

Sample essay on reconstruction and the west

[Sociology](#), [Slavery](#)



History:

The Reconstruction era and the settlement of the West were two of the most defining events in American history. These are the formative years when the United States experienced tremendous changes in its political, social and economic conditions. The Reconstruction period affected much of the Southern part of the United States, especially those that concerned the African-Americans and their newly acquired freedom. On the other hand, the settlement of the West, despite contributing much to the improvement of the economy, brought the unavoidable conflict between the government and the Native Americans.

THE RECONSTRUCTION PERIOD

The Reconstruction period started in 1865 until 1867. These were the years after the Civil War, when tremendous disagreements arise due to conflicting views on how the Reconstruction should be set. Despite the conflicting views, the Black Americans saw hope, as the 13th amendment to the Constitution was ratified in 1865, resulting to the formal abolition of slavery. The ratification of the law against slavery, however, has not completed the fight for the Afro-Americans. Equality remains to be an issue in the United States, especially in the South where the primary conflict arise from Southern Whites, majority of them were former slave who disgust the idea of the Blacks given equal rights. In the fall of 1865, a state legislature that was formed under the Reconstruction plan of President Johnson adopting the “Black Codes”, an oppressive law that imposed limited civil rights and economic status of the newly freed people. The code was explicit in denying

the blacks their right to vote, while imposing restrictions on their freedom of movement. It was the ratification of the 14th Constitutional Amendment that granted citizenship to “ all persons born or naturalized in the United States,” and that included the newly freed slaves (Reconstruction) As a result, the male African-Americans were given the “ equal protection of law” just like any other citizens of the United States.

The brief Reconstruction period was successful as it has produced the three amendments to the Constitution: the 13th, 14th and the 15th amendments. The 13th amendment to the Constitution states that “ Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude () shall exist within the United states, or any place subject to their jurisdiction (13th Amendment), has formally abolished slavery in America. The 14th amendment, on the other hand, granted former slaves the U. S citizenship and the equal protection of law. It was the 15th amendment that gave the African-Americans the feeling that they are given the right equal to that of their White counterparts: the right to vote.

Change was not easy for the white Americans who got used to having the Blacks as their slaves. Despite the Constitutional amendments, racism and discriminating attitudes were widely observed from the white Americans. The Reconstruction was a failure in terms of fully integrating the Black Americans into the society.

WESTERN SETTLEMENT AND THE ANTIVE AMERICANS

After the American Civil War, the massive work on the railroads in the West resumed. Many of the railroad workers opted to stay after the construction of the roads, but what made the fast expansion of the West was the ease of

migration brought about by the transcontinental roads. The railroads became the means by which the population of the Western part of the United States increased due to the influx of new settlers (Immigration). In line with the construction of the railroads was the ratification of the Homestead Act. This act opens the opportunity for diverse settlers to avail of lands in the West. The Homestead Act granted a free 160 acre land to a settler who can at least complete the government requirements. By the end of the 19th century, there were 80 million acres given to more than 480, 000 individuals who availed of the grant.

In the spirit of Westward expansion, the government ordered the Native Americans to give up all their lands. The government wanted the natives to move away from the presentable locations in order to be able to attract the white settlers. The expansion was not without resistance from the Native settlers of the region. Conflict ensued resulting to several wars that cost the lives of many government soldiers and the immediate decrease of the Indians. Red Cloud, a leader of one of the natives said after his withdrawal from the arranged peace talks in 1866:

You are the White Eagle who has come to steal the road. The great Father

(the president) sends us presents and wants us to sell him the road, but the

White Chief comes with the soldiers to steal it before the Indians says yes

or no. I will talk to you no more. I will go now and fight you! As long as I live I will fight you for the last hunting grounds of my people" (The Battle).

The Battle of the Little Bighorn: The Battle of the Little Bighorn happened in

1876 between the U. S. Cavalry and the Indians tribes of Cheyenne, Sioux and Arapaho. The tribes decided to wage war against the whites for their insistent destruction of the native's tribal lands. Unknown to the U. S cavalry, the tribes have joined to form a strong alliance against any attack from the U. S military.

The U. S Calvary was supposed to force the Indians into the reservation areas where they were to stay in order not to cause fear to the white settlers. The attack was led by Lt. George Custer but despite their military tactics, the unexpected number of the natives caused the cavalry to be trapped and wiped out by the fierce warriors of the tribes (The Battle).

References

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