

Reconstruction Activities - Answer Key

Activity 1: Early Reconstruction 1866-1870

Significance of the 1868 Louisiana Constitution - ANSWERS

Primary Source

Extract from the reconstructed Constitution of the state of Louisiana, with portraits of the distinguished members of the Convention & Assembly, A.D. 1868

- <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/cph.3g05947>
- **Repository:** Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C.
- **TIP:** Use the link above to display the image on a projector so the whole class can look together.

A. Look at this image.

- What do you notice first?
 - **Possible answers:** *faces, eagle, cannon, flags, words, pictures, etc.*
- What images stick out to you?
 - Possible answers: *flags, plants, faces, seated man, cannons, faces, etc.*
- What words stick out to you?
 - **Possible answers:** *“Reconstructed Constitution,” “Distinguished members,” “State of Louisiana,” etc.*
- What do you notice about the design or layout?
 - **Possible answers:** *one person at center, each face in a little circle, illustrations at the corners, some words larger than others, etc.*

B. Take a closer look at the sections above showing portraits and excerpts of the constitution.

- How are the people portrayed? What are they wearing? What illustration and design choices did the artist make?
 - **Possible answers:**
 - *Each person has a portrait from the chest up*
 - *Wearing suit jackets and ties*
 - *Each face is in an oval, with name in a banner at bottom*
- What words are in all capital letters in the excerpts from the constitution? Why do you think those words are emphasized?
 - **Possible answers:**
 - *BILL OF RIGHTS, COLOR, PUBLIC EDUCATION, COMMON, RACE, COLOR, PREVIOUS CONDITION*

- *BILL OF RIGHTS and COLOR emphasizes that Black Louisianians will have freedoms, rights, and privileges that they were previously denied.*
 - *PUBLIC EDUCATION, COMMON, RACE, COLOR, and PREVIOUS CONDITION emphasize that Black children will be able to go to the same schools as white children, regardless of whether they were formerly enslaved.*
- Why do you think these two particular excerpts from the constitution were selected for this print? What might be the significance of these articles?
- **Possible answers:** *These areas of the Constitution grant important rights that were denied to Black people in Louisiana before this Constitution was written. The rights to education and to enjoy public spaces and businesses were major victories for Black legislators and would substantially change the lives of people of color in Louisiana.*

C. Look at these close-up images and symbols from the document.

- What images can you identify?
 - **Possible Answers:** *Cannons, flags, eagle, guns, plants, swords, etc.*
- Do you see any images that you cannot identify? Describe those images.
 - **Possible answers:** *Bowl-type object, not sure what the plants are, pointed spikes, etc.*
- What do these images mean to you? What do they make you think about?
 - **Possible answers:** *plants remind of Southern plantations where enslaved people had to work, guns and cannons reference the civil war, the eagle and flags are symbols of the United States and patriotism, etc.*
 - **More information:**
 - *Some of the plants depicted are cotton and sugar cane, which were cultivated, harvested, and prepared for market by enslaved labor.*
 - *Burning cotton bale at bottom left and broken sugar kettle at bottom right reference the end of enslavement and breaking the chains to unpaid agricultural labor.*
 - *Bayonets, cannons, and guns reference the violent fighting of the American Civil War that led to a Union victory and freedom for enslaved people. The weapons may also suggest that the people are willing to fight to defend the new 1868 Reconstructed Constitution*

D. Reflect and question:

- After looking closely at this document, what do you think the printmaker was trying to communicate to people who saw this print in 1868?
 - **Possible Answers:** *Trying to share some of the key parts of the 1868 Louisiana constitution and show the public who were the people involved.*
- What do you think was the printmaker's attitude toward the 1868 Louisiana Constitution? Did they feel positive or negative about the constitution and the members of the convention? What clues make you think that way?
 - **Possible answers:** *Artist felt positively about the constitution and the members of the convention. Pointed out parts of the constitution as major accomplishments and emphasized key words to show their importance. Honored each Black member of the convention by putting their name in a scroll and circling each face. Respectful depiction of the members.*
- Who do you think was the intended audience for this print? What clues make you think that?
 - **Possible answers:** *Possible audiences include Black people throughout Louisiana and the South. Perhaps intended to promote pride and a sense of accomplishment among people of color who were formerly enslaved. May also be trying to convey to any white people who opposed the constitution that the Black members of the convention were respectable members of society. Through images of weapons, they may remind both supporters and those who were opposed that these changes to the constitution were hard won through violent fighting, and that it would be similarly defended, if necessary.*
- Where do you think this print would have been displayed in 1868?
 - **Possible answers:** *stores, government buildings, community centers or halls, saloons, public spaces*
- Is this print similar or different to any of the ways we share information currently?
 - **Possible answers:** *posted flyers on a bulletin board, newspapers, information on a website, images of people might be like social media,*

something you might post on various online platforms to share information, etc.

- What further questions do you have about this print? What does it make you wonder?
 - **Possible answers:** *What else do we know about the people in the print? Who is the person in the middle and why is he bigger than all the other portraits? What else did the Reconstructed Constitution include?*
 - **Encourage students** to seek answers to their additional questions through more primary sources.

Activity 2: Late Reconstruction 1870-1877

Interpreting a Contested Election and an Armed Rebellion – ANSWERS

Read this excerpt from an **article** titled “The White League—Its Significance. The Duty of the Colored Voter” published in a Black-owned newspaper, *Weekly Louisianian*, from July 4, 1874.

Citation:

"The White League.--Its Significance. The Duty Of The Colored Voter." *Weekly Louisianian* (New Orleans, Louisiana), July 4, 1874: 2. *NewsBank: Black Life in America*.

Typed transcription (key phrases highlighted):

“The White League is the name selected by the Anti-Republican elements of Louisiana, to designate a political organization that rests on the distinction of race and color; ostensibly proposes to protect the rights of the white citizen, by organizing an **exclusively white man’s party**, and, with such an organization, to conduct the approaching political campaign of the State. In order to understand the significance of the movement, we will admit the existence of certain evils growing out of the character of the laws and government of the State, since the era of reconstruction, and we concede **that many members of this organization, believe not only that the distresses complained of, are referable to the dominancy of the Republican party in the State**, but, inclusively and specially, **to the dominance of the colored over the white vote**. We further concede that the same parties, entertaining the above mentioned convictions, honestly but erroneously believe that the remedy and relief desired are to be found in **the withdrawal from the colored voters of Louisiana**, of the political control, heretofore supposed to be possessed by them over the State government. Another class of the adherents of the White League, while entertaining the purposes above expressed and adopting the indicated means for their accomplishment, are actuated, not by honest convictions, but by a **bitter and unreasoning prejudice against the colored**

people, that will not permit them to see anything reasonable or creditable in the colored voter, or anything legitimate and equitable, in the exercise, by him, of either the political or civil rights, conferred and guaranteed by the Constitution and laws. These gentlemen may be sincere but they are neither just nor generous in their estimate and treatment of our race."

Questions:

- Underline the words and sentences that stick out to you.
- How does this article describe the White League?
 - **Possible answers:** *Describes the White League as a political organization only for white men, which is prejudiced against people of color and upset that the Republican party has control in Louisiana, etc.*
- According to this author, what is the primary purpose of the White League?
 - **Possible answers:** *The purpose of the White League is to get rid of the Black voters in Louisiana to remove the Republican party from control in the state. The White League wants to deny Black people their civil and political rights, etc.*

Read excerpts of this **article** from *The New Orleans Times*, a white-owned newspaper, published on September 2, 1874, which was 12 days before the Battle of Liberty Place.

Citation:

"Ratification. An Immense Turn out of the Democracy, White Leagues and other Organizations Composing the People's Party." *New Orleans Times* (New Orleans, Louisiana) XI, no. 6399, September 2, 1874: [1]. *Readex: America's Historical Newspapers*.

Typed transcription (key phrases highlighted):

"Ratification

An Immense Turn Out of the Democracy, White Leagues and other Organization Composing the People's Party.

Eloquent and stirring Speeches by Col. John McEnery, H.N. Ogden, Esq., Judge Voorhies and others

Speech of Gov. McEnery

The Governor said he was suffering from severe illness, and was an invalid; therefore, he said, his speech must necessarily be curtailed.

The Republican, he said, had called him an incendiary, and accused him of having stirred up the people of North Louisiana to agitation. Of this he was guilty; and the same

advice he gave to the people of the Red River parishes he now gives to the people of Orleans. The white people owed it to their dignity to get rid of the existing government, and he counseled them to do so at the coming election, “peaceably if you can, forcibly if you must.” If a government is corrupt and impotent, and does not afford the needful protection to the citizens, they must take the law into their own hands and exert the privilege of self-preservation. He justified his speeches to the people of North Louisiana during his late tour, and told the people of Lincoln parish particularly that if the officials of the parish were Democrats and guilty of the acts of the existing officers, he would hang them just as quickly as Republicans. The Governor’s speech lasted about half an hour, and it was largely a repetition of his speeches on former occasions, particularly at Baton Rouge.

The Resolutions

On conclusion Mr. Eustis introduced Mr. A.C. Lewis, chairman of the Committee on Resolutions, who read the following paper:

1. Resolved, That the Democratic and Conservative parties do emphatically ratify the resolutions adopted by the Baton Rouge State Convention, and heartily endorse the nominations.
2. Resolved, That the de facto State government is an odious usurpation, originated in fraud and tyranny, and maintaining itself merely through Federal support.
3. Resolved, That Federal interference in State matters, except in rigid compliance with the Constitution and laws of the United States, cannot but be deprecated as subversive of our republican institutions.
4. Resolved, That it is wise and prudent to vote against the constitutional amendments suggested and desired by the Kellogg usurpation; and moreover, that the so-called Legislature, being itself a part of the usurpation, has no right whatever to submit to the people any amendment to the organic law.
5. Resolved, That the white people of Louisiana do not contemplate depriving the colored people of their political rights; that it is the interest of the whole people that peace and harmony should prevail, but it is a matter of profound conviction that this consummation can be attained only by an intelligent, conservative and responsible government.”

Questions:

- What does McEnery urge people to do in his speech?
 - **Possible answers:** *McEnery urges people to get rid of the government. He asks them to get rid of the government by participating in upcoming elections, but also to use force to instate the government they want if the elections do not align with their desired outcomes, etc.*
- According to this article, why are the Democrats and the White League upset with the current government?

- **Possible answers:** *They are upset because they believe Republicans are in charge only through fraud, tyranny, and federal support. They consider federal interference in state law to be against the will of the people. They are also prejudiced against people of color and do not want them to have control. This is evidenced by the line “the white people owed it to their dignity to get rid of the existing government.” Even though they state later than they are not trying to take away the rights of Black people, the language suggests that only white people should make choices about the government.*
- What are two differences between this article and the one in the *Weekly Louisianian*?
 - **Possible answers:**
 - *The New Orleans Times* claims that the White League is NOT trying to take away the rights of Black citizens, but the *Weekly Louisianian* argues that this is one of the main purposes of the White League.
 - *The New Orleans Times* article quotes McEnery urging white citizens to violence and force if they do not get their way. The *Weekly Louisianian* article identifies the White League as a real threat to Black citizens’ rights but does not urge anyone to become violent.

After the Battle for Liberty Place

Look at the primary titles and layout of this **map** published in New Orleans in 1874 after the Battle of Liberty Place. The map shows the movements of the White League and Metropolitan Police force during the fighting on September 14, 1874. The bottom corner lists only the names of white men wounded or killed in the battle.

Thomas S. Hardee and H. Lewis, “Battle of New Orleans for Freedom,” H. Lewis Publisher, (New Orleans, LA), Louisiana State Museum, <https://louisianastatemuseum.org/map-collection/battle-new-orleans-freedom>

Questions:

- What words are used in the headings?
 - **Possible answers:** “Revolution,” “Roll of Honor,” “Battle of New Orleans for Freedom,” etc.
- What do those words convey about the attitude of the mapmaker toward the events of September 14, 1874?
 - **Possible answers:** *Using words like “honor,” “freedom,” and “revolution” to refer to the attacks on the Metropolitan Police demonstrate that the mapmaker and/or printer felt positively toward the White League and their attempt to overthrow the state government through violence, etc.*

- What audience do you think the mapmaker and publisher were trying to reach?
 - **Possible answers:** *Based on their positive language about the members of the White League, it seems the mapmaker and publisher were trying to reach audiences that would be sympathetic to the aims of the White League. The map seems designed to honor the White League and encourage additional support for their overthrow of the government. The mapmakers may also be trying to reach a nationwide audience and encourage them to view the White League as patriotic heroes, etc.*

The **political cartoon** below was published in *Harper's Weekly*, a national publication, on October 24, 1874.

Thomas Nast, 1840-1902, artist, "The Union as it was The lost cause, worse than slavery," Illus. in: *Harper's weekly*, v. 18, no. 930 (1874 Oct. 24), p. 878. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division. <https://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2001696840/>

Questions:

- What significant words do you see in this political cartoon?
 - **Possible answers:** *"Worse than slavery," "White League," "The Union as it was," "This is a white man's government," "The Lost Cause," etc.*
- Describe what you see in the image.
 - **Possible answers:** *People who are labeled "White League" and "K.K.K." with their faces covered are carrying weapons and shaking hands over a Black family that is kneeling down and trying to protect themselves. The family is surrounded by violent images including a person hanging from tree and a schoolhouse that is on fire, etc.*
- What do you think the artist is trying to communicate?
 - **Possible answers:** *Based on the words and images in this cartoon, the artist seems to be communicating that the K.K.K. and the White League are armed, violent groups and their power is threatening the safety of Black Americans. It suggests that that control of the White League and the K.K.K are creating terrible conditions for Black Americans and relating their current status to the conditions of being enslaved. The prominent skull and cross bones suggest that these white groups are intent on bringing death and violence to Black Americans. The artist is criticizing the power of these white groups.*

- How does the portrayal of the White League in this cartoon compare to the language and style of the map titled “Battle of New Orleans for Freedom” on the previous page?
 - **Possible answers:** *This political cartoon shows the White League as a violent threat to Black people, intent on preventing Black Americans’ access to education and political power by threatening to kill them. Conversely, the map titled “Battle of New Orleans for Freedom” portrays the White League as, honorable, revolutionary heroes engaged in battle, rather than a violent, racist, uprising.*

This **article** excerpt is from the Black newspaper *Weekly Louisianian* published in New Orleans on October 24, 1874.

"The Truth." *Weekly Louisianian* (New Orleans, Louisiana), October 24, 1874: 2. *NewsBank: Black Life in America*. <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.eu1.proxy.openathens.net/apps/news/document-view?p=AAHX&docref=image/v2%3A12B767D21CB17968%40AAHX-12BEC27E7144A3F0%402405821-12BC00278935F4B8%401-12D620644DA345A0%40The%2BTruth>.

Typed transcription (key phrases highlighted):

The Truth

One of the anomalies of the 14th of September revolution is the disposition of the White League or People’s party organs to consider the colored citizen as in leading strings, to be cajoled or coerced into compliance with the wishes of opponents by mere words or more active threats.

With the accomplishment of the revolution the White League leaders carefully telegraphed over the country their intentions and conduct towards the colored people, at the same time expressing their opinion of how the colored citizens felt under the new regime. We had daily statements of the acquiescence and general thankfulness of the colored masses over a change in the government created by themselves—through their votes,—and which, whatever its shortcomings, accorded in the main manhood and equal rights to the colored citizens. Against this we were told the colored people rejoiced, being thankful in the revolutionary upbuilding of a government whose cornerstone was “no room

for negroes,” and “this is a white man’s government,” characterized by acts of daily oppression in the country parishes, having their parallel only in the Kuklux outrages of previous years.

Of course, the country did not believe these White League misrepresentations. Apart from this **the colored citizens themselves**, desirous at all times for peace and concord with their fellows, have sought by all honorable means to overcome the ceaseless opposition of their opponents; but they have been and still are refused. Overtures of union based on republican ideas of justice and tolerance for all men, of equal rights to every citizen, are indignantly spurned; and instead **our people are offered the absolute denial, not only of their right as men and citizens, but even the bare protection to life and security** for property afforded in the enforcement of law, in the propositions of the White League, and at the same **time menacingly told that if they do not accept it will be worse for them.**

Questions:

- What is the main point of the article?
 - **Possible answers:** *The article reports that the White League and their supporters are trying to make it seem as if Black Americans are happy that the government was nearly overthrown by the White League. This article asserts that the White League does not represent the interests of Black Americans, and that the White League instead is trying to deny Black Americans their rights and threatening them with violence, etc.*
- How does this article address the ways that different groups interpret events?
 - **Possible answers:** *This article explains that other publications that support the White League are trying to create a false narrative about the way Black Americans felt about the attempted violent takeover of the state government. This article cautions that the interpretations published in White League-supporting papers were inaccurate. This encourages readers to question the sources they read and look for bias, etc.*
- Based on these different sources, what is your impression of the White League and the Battle of Liberty Place?
 - **Possible answers:** *Students’ opinions, based on readings..*

Activity 3: Post Reconstruction 1877-1896

Challenging Segregation in the Courts – ANSWERS

Section 1: The 1868 Louisiana Constitution and Hall v. DeCuir? 1878

- A. Read Article 13 of the 1868 Louisiana State Constitution and the sections of the *Hall v. Decuir* decision. Circle key words that contribute to their meanings.
- B. Explain the decision of the U.S. Supreme Court in *Hall v Decuir* in your own words. Why did the court rule in favor of the steamboat captain?
- **Possible answers:** *The Supreme Court decided that a state law could not ban racial segregation on interstate travel. They decided that only a federal law could do that, and since they argued that there was not a law from Congress that banned segregation, the steamboat captain was permitted to segregate passengers by race.*
- C. According to this court decision, what level of government was able to create legislation on racial segregation: state or federal? Why is that question important in this case?
- **Possible answers:** *The court decided that only federal legislation could create laws about segregation on interstate travel, not state legislation. This is important in this case, because it meant that even though the state of Louisiana banned discrimination and segregation on transportation through its state constitution, this would not apply on any transportation passing through Louisiana and crossing state lines.*

Section 2: 1890 Louisiana Separate Car Act and Daniel Desdunes, 1892

The Black-owned New Orleans newspaper *The Crusader* published this article on July 16, 1892.

Citation:

“Jim Crow is Dead.” *The New Orleans Crusader* (New Orleans, Louisiana), July 16, 1892. Held at Xavier University of Louisiana. Jstor. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/community.31024908>

Typed transcription (key phrases highlighted):

“JIM CROW IS DEAD

The Jim Crow car is ditched and will remain in the ditch. Reactionists may foam at the mouth and Bourbon organs may squirm, but **Jim Crow is dead as a door nail**. Monday the case of Prof. D. F. Desdunes, arrested sometime ago on the L. & N.R.R. and charged with violating the **separate car law**, which Judge Marr had under advisement on a plea attacking

the constitutionality of the law at the time of his disappearance in April last, was called up before his successor. After argument by Counsel Judge Ferguson overruled the State's demurrer to defendant's plea, holding the law, as applying to interstate passengers, unconstitutional. Thereupon the State's Attorney abandoned the prosecution, being satisfied that Desdunes' allegation that he was on his way to Mobile would be readily proved. It is well to remark here that the report of a morning paper that Desdunes had been incarcerated at the time of his arrest is totally incorrect. Mr. Desdunes was never in jail. He was bailed out as soon as arrested."

A. Read the Separate Car Act and the newspaper article about the outcome of the arrest. Circle the key words that explain the meaning of the law and the outcome of the case.

B. What are the differences between the Louisiana Separate Car Act and Article 13 of the 1868 Louisiana Constitution?

- **Possible answers:** *Article 13 of the 1868 Louisiana State Constitution said that no public transportation, business, or public space could distinguish or discriminate by race. The Separate Car Act said that railcars must provide equal but separate cars for white people and people of color, and that no one could sit in the car where their race was not assigned, etc.*

C. In what ways was the outcome of Daniel Desdunes's arrest different from the outcome of *Hall v. Decuir*? How were the outcomes similar?

- **Possible answers:** *The two were different because the Supreme Court allowed segregation on interstate travel in Hall v. Decuir, but a New Orleans court ruled segregation unconstitutional on interstate travel in the Desdunes case. They were similar because judges in both instances decided a state law could not control segregation on interstate travel—it could neither ban nor mandate it.*

Section 3: 14th Amendment, the Separate Car Act, and Plessy v. Ferguson? 1896

A. Read the excerpts from the decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson* and circle the key words that explain the decision.

B. What was the reasoning of the U.S. Supreme Court for upholding the Louisiana Separate Car Act in *Plessy v. Ferguson*?

- **Possible answers:** *The Supreme Court Justices reasoned that providing "equal, but separate, accommodations" did not violate the Fourteenth Amendment. The judges claimed that legislation cannot make the races socially equal, only guarantee equal rights to both. And that the law is meant to treat all equally, but cannot erase all distinctions between races, especially if it is the will of the general public to keep the*

racess separate. They claimed that separate spaces did not imply that one race was inferior to another, etc.

- C. Where in the decision do justices reference the power of state laws to segregate people by race?
- **Possible answers:** *The Supreme Court Justices said that state laws could permit or require racial segregation when they wrote that such laws “have been generally, if not universally, recognized as within the competency of the state legislatures in the exercise of their police power.”*
- D. In your own interpretation from reading primary texts, does the Louisiana Separate Car Act violate the 14th Amendment?
- **Possible answers:** *Up to student interpretation. Answers should reference the 14th Amendment and the Louisiana Separate Car Act, using specific examples to explain their reasoning.*

Section 4: Discussion

- A. Compare the three cases and their outcomes.
- **Possible answers:**
 - *Hall v. Decuir: permitted segregation on interstate travel, said that Article 13 of the Louisiana State Constitution of 1868 which prevented discrimination on public transportation did not apply in this case because states could not regulate segregation on interstate travel, ruled only federal law could do that*
 - *Desdunes: ruled that segregation could not be enforced by the Louisiana Separate Car Act, said state law could not regulate segregation on interstate travel*
 - *Plessy v. Ferguson: said that the state law could regulate segregation on travel within a state, that it was beyond the purpose or the means of the federal government to regulate or enforce segregation at the state level, and also said that accommodation that were separate but equal did not imply inferiority of any race and were therefore acceptable*
- B. How does each case interpret the role of federal and state power?
- **Possible answers:**
 - *Hall v. Decuir: said only federal law could regulate segregation on interstate travel, that a state law could not ban segregation on transportation crossing state lines*
 - *Desdunes: again, decision was that only federal law could regulate segregation on interstate travel, and that a state law cannot require segregation on transportation crossing state lines*

- *Plessy v. Ferguson*: ruled that states could require segregation on travel within their own states and that it was not the role of the federal government to interfere with that

C. What was the role of the courts in upholding racial segregation laws during this period?

- **Possible answers:** *During this period, the Supreme Court refused to take a hard stance on the federal regulation of segregation. They only said that states could make no laws regarding segregation on interstate travel because that was the purview of the federal government, but that within states the state legislatures were welcome to create segregation laws that separated people by race. The U.S. Supreme Court's decisions allowed segregation laws to continue and argued that as long as the services provided were equal, the 14th Amendment was not being violated.*