Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ HW – Reconstruction

Due:

**• Reconstruction Debate**

Reuniting the Union after the Civil War was not easy. Cities, towns, plantations, roads, bridges, and railroads in the South had been destroyed during the war. A quarter of a million Confederate soldiers were dead and thousands more were injured or ill. Families had few resources and few men to help them rebuild their lives. People throughout the Union agreed that the South needed help rebuilding. There were very different opinions about how the ***Reconstruction,*** or process of rebuilding and the plans for rebuilding, should be done.

President Lincoln announced the Ten Percent Plan in December, 1863. Under the terms of his plan, a state could form a new government and adopt a new constitution banning slavery once ten percent of the voters of the state took an oath of loyalty to the Union. White Southerners, except for Confederate leaders, who were willing to swear loyalty to the Union were offered ***amnesty,*** or a pardon. Lincoln did not force states in the South to give African Americans the same rights as white Americans. He did support granting educated African Americans, and those who had served in the

Union army, the right to vote. Three states formed governments under the Ten Percent Plan. They were Louisiana, Arkansas, and Tennessee. Congress refused to recognize the representatives from these states.

A group of Republicans in Congress supported a harsher plan. Radical Republicans who supported a more ***radical,*** or extreme, plan, believed that Congress should decide the Reconstruction policy. They did not want the president to have that right. They voted to deny states admittance to the Union under the Ten Percent Plan. Congress established the Wade-Davis Plan in July, 1864. The plan required a majority of all white males to swear loyalty to the Union. Only white males who had never fought for the South during the Civil War could vote for delegates to the state constitutional convention. Former Confederates were prohibited from holding public office. New state constitutions were required to abolish slavery. After these conditions had been met, the state could be readmitted to the Union. Lincoln refused to sign this bill into law.

Congress and the president formed the ***Freedmen’s*** Bureau, an agency to help former enslaved persons, in March, 1865. The Bureau helped many African Americans make the transition from slavery to freedom. The Freedmen’s Bureau provided food, clothing, and medical services, formed schools, and assisted African American colleges

and universities, such as Atlanta University, Howard University, and Fisk University. It also helped people buy land. It offered free transportation to the countryside for jobs.

**• Lincoln Assassinated!**

On April 14, 1865, President Lincoln was shot and killed while he was attending a play at the Ford Theater in Washington, D.C. John Wilkes Booth assassinated, or killed, the president. Booth escaped to Virginia on horseback. He was tracked down and shot to death by Union troops. Other members of his group were plotting to kill other important members of the United States government. Eight people were convicted for their role in the plot by a military court. Four were hanged and four were sent to prison for the rest of their lives.

Vice President Andrew Johnson became the president after Lincoln was assassinated. He had been a Democratic senator from Tennessee. He was the only Southern senator who supported the Union during the Civil War. Johnson wanted to punish slaveholders in the South. He supported states’ control over many decisions. He did not wish to help African Americans. Johnson’s plan for Reconstruction, called “Restoration,” was announced in the summer of 1865. Under his plan, Southerners had to swear loyalty to the Union in order to be pardoned, or granted amnesty. High-ranking Confederate officials and wealthy landowners had to apply personally to the president. Johnson believed that wealthy landowners and Confederate officials had tricked average Southerners into seceding from the Union.

Governors were appointed by Johnson to Southern states. They were required to hold elections for state constitutional conventions. Only white Southerners who had been pardoned or granted amnesty could vote. Johnson opposed equal rights, including the right to vote, for 911 freed African Americans. He believed that white men should manage the South. He also believed that Southern states should decide what to do about freed African Americans. Southern states were required to abolish slavery and denounce secession at their constitutional conventions before they were admitted into the Union. They also had to approve, or ratify, the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution, which abolished slavery in the United States. All former Confederate states, except Texas, formed new governments under Johnson’s plan by the end of 1865. Johnson thought that “Restoration” was almost complete.

**• African Americans’ Rights**

Voters of Southern states established new governments and elected new representatives under Johnson’s plan during the fall of 1865. The group of more than 12 representatives included former Confederate leaders, including the vice president of the former Confederacy. Congress refused to recognize the newly elected members of Congress from the Southern states. Many Republicans in Congress rejected Johnson’s plan and refused to readmit the Southern states to the Union. They believed the terms of Johnson’s plan were not strict enough. They felt they were being robbed of their

hard-won victory. They also wanted the Southern states to improve their treatment of African Americans.

A series of laws called ***black codes*** that allowed plantation owners to exploit African Americans, or treat them unethically, were passed in 1865 and 1866. Important parts of these laws were designed to control freed African American men and women. These laws violated the rights of African Americans. Local officials were permitted to arrest and fine unemployed African Americans. The laws forced them to work for white employers to pay off their fines. African Americans were prohibited from owning or renting farms. Orphaned African American children were used as unpaid apprentices by whites. The black codes re-created a new form of slavery. The Freedmen’s Bureau was extended and given new powers by Congress in early 1866. Special courts were established to prosecute people who were charged with violating the rights of African Americans. African Americans were permitted to serve on juries. Under the terms of the Civil Rights Act of 1866, African Americans were given full citizenship. The federal government was granted power over the states to protect the rights of African Americans. This law did away with the black codes. It also overturned the 1857 *Dred Scott* decision, in which the Supreme Court ruled that African Americans were not United States citizens. Johnson vetoed the Freedmen’s Bureau bill and the Civil Rights Act. Congress had enough votes to defeat, or ***override,*** Johnson’s vetoes. They became laws. The differences between Congress

and President Johnson grew. The Radical Republicans in Congress created their own plan for Reconstruction.

Congress wanted to make certain that rights granted to African Americans under the Civil Rights Act were never overturned in court. They passed the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution in 1866. The Fourteenth Amendment granted full citizenship to all people born in the United States. The amendment stated that a person could not lose life, liberty, or property “without due process of law.” Furthermore, it stated that all citizens were guaranteed “equal protection of the laws.” States would lose their representation in Congress if they prevented any white adult male citizen from voting. The amendment prohibited former Confederates from holding national or state office unless two-thirds of Congress granted them amnesty. African Americans were not granted voting rights under the amendment, however. In order to be readmitted into the Union, Southern States had to approve the Fourteenth Amendment. Tennessee was the only state out of eleven Southern states to do so. The Fourteenth Amendment was eventually adopted in 1868.

Johnson pressured Northern and Southern states to reject the Fourteenth Amendment. He also campaigned heavily against Republican candidates in the congressional elections of 1866. Johnson’s nasty campaign upset many Northerners. Northerners also worried about further violence between whites and African Americans. Violent riots between the two groups had occurred in Memphis, Tennessee, and New Orleans, Louisiana. The Republicans were victorious. They increased their majorities in Congress and controlled the governments in every Northern state. Congress had the power to follow its own plan for Reconstruction.

**• Radical Reconstruction**

Congress had the power to override, or defeat, Johnson’s vetoes. There was nothing Johnson could do. Congress passed a number of laws that began the period known as Radical Reconstruction. The First Reconstruction Act, passed in March 1867, created new governments in the ten Southern states that had not approved the Fourteenth Amendment. Tennessee was readmitted into the Union because it had approved the amendment. The ten Southern states were divided into five military districts under the authority of a military commander until they formed new governments. The act allowed African American males to vote in state elections. It prohibited former Confederate officials from holding public office. States had to approve the Fourteenth Amendment and submit new state constitutions to Congress for approval before they could be readmitted into the Union. Military commanders were required to register voters and organize new state constitutional conventions under the terms of the Second Reconstruction Act.

Thousands of African American voters took part in the elections for constitutional conventions and state governments. Many whites refused to take part. Republicans took control of Southern state governments. Seven Southern states—Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, North Carolina, and South Carolina—established new governments and were readmitted into the Union in 1868.

Congress passed laws limiting the powers of the president. Johnson, as commander in chief of the military, controlled the actions of the military governors. He was strongly opposed to Radical Reconstruction. The Tenure of Office Act of March 1867 prohibited the president from removing government officials without Senate approval. The president no longer controlled his own cabinet.

Johnson responded by suspending his Secretary of War, Edwin Stanton, without Senate approval. He purposefully violated the Tenure of Office Act and appointed military commanders the Republicans opposed as commanders of military districts in the South. Johnson was formally charged with wrongdoing, or ***impeached,*** by the House of Representatives. The case went on trial before the Senate and lasted almost three months. The result fell one vote short of convicting the president. Johnson finished out his term of office. The Republicans chose the Civil War hero, Ulysses S. Grant, as their candidate in the election of 1868. Most Southern states were readmitted to the Union by this time. The Democrats nominated Horatio Seymour, a former governor of New York. Grant

won the election.

The Fifteenth Amendment to the Constitution, which became law in February 1870, granted African American males the right to vote. State and federal governments could no longer deny any male citizen the right to vote based on “race, color, or previous condition of servitude.”

**Please answer the following questions based on the reading.**

**1.** How did the Radical Republicans’ Wade-Davis Bill for Reconstruction differ from Lincoln’s Ten Percent

Plan?

**2.** What provisions were included in Johnson’s “Restoration” plan?

**3.** How did African Americans suffer under reconstructed governments?

**4.** Why did Congress pass the Tenure of Office Act in 1867?