BrianPop - Reconstruction

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Once the Civil War was ended, the North and the South still disagreed on two important issues. The two issues were the role of the federal government and African Americans' place in society. The war did not end the divisions between the North and the South, it only made them deeper. The South was in ruins after the war, its cities were destroyed and its former slaves did not have homes or jobs. It was President Abraham Lincoln's job to lead the nation's reconstruction. Reconstruction means the process of rebuilding. Abraham Licoln had just been reelected (elected again) President before the Civil War ended. He offered the people of the South amnesty (forgiveness) if they would support abolition (freedom for all slaves) and the United States Constitution. Lincoln offered freemen (liberated slaves) jobs and free schooling, and also distributed food, clothing, and medicine to all Southerners who needed help. But President Lincoln was assassinated five days after the Confederacy surrendered and his Vice President Andrew Johnson became the next President. Andrew Johnson had been a slave owner and he allowed Southern leaders to pass Black Codes, severely limiting the rights of freedmen. It was almost like African Americans were slaves again. A group of radical Republicans from the North tried to stop the South from passing racist laws. They passed the 14th Amendment, which guaranteed all the rights of American citizenship to freedmen. Congress took control of governments in Southern states and stationed Union soldiers in the South. African Americans were elected to Congress for the first time. Unfortunately, laws alone couldn't bring the country together. The North and the South still had completely different social values. Many white people in the South found it hard to accept former slaves as their equals.