Effects of Reconstruction
By Cathy Pearl

People in this country were tired of Reconstruction by the middle of the 1870s. Southerners were not happy with the government. They saw it as a group of people who did nothing but tax people and then spend the money. At the same time, the Federal army was leaving the South. Whites were gaining back the power they lost right after the war ended.

The effort to help the South was not a total failure. The Union had also been saved. By the 1870s, all of the Southern states were part of the Union again. The South was rebuilding its cities. They were growing quickly. People who had left were coming back to start their lives over again.

As farms were rebuilt, people in the South grew crops that weren't food. Some of these products were tobacco and sugar. Farmers began to earn good money again. But this meant that they were growing less food to feed the people who lived there. Much of the food was shipped in from other parts of the country.

Blacks had gained more rights. The Thirteenth Amendment banned slavery in the country. The Fourteenth Amendment said that blacks in the country were now citizens. Blacks also had gained the right to vote. That was given in the Fifteenth Amendment.

Organizations were being started. They would help blacks get jobs and go to school. One group was the Freedmen's Bureau. This group helped to start many schools for blacks to attend. The group also tried to help them with problems that they faced every day.

Reconstruction was not all good. There were bad things that happened because of it, too. Former slaves were stuck in poverty. As their children grew up, they also lived in poverty. This cycle would go on for many years.

Blacks being poor kept them from doing many things. They did not have enough money to buy land. Whites continued to keep them from owning businesses. Even if they could open a business, most of them did not have the money to do it.

After the Civil War, the Federal army was in the South. But when Reconstruction ended, the army left. Blacks were scared. Now, there was no one to protect them. Organizations like the Ku Klux Klan or KKK started. These groups of people kept blacks from voting in elections.

Just because blacks were now supposed to be equal to whites didn't mean that they were treated that way. Whites living in the South and the North did not see blacks as equals. Even though they were no longer slaves, blacks were still treated as if they were.

While farming was good for the South, it was also bad. The focus on farming meant that there weren't a lot of factories being built. The North had a lot more factories to make the things that people needed and wanted. People in the South had to pay more for these same goods because they had to be sent to that part of the country.

Many people in the North and South were bitter after the war ended. Reconstruction did not help that. The South was angry with how its people were treated after the war. The way they were treated meant they did not trust many people who were in politics.

Many people today believe that Reconstruction was a total failure. As we look back, we can see that there were some good points. Still, many groups of people including blacks and women would have to fight for rights that would make them equal to white men.
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Questions

1. The Fifteenth Amendment guaranteed blacks the right to do what?
   A. Become president
   B. Become citizens
   C. Vote

2. What group started to keep blacks from voting in elections?
   A. The Freedmen's Bureau
   B. The KKK
   C. Reconstruction

3. Which part of the country had more factories?
   A. The South
   B. Canada
   C. The North

4. After the war, the South grew more crops that could be what?
   A. Sold
   B. Used to feed blacks
   C. Used to feed animals

5. Before Reconstruction ended, who was in the South to help protect blacks?

6. How did the South feel about the way they were treated after the war?

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Was the South right to feel bitter about the way Reconstruction affected them? Explain.
Do you think Reconstruction had more good effects or more bad effects? Explain.