

Andrew Johnson



## Teaching Guide

### SEGMENT 4, WEBISODE 7

Please note: Each segment in this Webisode has its own Teaching Guide



#### Segment Overview



#### Let's Discuss

Thaddeus Stevens, a Pennsylvania senator deeply committed to justice, believed that the federal government—not the states—should shoulder the responsibility of assuring African Americans equality under the law. President Andrew Johnson disagreed.

Radical Republicans, (those who wanted the South to change completely and wanted African Americans to have full rights as citizens) led by Stevens and others, initiated the first impeachment of an American president. The Constitution allows for impeachment of high government officials and removal from office for treason, bribery, or other high crimes and misdemeanors. While the House of Representatives voted to impeach Johnson, the Senate acquitted him by just one vote. Most scholars believe that Johnson, while guilty of thwarting Reconstruction, was not guilty of high crimes and misdemeanors. Stevens lived only a few weeks after the trial and was buried in an integrated cemetery.

#### Teacher Directions

1. Students, in small teams, discuss the following questions.
  - What is impeachment?
  - For what reasons can a president be impeached?
  - On what issue did Stevens and Johnson disagree?
  - What was the result of the impeachment trial of President Andrew Johnson?
2. Make sure students understand the following points in discussing the questions.

Impeachment of a president in the House of Representatives, leads to a trial in the Senate. If the president is convicted of treason, bribery, or high crimes and misdemeanors, he is removed from office. Stevens believed the southern states should give African Americans the vote, land, and guarantees of equality under the law before being allowed to reenter the Union. Johnson believed it was the responsibility of the states, not the federal government, to guarantee African Americans their rights. Johnson was impeached by the House of Representatives, but the Senate did not have the required two-thirds votes needed for conviction.



## History Sleuth

### Teacher Directions

1. Explain to students that to impeach means to charge a public official before a governing, legislative body with misconduct while in office. Presidential impeachment requires the charge of treason, bribery, or other high crimes and misdemeanors.
2. Explain to students that most historians believe that Andrew Johnson was impeached more for his political beliefs than for any high crimes or misdemeanors. Southern states tried to circumvent the Thirteenth Amendment (abolishing slavery) by passing Black Codes restricting the lives of African Americans. Congress established the Freedmen's Bureau to protect the rights of the four million formerly enslaved African Americans. Congress also passed the Civil Rights Act of 1866, which guaranteed African Americans all the rights of citizenship and forbade states from restricting their rights. Johnson vetoed the bill. (Under the Constitution, the president can veto any bill passed by Congress; his veto can be overridden by a two-thirds majority in both houses.) For the first time in American history, Congress overrode a presidential veto. Congress went on to pass other Reconstruction acts. When Johnson tried to fire Secretary of War Edwin Stanton, a Radical Republican, the House of Representatives impeached him.
3. Distribute the Student Sheet: *The Impeachment of Andrew Johnson*. With teammates, students discuss the following questions.
  - Why is this cartoon called "The Veto"?
  - What is President Andrew Johnson doing?
  - What is the result of his actions?
4. Make sure students understand that Johnson's veto of the Civil Rights Act and his opposition to the Freedmen's Bureau were factors in his impeachment but were not grounds for a conviction.

### Teacher Directions

In their small learning teams, students respond to one of the following prompts.

- Do you believe Thaddeus Stevens was a hero? Why or why not?
- After the war, some Americans proposed that freed African American slaves be given land to help them make a living and to pay them back for slavery. Should African Americans have been given "forty acres and a mule"?



## What do you Think?



Moving Toward  
Freedom

### Teacher Directions

1. Ask students the following question.

Have you ever heard the phrase “forty acres and a mule”? Or have you ever heard someone say, “I want my forty acres and a mule”?

2. Introduce students to the concept of reparations for formerly enslaved African Americans by sharing the following information.

Several plans were suggested or adopted to help the formerly enslaved African Americans support themselves. Near the end of the Civil War, during his March to the Sea, General William T. Sherman issued Special Field Order # 15 on January 16, 1865, setting aside lands along the coast of Charleston for African American settlements. The government would distribute forty acres of land to each head of a family.

During Reconstruction, Radical Republican Senator Thaddeus Stevens offered several plans to assist former slaves. Stevens wanted to break up large Southern plantations to provide formerly enslaved African Americans with land. His plan, viewed as too radical and punitive toward the South, was not adopted. President Johnson vetoed any proposal that provided land to freedmen.

The Southern Homestead Act of 1867 aimed to make public lands in the South available to both blacks and whites. But most poor people lacked even the small amount of money needed to buy land. Many free African Americans became tenant farmers or sharecroppers. Under the sharecropping system, the owner provided land, seed, and supplies. The sharecropper worked the land and paid the owner with a share of the crops he grew. Unfortunately, this system kept power—and capital—in the hands of the owners, and virtually enslaved the sharecropper, who somehow never got ahead financially.

3. Distribute the Student Sheet: *Forty Acres and a Mule*. In their small groups, students discuss the following questions.
  - What was General Sherman’s plan to help freed African Americans? What was Thaddeus Stevens’ plan?
  - Do you think Stevens’ plan should have been adopted? Why or why not?



## Connections

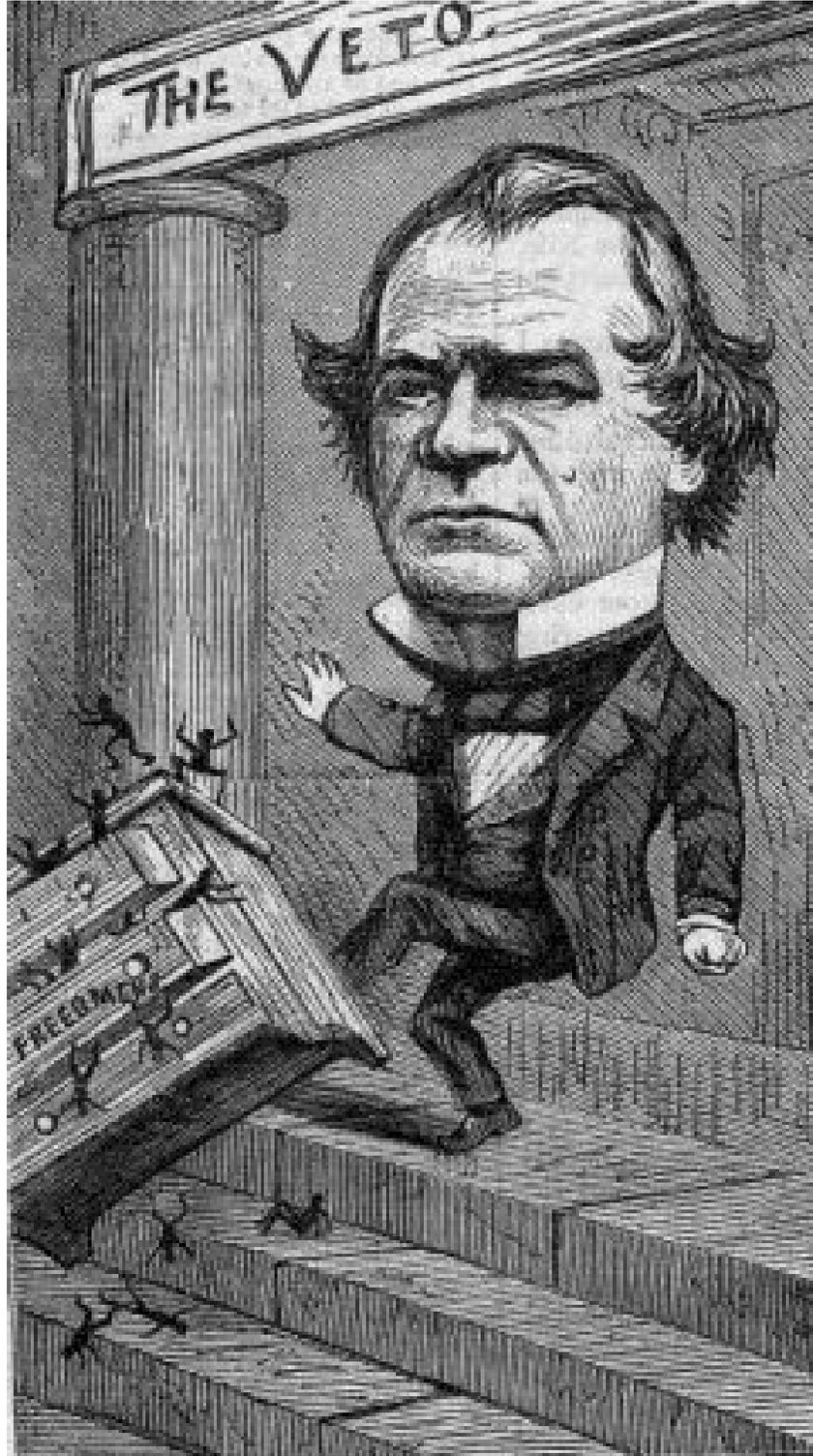
### Teacher Directions

Use the following activities with your students.

**Language Arts** — Students write a storyboard for a play or skit that tells the story of individual black Reconstruction legislators or of the impeachment of Andrew Johnson.

**Geography** — Students draw a map of the United States that communicates the dates or the order in which the former Confederate states adopted their Reconstruction constitutions.

# Impeaching a President



*Harpers's Weekly 1866*

## Forty Acres and a Mule

*The islands of Charleston south, the abandoned rice fields along the rivers for thirty miles back from the sea, and the country bordering St. Johns River, Florida, are reserved and set apart for the settlement of Negroes now made free by the acts of war and the proclamation of the President of the United States."*

*Whenever respectable negroes, heads of families, shall desire to settle on land ... each family shall have a plot of not more than (40) forty acres of tillable ground...*

General William T. Sherman's  
Special Field Order # 15

Within a few months, 40,000 freedmen had received 400,000 acres of land. However, President Johnson broke the promise made to the freedmen and ordered the land returned to its original plantation owners.

Over the next few years, several other plans were proposed to grant land to freedmen. Thaddeus Stevens proposed that the government confiscate the property of former slaveholders who owned more than two hundred acres. This land would be allocated to freedmen in forty-acre lots. The remaining land would be sold and part of the money used to pay pensions of Union soldiers. This plan was not approved.

