

Directions: You can print, hand write, photograph/scan, and upload each of these sheets as a JPEG or PDF files to Canvas OR you can go to File>Make a copy, fill in the document on Google Docs, download it as a PDF, and upload the PDF to Canvas. This should be submitted before class on Monday.

Doing the work of a historian: Build your own historical narrative from primary sources

Record your thinking for these questions on this chart as you analyze each source.

1. Consider if the source indicates that Reconstruction led to social or political progress. Circle or highlight the “Y” for yes or the “N” for no.
2. If the source shows progress that Reconstruction made in furthering democracy, expanding education, etc., who was responsible for making that happen? e.g., the federal government? Local Black community? Local white Democrats? Etc.
3. If the source shows that the era was not working, that it was violent or corrupt in some manner, who was responsible for that? e.g., the federal government? Local Black community? Local white Democrats? Etc.
4. If this source shows popular views of Reconstruction, what are they and what reasons do they offer?

As you read through the documents, consider, do these sources corroborate the Dunning or the Du Bois description of Reconstruction? [LINK TO PRIMARY SOURCE DOCUMENTS PACKET](#)

Quick Reference

Dunning Schools claims that...	Du Bois claims that...
Reconstruction was a disaster because the corrupt Northern outsiders and local Black leaders that were elected to government did not know how to govern. They were ignorant and racist against white people. They nearly ruined Southern society. Therefore, white Southerners had to end the failure of Reconstruction in order to save the South.	Reconstruction was a revolutionary time with incredible advancements in education and democracy, almost unparalleled in world history. Black Americans organized to ensure the fruits of their new freedom. Unfortunately, anti-democratic forces in the South were threatened by Black progress and used violence and lies to destroy this incredible period.

Source 1: Black Codes, Louisiana, 1865 : Does this source indicate social or political progress? (Y / N)

If this source shows progress was being made during Reconstruction, this was <u>because of the actions of:</u>	
If this source shows Reconstruction as violent and lacking progress , this was <u>because of the actions of:</u>	Local white Southern governments passed the Black Codes to severely restrict the freedom and rights of the formerly enslaved people. These laws controlled where Black people could live, meet, and what they could carry, closely resembling slavery. Rather than simply accepting freedpeople, the white lawmakers used legal systems to maintain racial hierarchy. This source demonstrates that the Reconstruction’s failures were caused by white

	resistance undermining Black freedom.
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Source 2: Statement from Freedman Henry Adams: Does this source indicate social or political progress? (Y / N)

If this source shows progress was being made during Reconstruction, this was <u>because of the actions of:</u>	
If this source shows Reconstruction as violent and lacking progress , this was <u>because of the actions of:</u>	White Southerners violently attacked freedpeople who asserted their independence. Adams describes beatings, hangings, and former enslaves refusing to simply recognize Black freedom. These violent actions were targeted to intimidate the African Americans back into inferiority. The federal government's limited protection allowed for these abuses to continue. This supports Du Bois' argument that Reconstruction collapsed due to white supremacist terror and not because of incapability.

Source 3: Family Reunification Ads and a Marriage Certificate: Indication of social or political progress? (Y / N)

If this source shows progress was being made during Reconstruction, this was <u>because of the actions of:</u>	Freedpeople actively searched for relatives that were originally separated during slavery and also formed legal marriages. Black newspapers and churches provided these platforms to reunite families. These efforts show formerly enslaved people claiming control over their personal lives. Additionally, the legal marriage certificate represents recognition of Black humanity, aligning with Du Bois' view of Reconstruction as a period of meaningful social progress.
If this source shows Reconstruction as violent and lacking progress , this was <u>because of the actions of:</u>	

Source 4: Freedmen's Bureau: Does this source indicate social or political progress? (Y / N)

If this source shows progress was being made during Reconstruction, this was <u>because of the actions of:</u>	The federal government established the Freedmen's Bureau to provide food, shelter, education, and more. Thousands of schools were created for freedpeople. Additionally, Northern and Black teachers worked together to expand the education effort, hoping to lay the foundation for long-term Black advancement. This also supports Du Bois' interpretation of Reconstruction as a revolutionary effort toward equality.
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If this source shows Reconstruction as violent and lacking progress , this was <u>because of the actions of</u> :	
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Source 5: Louisa Jacobs and the State of Education of Freedpeople in Georgia: Indication of progress? (Y / N)

If this source shows progress was being made during Reconstruction, this was <u>because of the actions of</u> :	Black communities organized schools and prioritized education for their children, showing a strong commitment to learning. Jacobs describes hundreds of Black students attending schools and notes that many teachers were Black themselves. At the same she acknowledges that slavery is not dead in Georgia, meaning that racism and exploitation still exists. However, despite these obstacles, freedpeople continued building schools in a hope to bring real progress.
If this source shows Reconstruction as violent and lacking progress , this was <u>because of the actions of</u> :	

Source 6: Evidence of the political popularity of Reconstruction in **1865?**: (Choose one below and fill in reason and fill in reason):

This source shows that Reconstruction is important and worthy BECAUSE	This cartoon argues that Black men who fought for the union deserve the right to vote. The cartoon depicts a man with only one leg, portraying what he has given up to defend this country. By asking "Franchise (Voting) and not this man?", the image suggests that denying the right to vote to Black veterans is unjust. This reflects the growing support for expanding democracy after the war, especially since this cartoon frames voting as a reward for their loyalty and sacrifice. This supports Du Bois' claim that Reconstruction aimed to broad democratic participation.
This source argues that Reconstruction does not work and it is probably a waste of money BECAUSE	

Source 7: Black Churches: Does this source indicate social or political progress? (Y / N)

If this source shows progress was being made during Reconstruction, this was <u>because of the actions of</u> :	Black communities organized independent churches where they could worship freely and without white control. These churches became centers for charity, education, and political meetings. Black ministers often became political
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	leaders during Reconstruction, demonstrating community-driven social and political progress.
If this source shows Reconstruction as violent and lacking progress , this was <u>because of the actions of</u> :	

Source 8: Civil Rights Act of 1866: : Does this source indicate social or political progress? (Y / N)

If this source shows progress was being made during Reconstruction, this was <u>because of the actions of</u> :	Republicans in Congress passed the Civil Rights Act to guarantee citizenship and equal rights, declaring that all races were entitled to the same legal protections. This expanded the meaning of American citizenship in an attempt to create equalized laws regardless of race. This supports Du Bois' argument that Reconstruction produced major democratic advances.
If this source shows Reconstruction as violent and lacking progress , this was <u>because of the actions of</u> :	

Source 9: What was President Andrew Johnson's (Democrat) view of Reconstruction in **1866**? (**Choose one below and fill in reason and fill in reason**):

This source shows that Reconstruction is important and worthy BECAUSE	
This source argues that Reconstruction does not work and it is probably a waste of money BECAUSE	Johnson presents Reconstruction as unnecessary by claiming freedpeople already have equal opportunity. This ignores the widespread violence and poverty that the freedpeople still faced. His argument frames that government assistance is just favoritism rather than justice, since they have already spent \$3,000,000,000 to set them free. This reflects a desire to restore white control quickly, mirroring the Dunning School's belief that Reconstruction was excessive.

Source 10: Evidence of political popularity of Reconstruction in **1866**: *Did the voters agree with Johnson's views of the cost of Reconstruction?*

(**Choose one below and fill in reason and fill in reason**):

This source shows that American voters viewed Reconstruction as important and worthy BECAUSE	Voters primarily elected Republicans, which indicates rejection of Johnson's approach. The election results suggest many Northerners believed federal intervention was necessary to protect Black rights. Voters supported stronger national
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	enforcement of civil rights, demonstrating that Reconstruction was not an unpopular proposition, but a supported project.
This source suggests that American voters viewed Reconstruction as something that does not work and is probably a waste of money BECAUSE	

<p>Source 11: How does this source show a changing relationship between states and the federal government? <i>(write)</i></p> <p>Congress overrode state authority in order to impose military rule. This demonstrates a shift toward national responsibility for protecting civil rights since Congress decided that Southern states could not be trusted to protect the rights of freedpeople. States were no longer treated as fully sovereign, instead, federal power expanded to enforce democracy. This marks a shift from states' rights toward federalism in protecting citizenship.</p>

Source 12: 14th Amendment: Does this source indicate social or political progress? (Y / N)

If this source shows progress was being made during Reconstruction, this was <u>because of the actions of:</u>	The federal government permanently redefined citizenship through the Constitution. By guaranteeing birthright citizenship and equal protection, Congress shifted the responsibility for civil rights away from the states and into national hands. This reflects recognition that the Southern government could not be trusted to protect freedpeople. This supports Du Bois' argument that Reconstruction was a revolutionary attempt to rebuild democracy on new foundations.
If this source shows Reconstruction as violent and lacking progress , this was <u>because of the actions of:</u>	

Source 13: Secondary Source from Historian Lerone Bennett Jr.: Indication of social or political progress? (Y / N)

If this source shows progress was being made during Reconstruction, this was <u>because of the actions of:</u>	Bennet describes it as filled with political involvement and hope. He explains that the large numbers of Black Americans gathering in public and organizing for change shows that freedpeople were actively shaping their future. Rather than portraying Reconstruction as chaotic or failed, he presents it as a powerful moment of transformation and one of the most important democratic experiments in American history.
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If this source shows Reconstruction as violent and lacking progress , this was <u>because of the actions of</u> :	
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Source 14: Community Politics: Does this source indicate social or political progress? (Y / N)

If this source shows progress was being made during Reconstruction, this was <u>because of the actions of</u> :	The image shows Black men, women, and even children listening to a political speaker, demonstrating widespread community participation. Politics is shown as a shared activity instead of being limited to certain individuals. This indicates that the freedpeople were learning how the government worked in order to amplify their voices. The presence of families demonstrates long-term commitment to civic life. The source challenges claims that Black Americans were politically unprepared.
If this source shows Reconstruction as violent and lacking progress , this was <u>because of the actions of</u> :	

Source 15: KKK Terrorism: Does this source indicate social or political progress? (Y / N)

If this source shows progress was being made during Reconstruction, this was <u>because of the actions of</u> :	
If this source shows Reconstruction as violent and lacking progress , this was <u>because of the actions of</u> :	They used intimidation, threats, and even murder to stop Black Americans from voting or holding office. Their letter to a freedperson shows organized political terror. This violence was meant to restore white supremacy, however, the lack of safety made it difficult to sustain democratic gains. Reconstruction did not fail because the freedpeople were incapable, but because white supremacists violently killed their progress.

Source 16: Union Leagues: Does this source indicate social or political progress? (Y / N)

If this source shows progress was being made during Reconstruction, this was <u>because of the actions of</u> :	Union Leagues that organized Black communities to protect political rights and build political knowledge. They explain the violence and lawlessness made it necessary for them to have such organization and determination. As the Union Leagues developed, they became a beacon of hope, and represented a community-based response to danger, showing political agency even in an unstable environment.
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If this source shows Reconstruction as violent and lacking progress , this was <u>because of the actions of</u> :	
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Source 17: Evidence of the popular political view of Reconstruction in **1868**? (Choose one below and fill in reason):

This source shows that Reconstruction is important and worthy BECAUSE	The Republicans won an 1868 election in a “landslide”, and Grant entered office with a strong Republican Congress. This matters because elections show which direction the public is supporting, and this result signals approval of a stronger Reconstruction approach. The source also connects the election to major goals such as stopping violence and passing a constitutional amendment to protect Black suffrage. This proves that Reconstruction was a political priority backed by national leadership.
This source argues that Reconstruction does not work and it is probably a waste of money BECAUSE	

Source 18: The 15th Amendment: Does this source indicate social or political progress? (Y / N)

If this source shows progress was being made during Reconstruction, this was <u>because of the actions of</u> :	This source shows progress because the federal government used the Constitution itself to protect voting rights. The amendment states that the right to vote cannot be denied based on factors like race, which directly targets the way Southern states could try to block freedpeople from political power. This is significant because it shifts the protection of civil rights to the national level than trusting states that had recently slavery and rebellion.
If this source shows Reconstruction as violent and lacking progress , this was <u>because of the actions of</u> :	

Source 19: Organized Community Self-Defense on Election Day: Indication of social or political progress? (Y / N)

If this source shows progress was being made during Reconstruction, this was <u>because of the actions of</u> :	Black voters were determined to participate in elections, even when doing so was dangerous. The image explains that politics often needed organized and armed self-defense, which means voting was treated as something worth protecting. While the need for weapons highlights the threat of violence, the significance here is that the freedpeople did not give up political rights in the face of violence. This
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	demonstrates political commitment and community planning, supporting the idea of actively fighting to make democracy real in daily life.
If this source shows Reconstruction as violent and lacking progress , this was <u>because of the actions of:</u>	

Source 20: Elected Black Officials During Reconstruction: Indication of social or political progress? **(Y / N)**

If this source shows progress was being made during Reconstruction, this was <u>because of the actions of:</u>	Thousands of Black men that were elected to local, state governments, and the U.S. Congress. This is significant evidence of democratic expansion, especially since holding office is evidence that citizenship is being recognized in practice. This proves that the Reconstruction created real changes in representation, not just promises on paper, exemplifying the political power and participation these officials held.
If this source shows Reconstruction as violent and lacking progress , this was <u>because of the actions of:</u>	

Source 21: Charles Sumner Speech, 1870: Does this source indicate social or political progress? **(Y / N)**

If this source shows progress was being made during Reconstruction, this was <u>because of the actions of:</u>	This source shows progress because Sumner argues that the real victory of the Civil War was establishing more human rights. This demonstrates the Reconstruction as a major shift in what the nation is supposed to stand for. He also argues that equality should be treated as a core legal principle, not just an ideal. This reflects how Republican leaders were trying to redefine American law and government around rights.
If this source shows Reconstruction as violent and lacking progress , this was <u>because of the actions of:</u>	

Source 22: The Only Black Majority State Legislature in U.S. History: Indication of social or political progress? **(Y / N)**

If this source shows progress was being made during Reconstruction, this was <u>because of the actions of:</u>	Miller describes how the legislature built schoolhouses, expanded education, and more, demonstrating that these governments were capable of effective implementations. Additionally, South Carolina had a Black majority in the legislature. These achievements contradict
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	claims that Reconstruction governments were inherently corrupt. Instead, the source supports Du Bois' argument that Reconstruction produced significant political and social advancements.
If this source shows Reconstruction as violent and lacking progress , this was <u>because of the actions of</u> :	

Source 23: Evidence of the popular political view of Reconstruction in **1872?** (Choose one below and fill in reason):

This source shows that Reconstruction is important and worthy BECAUSE	
This source argues that Reconstruction does not work and it is probably a waste of money BECAUSE	The Congress dismantled the Freedmen's Bureau in response to political pressure and complaints about expense. The decision reflects declining willingness to keep federal involvement in Southern reform. Instead of demonstrating that the Reconstruction programs were ineffective, this source shows that the political commitment diminished over time. This retreat represents abandonment, not failure. This aligns with Du Bois' interpretation that Reconstruction collapsed because support was withdrawn, not because its goals were unrealistic.

Source 24: Evidence of the popular political view of Reconstruction in **1873** (Choose one below and fill in reason):

This source shows that Reconstruction is important and worthy BECAUSE	
This source argues that Reconstruction does not work and it is probably a waste of money BECAUSE	After the economic crisis of 1873, Northern priorities shifted towards business and economic recovery rather than civil rights. This source also explicitly states that profitable trade mattered more than Black rights, indicating a moral retreat. This suggests that Reconstruction lost support because equality had been achieved, but because economic self-interest overtook importance and humanity. This source highlights how economic instability undermined political will.

Source 25: Evidence of the popular political view of Reconstruction in **1874** (Choose one below and fill in reason):

This source shows that Reconstruction is important and worthy BECAUSE	
This source argues that Reconstruction does not work and it is probably a waste of money BECAUSE	The cartoon portrays Reconstruction governments as corrupt and dysfunctional, particularly focusing on Black political leadership. By depicting officials calling each other rude terms, this image encourages viewers to associate Reconstruction with incompetence. This reflects a broader popular narrative that blamed Black officeholders rather than acknowledging the violence and destruction they faced. The cartoon serves as propaganda reinforcing the Dunning School perspective.

Source 26: Evidence of the popular political view of Reconstruction in **1876 (Choose one below and fill in reason):**

This source shows that Reconstruction is important and worthy BECAUSE	Senator Blanche talks about the threats and violence that was documented, demonstrating that free elections were impossible without federal protection. This source indicates that democratic rights were still under attack. The Compromise of 1877, which removed federal troops from Southern statehouses, shows that the Reconstruction ended due to political bargaining and not a successful resolution.
This source argues that Reconstruction does not work and it is probably a waste of money BECAUSE	

What do **sources 27-29** reveal about life in the South AFTER Reconstruction ended?

These sources reveal that life in the South after reconstruction was marked by extreme violence and economic exploration of Black Americans. Ella Watkins Harper (Source 27) describes the widespread murder and the absence of public outrage, showing that Black lives were no longer protected by either law or public opinion. Furthermore, source 28 demonstrates how sharecropping replaced slavery with a new system of economic control, trapping Black families in debt and dependency. Finally, source 29 shows the total reduction of Black voting power after Reconstruction, with registration dropping from over 130,000 to just a few thousand. Together, these sources reveal that after federal protection ended, white supremacist governments dismantled the political and social gains of Reconstruction.