis Bill, passed by Congress in 1864 and subsequently vetoed by Abraham Lincoln, demonstrated the radical Republican determination to disenfranchise the landed class in the rebellious states, and suggested that once stripped of political power, the planters might lose their economic advantages as well. General Sherman issued his famous Special Field Orders No. 15 in January of 1865, allotting the mythological “40 acres” to every freedman, and the Freedman’s Bureau was created by Congressional act only three months later. This act confirmed Sherman’s order to redistribute the land among the freedmen. Most of these efforts, however, were overturned at the close of the war by Andrew Johnson’s Proclamation of Amnesty, issued shortly after Lincoln’s death in the spring of 1865. The primary concern of the federal and state governments was the restoration of the cotton economy, and promises made to freedmen took a back seat to this national priority.

The question of land settled by Johnson’s amnesty, the federal government and the freedmen turned attention to the question of labor. Former masters encouraged their former slaves to stay on and sign labor contracts, and many freedmen did. Landowners still needed workers to labor on the land, and freedmen needed a source of personal supplies. At first, labor arrangements largely required landowners to provide shelter, clothing, and provisions to the free laborers in exchange for small portions of the crop yield. Some included a wage as well. These contracts were often vague at best and depended on the honesty of the landowner. Wages were to be paid at the end of the year, effectively creating an economic dependency in the workers on the landowners, and arguably binding the freedmen to the plantation. Labor contracts expanded over time to create the system of sharecropping, a system by which laborers worked specific plots of land using the landowner’s equipment and provisions for a portion of the profit from the sale of the crop, minus the cost of said provisions (Hollis 19-21). Although many freedmen eventually became sharecroppers, some also established cash or share tenancies, which could and often did, over time, lead to land ownership.

The Freedmen’s Bureau, immediately tasked with the enormous burden of providing rations of food and clothing to ex-slaves, erecting hospitals, and transporting and relocating freed people, quickly took on the role of labor arbitrator between freedmen and

their former masters and new employers. Predictably, former slaveholders were not eager to employ their former property as free laborers (although Hollis argues that they preferred black to white labor), and were prone to taking advantage of their laborers. The Bureau aided the largely illiterate freedmen population in negotiating contracts, and some historians conclude that in regions where the Bureau was active, the economic situation of freedmen was far superior to those in regions where it was not (Harrison 211-213). As the Bureau was staffed largely by former Union military and representatives from Northern aid societies, it adhered to the Northern ethic of free labor and the legal significance of contracts. According to Harrison, “most federal officials operating in the post-emancipation South regarded the labor contract as a necessary guarantee of economic freedom. The contract appeared to represent an equitable agreement freely entered into by legally equal partners” (211).

Still, despite the ideals of the short-lived Bureau and its authority, there was no shortage of abuses of contract labor, particularly in localities outside the reach of the Bureau. Many former Confederate states passed and attempted to enact Black Codes at the onset of Reconstruction. This type of legislation severely restricted the economic autonomy and physical mobility of ex-slaves in a thinly veiled attempt to recreate the conditions of slavery through provisions such as employment licenses, juvenile apprenticeships, and vagrancy laws. Although these laws were overturned by the Civil Rights Act of 1866 and subsequently by the restructuring of state legislatures by Radical Republicans in Congress, the Codes made clear the intention of the landed class, and established a political and economic climate suitable for the legitimization of a racial caste system. In other words, pervasive racism and contempt for former slaves made it possible and even easy for landowners to abuse the labor contract system.

Furthermore, the illiteracy of the overwhelming majority of freedmen created obvious obstacles to the kind of enfranchisement and political power the black community required to participate in the large-scale establishment of free agricultural labor standards. This does not mean, however that the black community was entirely powerless. The most important and long-lasting work of the Freedmen’s Bureau, in fact, was in aiding in founding and maintaining thousands of schools for black children and adults. Between 1860 and 1880, black school attendance grew from 2% to 30% including elementary, secondary and post-secondary schools (Butchart 33-34). These schools were initially taught by black and white Northern abolitionists, although the instructional duties were quickly assumed by members of the Southern black community. Despite tremendous backlash from a white community that feared the autonomy, independence, and equality education could bring (48-49), black schools flourished, many into and beyond Jim Crow. Black schools were as often as not funded by the local black community (40), and taught by black teachers trained at “normal schools” established during and immediately following the war.

Soon, the emergence of industrial education institutes and black colleges opened further

economic doors for the black community. Although these opportunities were as infrequent in nature as those afforded by cash tenancies, they were essential in providing the foundation for a emerging black middle and upper classes, which created traction in the segregation era struggle for the political enfranchisement of the African-American community as a whole. In short, Reconstruction Era black schools and land and labor contracts led to the limited but very real opportunities that soon blossomed into land ownership and higher education for an emerging Black Elite. This economic stratification set the stage for 20th century African-American leaders such as W.E.B Du Bois and Marcus Garvey who would bring the struggle for emancipation full circle by advocating, each in his own way, full racial equality and real freedom.

The end of slavery challenged the U.S. government in terms of forming policy considering a national conflict between the dependence of the cotton economy on cheap labor, and the civil rights of the newly freed African-American population. The end result was a system that relegated most of that community to a labor system that tied African-Americans to the land with little to no economic independence or autonomy. At the same time, the establishment of black schools and universities created small but rising black middle and elite classes from which later black leaders established a political base, and an economic structure as well.

Objectives

By participating in and completing this unit of study, students will:

- Read and interpret primary source documents
- Evaluate the impact of federal policy on freedmen
- Evaluate the impact of state legislation on freedmen
- Identify economic challenges of freedmen
- Demonstrate understanding of personal challenges of freedmen
- Evaluate the opportunities of education for freedmen and black children
- Draw conclusions about the economic meaning of freedom
- Draw conclusions about the economic and political development of African American communities

Strategies

A wide variety of strategies will be used during the course of this unit. As the development of literacy skills is a high priority in the Philadelphia School District, this unit includes a great deal of reading and writing. Literacy strategies to be used will include reading primary sources using a variety of before, during, and after (BDA) reading activities, such as text renderings, vocabulary development, highlighting key facts, annotating texts, sorting information using graphic organizers, and completing writing prompts. This unit includes two document-based questions (DBQs) as well. DBQs are particularly effective in AP courses, but are equally useful at any skill level.

Students will use peer reviews to edit writing drafts: this strategy builds writing skills by allowing students to see other writing styles, to comment on each other's work, and to share each other's strengths. Finally, students will engage in free writing regularly, and develop connections between the historical material and contemporary issues of economics and equality, demonstrated by the composition of a personal essay.

This unit also includes strategies that address multiple intelligences and differentiation. Using collaborative learning, students have the opportunity to take on group roles best suited to their individual strengths. Collaborative learning also gives students time to work in small groups with a limited number of peers, personalizing the learning experience and giving students the chance to teach to and learn from each other. Additionally, this unit encourages further collaboration by employing peer review. Finally, students will engage in role-playing to bring historical perspective and a hands-on experience to the learning.

Classroom Activities

Subtopic One: Emancipation and Land

Essential Question: What did freedom from slavery mean to the emancipated slaves and what did it mean to the U.S. government?

Lesson 1 (1 class period):

Hook: What is freedom? Students will free-write personal answers to this question in their thought journals. Guiding questions include: What does freedom look like? What is the opposite of freedom? What can free people do that people who are not free cannot do? What are some examples of free people? Are there differences between the meaning of freedom now and the meaning of freedom in slavery days? Ask for volunteers to share out answers and create a full-class brainstorm on chart paper, listing key words and phrases. Divide answers into "historical" and "modern" applications.

Guided Reading: Emancipation Proclamation. Use a Before-During-After (BDA) reading strategy. Before, have students perform a text rendering: skim the text and circle 3-5 key words. Use a whip-around to collect these key words and record them on the board. Using the results of the whip-around, ask students, "If a stranger walked into this room right now, what would he or she know about the reading based on this list of key words?" This strategy demonstrates to students the basic main idea of the reading before they begin to analyze the text. During, highlight key points: have students read the text alone or in small groups, highlighting one or two key points, or main ideas, in each paragraph. After, annotate the text: in small groups or as a whole class, ask students to make margin notes on the reading by summarizing the highlighted portions in as few words as possible.

Closure: Discuss the similarities and differences between the start-of-class brainstorm and the meaning of freedom as framed by the Emancipation Proclamation. Ask students to reflect on these similarities and differences in their thought journals.

Adaptation: For classes/students with lower reading levels, the second, third, and fourth paragraphs of the Proclamation, describing the stipulation that it applies only to states and counties in active rebellion, may be omitted from the reading.

Lesson 2 (1 class period):

Hook: In what ways did the Emancipation Proclamation address freedom? (Answers should include: self-emancipation “in any efforts they may make for their actual freedom;” avoidance of violence, labor for wages, service in the military.)

Guided Notes: Students will record the definitions of freedom as found in the Proclamation in their notes:

- enslaved people must take action for their own freedom
- freed people will work for wages
- freedmen may serve in the U.S. military

Students should go back and find & highlight or annotate the passages in the Emancipation that state these definitions of freedom.

Guided Reading: Divide students into homogenous groups of 2-3. Distribute the 13th & 14th Amendments to the U.S. Constitution, with lower-level groups receiving the 13th and higher-level groups receiving the 14th (Sections 1, 2, and 5). Have students read and annotate these amendments with an eye for the definition of freedom in each. Ask groups to summarize these amendments. Then pair the groups and have them share their results.

Independent Activity: Using the Emancipation Proclamation and the 13th & 14th Amendments and a Quotes & Notes graphic organizer ask students to find the meanings of freedom as described by the post-bellum federal government. Require students to find selections in the document that address the Essential Question (What did freedom from slavery mean to the emancipated slaves and what did it mean to the U.S. government?) and record them in the “quotes” column of the Quotes & Notes organizer using the “notes” column to record their ideas on how the quote relates to the Essential Question.

Closure: Have students free write in journal: What is missing from the government’s definition of freedom? If time permits, ask students to share & discuss their thoughts.

Lesson 3 (1 class period):

Hook: If you were a newly emancipated slave, what is the first thing you would want to do? What would be your main priorities? What challenges do you think you may have faced in acting on those priorities?

Background Notes: The South Seas Islands and the Port Royal experiment:

- Islands off the coast of South Carolina were liberated by Union troops in 1861
- White residents fled, leaving over 10,000 enslaved people behind
- With the aid of Northern abolitionist organizations, the black residents organized the land into subsistence farms and cotton plantations and founded towns
- Many free blacks and Union authorities considered this a model for emancipation
- Despite the success of the “experiment,” the land was returned to white control at the close of the war by President Johnson in 1865

Guided Reading: excerpts from “Newspaper Account of a Meeting between Black Religious Leaders and Union Military Authorities,” February 13, 1865, Savannah, GA. (Questions and answers: First through Fifth). Using a BDA, guide students through this reading, allowing them the choice to work individually or in pairs. Before, text rendering with an eye to the Essential Question. During, highlighting key points and annotating. After, continue Quotes & Notes organizer.

Closure: Ask students share out from their Quotes & Notes. Expand into a general discussion on the Essential Question, given enough time.

Lesson 4 (2 class periods):

Hook: Free write in journal: Based on yesterday’s reading, how would you have answered General Sherman’s questions compared to how the black leaders of Savannah did? Allow students time to discuss their answers to make relevant contemporary connections with the historical material. Encourage them to make notes on the discussion in their thought journals.

At this point, students should be encouraged to transition from guided readings of the primary sources in a group to reading them independently and individually. For the last two class periods, students will be given a DBQ and will use the Quotes & Notes organizer and the DBQ to construct an evidence-based written response to an open-ended question.

Documents:

1. Emancipation Proclamation
2. General Sherman’s Special Field Orders No. 15
3. 13th & 14th Amendments

4. News paper account of a meeting between Black Leaders and Union Authorities
5. Letters from Edisto Islanders

Question: Compare and contrast the freedmen's vision of emancipation with the meaning of emancipation as defined by the U.S. government?

Three of the five documents included in the DBQ have been previously read and discussed in class and are recorded on the students' Quotes & Notes organizer. Only two of the documents are new. Therefore, while students should be well prepared to compose a portion of their responses, they also will have to incorporate the new texts. Responses must use evidence from all the texts to support the arguments: students should be encouraged to add the evidence from new texts to the Quotes & Notes organizer before composing a response. They should be allowed most of one class period to complete a first draft for their response. Students will then use peer review checklists to critique and edit each other's work. After a student has had two peers review his/her work, he/she will incorporate the edits and suggestions to complete a final draft for a final assessment grade.

Adjustment: If students are familiar and practiced with DBQ, this lesson can be completed in one class period, without the use of peer review. For students or classes with lower level writing skills, a writing scaffold should be used to complete the writing assignment.

Subtopic Two: Land and Labor

Essential Question: What, if any, relationship exists between freedom and labor? How did freedmen and government agencies view this relationship in the period immediately following emancipation?

Lesson 5 (1 class period):

Hook: Free-writing prompt: Does being a student have an effect on your freedom? What about being a teenager? If so, are the effects positive, negative, or both?

Background Notes: Black Codes

- In 1865 & 1866, many positions in Southern state governments were returned to wealthy plantation owners who had served in the rebellion
- These state legislatures began passing laws collectively known as Black Codes
- Black codes attempted to restrict the free movement and employment options of the former slaves
- Most black codes were quickly overturned by federal law

Guided Reading: Jigsaw the Mississippi Black Codes. Divide the document into sections, basing the length of each on the reading levels of the students in the class. Each student will read his or her assigned section and answer the following set of questions:

1. Summarize the stipulations of this section.
2. What rights does it give freedmen? What rights does it take away?

Students will then move around the room, sharing answers until they each have a summary of the full document.

Closure: Facilitate a class discussion based on the following questions: How did the Black Codes define the relationship between whites and blacks in Mississippi? Who do you think supported the Black Codes? How would the authors of the white codes try to justify them in today's society? How would being black under the Black Codes be similar to being a student or a teenager? Try to get students to the point of discovering that even though the Black Codes didn't last very long, they established a racial basis for social and economic hierarchy in the Southern states and for hierarchical interaction between white and black communities.

Adjustment: For students/classes hesitant to engage in class discussion, begin with or substitute a Pair & Share: each student will write brief responses to one or two of the questions, then share with a neighbor. Students can share each other's answers with the class instead of their own.

Lesson 6 (2 class periods):

Hook: What are the differences between forced labor, as in slavery, and working for someone else for wages? Are there any similarities?

Independent Reading: Labor contract between Henry Bledsoe and Abraham Bledsoe.

Answer reading comprehension questions:

1. How much does Henry get paid?
2. What does Abraham have to give Henry besides pay?
3. When does Henry get paid?
4. Why is the pay divided in this way?
5. What is left unsaid by the contract?

Guided Notes: Contract labor

- Freedmen often entered into work contracts with white landowners
- Contracts took many different forms, including:
 - wages for labor performed
 - portions of the crop or product for labor performed
 - sharecropping: landowner provided land, seed, and tools in exchange for a share of the crop
 - cash tenancy: landowner rented the land for cash to the laborer/tenant

Have students fill in the following points based on the Bledsoe contract:

- Contracts usually favored (the landowner)
- The specific work required by the contracts (was left unspecified)
- Contracts were issued as long-term (to keep the freedmen from leaving unsatisfying contracts, to prevent freedmen for looking for better terms elsewhere, etc.)

Independent Activity: Add provisions to the Bledsoe contract in order to make it fairer for Henry (the laborer).

Class Activity/Role play: Students will write labor contracts from both points of view.

Step One: Divide class into teams of four. In each group, two students will be the laborers, one will be the landowner, and one will be the Freedmen's Bureau official in charge of making sure contracts are fair (for smaller classes, create groups of three, without the Bureau official). The landowner gets to choose the type of contract they will negotiate, and to keep each student working in her or his role's best interest rather than in the interest of fairness, instruct that they will be graded on this activity as follows: the landowner will be graded on how much profit he or she can acquire; everyone else will be graded at the landowner's discretion (at the end of the activity, students should be informed that they will be graded on participation only).

Step Two: Students will then work together to write a labor or tenancy contract.

Step Three: Have groups exchange contracts and evaluate them while staying in their assigned roles: Would you accept this contract? What, if anything, do you see as unfair or inefficient about this contract?

Step Four: Have students reflect within their groups on the activity: Who was in charge? Did the laborers act in their own best interest or in that of the landowner? Did the Bureau official act in the interest of fairness or in that of the landowner? Why would the teacher allow the landowner to assign grades to the rest of the group?

Closure: Have groups share out their reflections from Step Four of the activity. Facilitate a full-class discussion that connects the reflection questions to the week's essential question: What, if any, relationship exists between freedom and labor? How did freedmen and government agencies view this relationship in the period immediately following emancipation?

Extended Activity: Write accounts of contract negotiation from a first-person perspective, as a letter or a diary entry.

Lesson 7 (1-2 class periods):

Hook: Free-writing prompt: What effect did being a contract laborer have on the meaning freedom for the freedmen? How was this similar to and different from slavery? How is it similar to or different from working as an hourly employee for a store today, or as a salaried employee for a company?

Students will be given a DBQ and will construct an evidence-based written response to an open-ended question.

Documents:

1. Bill Establishing the Freedmen's Bureau
2. Labor Contract between Abraham Bledsoe & Henry Bledsoe
3. Mississippi Black Codes
4. Accounts of contracts, Borgest & Adams, from Sterling

Question: How did freedmen and government agencies view the relationship between freedom and labor in the period immediately following emancipation?

Two of the four documents included in the DBQ have been previously read and discussed in class. The first and fourth are new. Students should be prepared to compose their responses using evidence from the texts to support their arguments by using their previous work while incorporating information from the new texts. They should be allowed most of one class period to complete a draft for a response. Students will then use peer review checklists to critique and edit each other's work. After a student has had two peers review his/her work, he/she will incorporate the edits and suggestions to complete a final draft for a final assessment grade.

Adjustment: If you choose to incorporate a peer review, this lesson may take 2 class periods. For more advanced students or classes, this DBQ can be completed as one draft in one class period and/or without a peer review. For students or classes with lower level writing skills, a writing scaffold should be used to complete the writing assignment.

Subtopic Three: Education

Essential Question: What is the relationship between education and freedom? How did freedmen and the African-American community view this relationship?

Lesson 8 (1 class period):

Hook: Free-writing prompt: What government institutions exist to help you? What are their purposes? What are their limitations?

Background Notes: Freedmen's Bureau

- The Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands (Freedmen's Bureau) was established in 1865 by Congress & President Lincoln
- It was initially tasked to feed, clothe, and care for freed slaves until they could establish themselves as freedmen
- Its expanded to serve as a legal resource for freedmen making labor and land contracts
- Its largest accomplishment was the foundation of thousands of black schools

- The Bureau was disbanded under President Grant in 1872

Guided Reading: Law Creating the Freedmen's Bureau. Civil Rights Act of 1866. Using a BDA, guide students through this reading, allowing them the choice to work individually or in pairs. Before, text rendering with an eye to the Essential Question. During, highlighting key points and annotating. After, Quotes & Notes organizer.

Lesson 9 (2-3 class periods):

Required Materials: Computer labs or laptop cart with internet access.

Hook: Free-writing prompt: What kind of job can you get with a high school diploma? How about with a trade school certificate? A college diploma? In other words, what is the relationship between your level of education and your earning potential?

Class discussion: Ask students to think back to the contract-writing activities. Have them brainstorm and discuss the challenges illiteracy brought for freedmen. In 1865, only 10% of African-Americans were literate. Who may have helped the illiterate freedmen negotiate contracts? What does dependence on someone else to help you sign and negotiate say about freedom?

Independent Research: Students will research Reconstruction era black schools independently to find answers to the questions listed below. They should continue to use the Quotes & Notes organizer from the previous lesson; however it will be amended to include a "source" column.

Suggested Questions:

- Why were black schools founded?
- What kinds of organizations helped to found and staff black schools?
- Who taught in black schools?
- How were black schools funded?
- How did African-American children and adults respond to black schools?
- How did white Southerners react to black schools?

Suggested Online Resources:

<http://www.freedmen.umd.edu/>

http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/reconstruction/schools/sf_postwar.html

<http://www.teachersdomain.org/resource/osi04.soc.us.civil.reconstruction/>

<http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/nge/Article.jsp?id=h-634>

<http://www.encyclopediaofalabama.org/face/Article.jsp?id=h-2600>

Essay: Using their research, students will write a research essay to address the essential question for this sub-topic: How did freedmen and the African-American community

view the relationship between education and freedom? Essays should be written in two drafts, using a peer review between drafts. Students will be required to cite their sources and should be encouraged to incorporate the primary sources provided in the previous lesson. Teachers should grade the essay according to a standard research essay rubric, provided to the students for guidance before they begin the first draft.

Adjustment: For students or classes with lower level writing skills, a writing scaffold should be used to complete the writing assignment. The number of class periods allotted for this assignment can vary according to the skill levels of classes and students.

Lesson 10 (1 class period):

In this final class period, students will be able to demonstrate their understanding of the content presented by making relevant contemporary connections to the material.

Independent Activity: Students will complete a “Thought Paper.” Using their responses to the free-writing prompts at the beginning of every lesson, students should compose a short essay answering the essential question of this unit: What is freedom? This essay should be a personal response, and although it can incorporate the historical content of the unit, the purpose of the essay to give students an opportunity to make personal and contemporary connections to the material. Students should be encouraged to connect to at least one contemporary political or economic local or national issue that is personally important to them, as well as relevant to the topics of freedom, labor, and education.

Extending the Unit

In an African-American history class, this unit can be followed by the debate between Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. Du Bois, or by the 15th Amendment and the movement for African-American enfranchisement, or by *Plessy v. Ferguson* and the roots of legal segregation, or by Black Nationalism as preached and practiced by Marcus Garvey.

Annotated Bibliography

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Detailed history of the conflicting views of various government officials on the use of land on the South Seas Islands by abandoned slaves during the Civil War, and the ultimate decision to restore the land to its former white owners.

Lowe, Richard. "The Freedman's Bureau and Local Black Leadership." *The Journal of American History*. 80.3 (Dec 1993): 989-998.

An overview of the role of the Freedmen's Bureau in establishing African-American political leaders during Radical Reconstruction.

Harrison, Robert. "New Representations of a 'Misrepresented Bureau': Reflections on Recent Scholarship on the Freedmen's Bureau." *American Nineteenth Century History*. 8.2 (Jun 2007): 205-229

A reconciliation of traditional and revisionist histories the Freedmen's Bureau.

Hollis, Shirley A. "Neither Slave Nor Free: The Ideology of Capitalism and the Failure of Radical Reform in the American South." *Critical Sociology*. 35.1 (Jan 2009): 9-27

Analysis of the economic philosophies that shaped federal land and labor policy during Reconstruction.

Fairclough, Adam. "'Being in the Field of Education and also Being a Negro...Seems...Tragic': Black Teachers in the Jim Crow South." *The Journal of American History*. 87.1 (Jun 2000): 65-91.

Describes the challenges and philosophies of black educators in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, including the tension between industrial and higher education.

Butchart, Ronald E. "Black hope, white power: emancipation, reconstruction, and the legacy of unequal schooling in the U.S. South, 1861-1880." *Paedagogica Historica*. 46.1-2 (Feb-Apr 2010): 33-50.

An in-depth history of the establishment of black schools in the South during Reconstruction. Details the backgrounds and motivations of the teachers in these schools as well as the financial challenges and terrorism the schools and teachers faced.

Student Resources & Primary Source Class Readings

13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Ratified December 6, 1865.

http://www.usconstitution.net/xconst_Am13.html

14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Ratified July 9, 1868.

http://www.usconstitution.net/xconst_Am14.html

Black Codes of Mississippi. An Act to Confer Civil Rights on Freedmen, and for other Purposes. 1865.

<http://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/document/black-codes-of-mississippi/>

Civil Rights Act of 1866. April 9, 1866.

<http://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/document/the-civil-rights-act-of-1866/>

Emancipation Proclamation. January 1, 1863.

http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/featured_documents/emancipation_proclamation/transcript.html

General W.T. Sherman's Special Field Orders No. 15. January 16, 1865.

<http://www.freedmen.umd.edu/sfo15.htm>

Labor Contract between Abraham Bledsoe & Henry Bledsoe. January 19, 1866.

<http://www.archives.gov/global-pages/larger-image.html?i=/research/african-americans/freedmens-bureau/images/3-contract-bledsoe-1.jpg&c=/research/african-americans/freedmens-bureau/images/3-contract-bledsoe.caption.html>

Law Creating the Freedmen's Bureau. March 3, 1865.

<http://www.freedmen.umd.edu/fbact.htm>

Letter from Edisto Islanders to General O.O. Howard. October 1865.

http://www.learner.org/courses/amerhistory/resource_archive/resource.php?unitChoice=10&ThemeNum=2&resourceType=2&resourceID=10070

Newspaper Account of a Meeting between Black Religious Leaders and Union Military Authorities. February 13, 1865.

<http://www.freedmen.umd.edu/savmtg.htm>

Sterling, Dorothy, ed. *The Trouble They Seen: The Story of Reconstruction in the Words of African Americans*. 1976. New York: De Capo Press, 1994.

A collection of first person accounts of Reconstruction Era African-American history.

Appendix/Standards

Common Core Standards Grades 9-10

CC.8.5.9-10.F.

Compare the point of view of two or more authors for how they treat the same or similar topics, including which details they include and emphasize in their respective accounts.

CC.8.5.9-10.H.

Assess the extent to which the reasoning and evidence in a text support the author's claims

CC.8.5.9-10.I.

Compare and contrast treatments of the same topic in several primary and secondary sources.

Common Core Standards Grades 11-12

CC.8.5.11-12.A.

Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.

CC.8.5.11-12.H.

Evaluate an author's premises, claims, and evidence by corroborating or challenging them with other information.

CC.8.5.11-12.I.

Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources.

CC.8.6.11-12.A.

Write arguments focused on discipline-specific content.

CC.8.6.11-12.D.

Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience.

CC.8.6.11-12.H.

Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.