



# Social Studies Mini-Unit

## The Reconstruction Era

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**Goal:** These lessons focus on both national and local personal narratives from the Reconstruction Period. Let these stories help you decide what characteristics a community, a leader or an individual would need during this time period.

**Materials:** Computer with internet, writing materials

**Instruction:** Following the Civil War, the Reconstruction Period began within our country an immense new chapter for social reform with the [definition of freedom](#) for debate. People began to rebuild the South and try to unite the states, but newly freed persons were seeking ways to build their own futures in a still hostile environment. Dive into these lessons to learn more about individuals of the time.

### Lesson 1: [Lincoln Originals](#)

This online exhibition features digital scans of primary historical documents in Abraham Lincoln's hand, or signed by him, drawn from the diverse manuscript holdings at Cincinnati Museum Center.



1. Explore the [Lincoln Originals Online Exhibit](#)
2. Read the Emancipation Proclamation Fact Sheet [\[linked here\]](#)
  - a. Extension: Review the 13th, 14th and 15th Amendments which are considered the Reconstruction Amendments.
3. Journal Entry: What characteristics defined President Lincoln?
  - a. Write a persuasive argument in the form of a letter addressed to a past president (or the current administration) outlining an important issue and what you believe the correct course of action is and why. Cite evidence to support your case.
4. Extension Option: Research Lincoln's Ten-Percent Plan, a plan for reconstruction, versus the Wade-Davis Bill, which was a Radical Republican plan for reconstruction. Explore the similarities and differences of these two documents. Get started with this [student-made presentation](#).
  - a. Journal Entry: Why did Lincoln want to make it easier for Southern states to join the unification of the United States?

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## **Lesson 2: Relations of Southern Ohio to the South Preceding the Civil War**

“The aim of this study is to ascertain as nearly as possible what forces were tending to bind the people of the southern part of Ohio... that part of the state which lies south of the old National Road. This line is selected because for many years it was to Ohio politics what Mason and Dixon’s line was to national politics—a line of cleavage.” - “WORDS” - David Carl Shilling

<http://library.cincymuseum.org/journals/files/qp/v08/n1/qp-v08-n1-rel-001.pdf>

1. Read the article with an adult or choose one core chapter to read (I-IV).
2. Write down questions you have while reading.
3. Journal Entry: Research the answer to two of your questions and record your answers.

## **Lesson 3: Cincinnati’s African American History**

An introduction to the African American history of Cincinnati and the contributions of African Americans as Civil War soldiers created by the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center.

1. Complete the lesson included in the link.
2. Journal Entry: Why do you think Cincinnati was a good or bad place to be during this time period for African Americans? Support your argument with evidence.



*Photo of Jefferson Lewis' headstone Union Baptist Cemetery*

## **Lesson 4: James Presley Ball - An American Journey**

Meet a Cincinnati resident born to a free African American family who became a successful photographer while navigating brittle racial tensions of a city perched on the border of slavery.

1. Browse [James Presley Ball’s online exhibit](#) created by CMC.
2. Take the Nancy & David Wolf Holocaust & Humanity Center Character Strength Survey: <https://www.viacharacter.org/pro/hhc/account/register>
3. Journal Entry: What were your top three character strengths? What were your bottom three? If you had been alive during the Reconstruction Era how would your strengths and weaknesses serve or challenge you?

**Product: Create something! Choose one (or a few) of the options.**

1. Review [Ohio's Civil War Monuments](#) included in this link. Choose one monument to focus on. Write a persuasive argument about why you think it should still be standing or not. Consider sending it in to a local official!
2. Create a website on weebly.com about a historical figure from this time period. Include 1-5 primary sources.
3. Make a detailed timeline of the Reconstruction Era (1865-1877). Include political, social and global details.
4. Write a historical fiction essay with you as the main character during this time period. Make sure to write with a strong introduction, climax and conclusion!
  - a. Guiding Questions: What challenges would you face?
5. Gather data from your own family to create a family tree dating as far back as possible (use the Hamilton County Genealogical Society as a resource: <https://hcgsohio.org/>). Create a family tree online or mural with descriptions as to professions or other important details of their life. Interview family members and include images where possible.

**Additional Resources:**

[National Park Service Study - The Era of Reconstruction:](#)

“Reconstruction offers Americans messages that are at once heartening and disheartening. It reminds us that American values of democracy, freedom, and equality are not simply slogans or legal doctrines. They are processes that must be defended and are subject to negotiation and redefinition, not just by the government, but by the people themselves” (p. 8).

[Facing History and Ourselves Website:](#)

“The Reconstruction Era and the Fragility of Democracy- Use this rich archive of lessons, videos, and primary sources to teach about one of the most tumultuous periods in US history and its legacy today.”

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