Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ HW – Reconstruction and the South

Due: Wed. 1/9/13

**• New Groups Take Charge**

The Republican Party controlled politics in the South during Reconstruction. African Americans, white Republicans from the South, and white settlers from the North controlled state constitutional conventions and state legislatures. African Americans contributed as voters and elected officials. They contributed to Republican

victories. Some African Americans held important positions. They briefly controlled the majority in the lower house of the South Carolina legislature. Between 1869 and 1880, 16 African Americans were elected to the House of Representatives and two to the Senate at the federal level. Hiram Revels and Blanche K. Bruce were two African American senators from the South.

Some Republican Southern whites were non slaveholding farmers or business leaders. They had opposed secession during the Civil War. Confederates called them ***scalawags,*** meaning scoundrels or worthless rascals. Other Republican leaders in the South were Northern whites who moved to the South after the war. They were often called ***carpetbaggers,*** because they moved South with cheap suitcases made of carpet fabric. Most carpetbaggers were former Union soldiers or members of the Freedmen’s Bureau who wished to settle in the South. Some greedy Northern whites did take advantage of the situation in the South. Many were reformers, however, who wanted to help rebuild the South.

Reconstruction governments were accused of dishonest, illegal activities and financial mismanagement, called ***corruption,*** by some critics. There was more corruption in the North, however. Most white Southerners were against increasing the rights of African Americans. Life was difficult for free African Americans in the South. Some plantation owners told former enslaved workers that they could not leave. Others refused to rent them land. Employers refused to hire them. Fear and force were used to keep African Americans in line. They were unable to find work or obtain credit.

Secret societies, such as the Ku Klux Klan, were organized to oppose African Americans’ rights. They believe whites should have all the power. The Ku Klux Klan organized many violent rampages against African Americans. Wearing white sheets and hoods to conceal their identity, members of the Ku Klux Klan burned African Americans’ homes, schools, and churches in the middle of the night. They murdered many African Americans and tried to scare them before elections so they would not vote. Many Southerners supported these violent actions. They justified violent actions as a defense against Republican rule. They wanted life in the South to remain the same. Congress passed laws to stop the terrorism. The laws were not successful because most white Southerners would not testify against the attackers.

**• Some Improvements**

Education went through important changes in the South during Reconstruction. African Americans and whites benefited from the improvements in education. More than 4,000 schools were established by 1870, through the efforts of the Freedmen’s Bureau and private charities. Many free African Americans and Northern whites served as teachers in the new schools. Reconstruction governments began establishing public schools for African Americans and whites in the 1870s. Before the war, there were no public schools for both races in the South. Academies for advanced learning became colleges and universities for African Americans, established by Northern missionary societies. Most Southern states had separate schools for the races. Schools in Louisiana, South Carolina, and Florida were ***integrated,*** or included both whites and blacks together, by law. The laws were not enforced, however.

The Freedmen’s Bank, established in 1865, helped some African Americans buy their own land. Most African Americans were unable to afford to buy their own land, however, so they worked as ***sharecroppers.*** In return for a percentage of the crops, a sharecropper rented a plot of land, seeds, tools, a small shack in which to live, and sometimes a mule. They had almost nothing left over after paying the landowner. They often had barely enough to feed their families. Sharecropping was not much different from slavery.

**• Reconstruction Declines**

As Southern Democrats regained political and economic control in the South by 1876, Northern support for Reconstruction decreased. Many Northerners thought it was time for the South to take care of its own problems. Many believed Reconstruction was preventing the Southern economy from growing. Northerners were worried about the racial tension in the South. Grant used federal troops to enforce the law and stop the

violence in the South only when necessary. He wanted to avoid conflicts in the South. Many conservative Republicans still felt that states’ rights were being violated. Grant had other matters to worry about during his presidency. Some Republicans, called Liberal Republicans, broke away from the party in the early 1870s because they opposed the corruption in the government and Reconstruction. They believed in restoring the relationship, or a ***reconciliation,*** with Southern whites. Liberal Republicans and Democrats supported Horace Greeley of New York in the 1872 presidential election. Democrats thought Greeley would beat the Republicans. Grant survived the split in the Republican party and was reelected.

The Amnesty Act, supported by Liberal Republicans, was passed by Congress in May 1872. Under this law, most former Confederates were pardoned. They were able to vote and hold office again. Most of those pardoned supported the Democratic Party. In Southern states where most voters were white, Democratic control of state governments replaced Republican control. In states where African American and white populations

were almost equal, the Ku Klux Klan, other violent secret societies, and Democrats frightened African Americans from voting. White Republicans were also threatened. These actions helped Democrats win seats in the government previously held by Republicans. Only three Southern states held a Republican majority in Congress by 1876—Florida, South Carolina, and Louisiana.

Some Republicans also shared the blame for Republican losses. Scandals involving top government officials including the vice president and secretary of war were uncovered. Scandals, combined with an economic depression, damaged the Republican Party.

**• The End of Reconstruction**

In the election of 1876, Republicans nominated Rutherford B. Hayes for president. They hoped to win back the Liberal Republicans by choosing a candidate with a reputation for honesty and moderate beliefs about Reconstruction. New York governor Samuel Tilden was the Democratic candidate. He had a reputation for fighting corruption in New York City. Tilden won the popular vote, or vote of the people. He narrowly lost the electoral vote after a disputed election.

Hayes was granted 20 disputed electoral votes after an investigation by a ***commission*** created by Congress. The commission was made up of a group of seven Republicans, seven Democrats, and one independent. A Republican replaced the independent after his resignation. Hayes won the commission’s vote, 8 to 7, which followed party lines. Instead of fighting the outcome of the election, Democrats in Congress agreed to support Hayes under certain conditions. The Compromise of 1877 stated that all federal troops would be removed from the South. The South would receive more federal aid. In return Democrats agreed to maintain African Americans’ rights and support Hayes for president. The compromise restored states’ rights. Reconstruction ended.

**• Change in the South**

Democrats returned to power in the South after the end of Reconstruction. Democrats who called themselves “Redeemers” for saving the South from Republican rule controlled Southern governments. These conservatives supported economic development, lower taxes, less public spending, and reduced government services. They opposed interference from the North. These conservative Democrats controlled Southern politics into the 1900s.

After the Civil War, the South continued to have a poor, rural economy. An attempt was made to increase industry and manufacturing in the South and build a “New South.” Many resources, including coal, iron, tobacco, cotton, and lumber, were available in the South. After Reconstruction, the textile industry grew in the South. Many Northern textile mills moved to the South. Lumbering and tobacco processing grew. James Duke of North Carolina owned the American Tobacco Company, which controlled almost all tobacco manufacturing in the country. Southern mills produced 20 percent of the nation’s iron and steel.

African American families worked long hours for little pay in Southern mills and factories. Industry in the South grew as a result of the available workforce. The Southern railroad was rebuilt by 1870. The miles of track more than doubled by 1890. Even with its industrial growth, the Southern economy continued to lag behind the Northern economy.

In an effort to change agriculture in the South, many large landowners broke up their properties, renting to sharecroppers and tenant farmers. These practices did not make much money. Poor farmers went into debt. Farmers began to grow crops for profit, called ***cash crops,*** in order to pay back the money they owed. They grew more and more cotton because it was the biggest cash crop. The oversupply of cotton caused the prices

to fall. Then farmers had to sell even more cotton to get the same prices. The rural economy fell deeper into debt and poverty.

**• A Divided Society**

After Reconstruction, racism increased. African Americans did not experience the justice they had hoped for. They were denied their basic rights. African Americans and poor whites were prevented from voting due to newly adopted voting requirements in the South. Many states made voters pay a fee called a ***poll tax*** to vote. Many African Americans and poor whites could not afford to vote. Some states required voters to

pass a ***literacy test*** in order to vote. People with limited schooling could not read and explain the difficult parts of a state constitution or the federal Constitution required to vote. A grandfather clause was added to permit whites who could not pass the test the right to vote. The ***grandfather clause*** allowed people whose fathers or grandfathers had voted before Reconstruction to vote. This still excluded African Americans from voting, since their fathers and grandfathers were not permitted by law to vote before Reconstruction.

Southern states continued to divide, or segregate, the South by race with the passage of a set of laws known as Jim Crow laws. These laws required whites and African Americans to be separated in every public place. The Supreme Court, in *Plessy* v. *Ferguson*, ruled that ***segregation*** laws were constitutional as long as public facilities and accommodations for African Americans and whites were equal. Segregation, or the separation of African Americans and whites, in public places lasted for more than 50 years. The facilities and accommodations for the two races were never equal.

Violence against African Americans in the South increased. Angry mobs killed African Americans who were suspected of committing crimes by ***lynching,*** or hanging. African American dreams of justice were lost in the deeply segregated South that followed Reconstruction. Reconstruction helped the South rebuild after the Civil War, but the promise of real freedom for African Americans was never realized. The poor, rural Southern economy continued, despite advances in industry, manufacturing, and agriculture.

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

**1.** Why did terrorist groups form in the South during Reconstruction?

**2.** In what ways did life in the South improve?

**3.** How did the Republican Party begin to lose its power in the South?

**4.** How did the Republicans win the election of 1876?

**5.** Why did Southerners focus on increasing industry and manufacturing in the South?

**6.** What happened to African Americans after Reconstruction?