

# WORKSHEET 39

## Multicultural Resources

### Freed African Americans After the Civil War

Read this passage and answer the questions that follow.

African Americans continued to suffer from economic inequality after the Civil War. Most freed African Americans did not receive the land that they hoped to own. With no land and little or no education, most former slaves had no choice but to continue working on plantations.

Building a new working relationship with freed African Americans proved difficult for many plantation owners. Even though the Thirteenth Amendment had abolished slavery in the United States, the attitudes of many southerners' toward African Americans did not change. Southern states passed laws limiting the freedom of African Americans. These laws, called black codes, aimed to return freed African Americans to slave labor.

On plantations where former slaveowners accepted that their workers were no longer slaves, freed African Americans and their new bosses often worked well together. Small plantation owners who had worked in the fields alongside their slaves often remained on good terms with freed African Americans. However, many large plantation owners did not want to make any changes. They did not want to bargain with freed African Americans over hours, wages, and working conditions. Many felt, as one planter declared, that former slaves "must be controlled in some way or white people cannot live amongst them." Such planters continued to treat freed African Americans as much as possible like slaves.

An example of the tensions between former masters and former slaves was on the

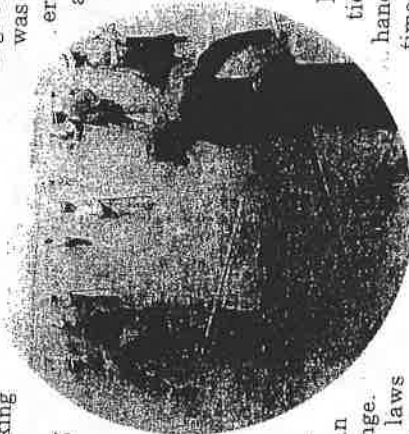
Henry Watson plantation in Greene County, Alabama. The former slaves there decided to stay, but to demand some changes, such as the firing of George Hagin, the overseer.

The workers refused to work until Hagin was gone. A compromise was reached, giving the workers a small part of the crop and the same amount of food and clothing they had received as slaves. Hagin was removed as the overseer, although he continued to work on the plantation.

This arrangement lasted only six days. Henry Watson, the plantation owner, felt that "All hands are having a good, easy time, not doing half work." He put Hagin back in charge.

Seventeen workers left the plantation rather than work under Hagin. A Freedmen's Bureau official helped the remaining freed African Americans negotiate a new arrangement with Watson. (The Freedmen's Bureau was a federal agency set up in the South to assist freed African Americans.) In exchange for their labor, the workers received a larger share of the crop.

Watson never accepted the new, more equal relationship between himself and his former slaves. He decided to rent the plantation to Hagin. Eventually Hagin worked out another arrangement with the workers. He divided the plantation into sections and rented individual lots to workers and their families. In return Hagin would receive a share of the crop at harvest. This arrangement, called sharecropping, would become the new system of labor in the South for decades to come.



Laborers on a South Carolina rice plantation.

1. Why did many freed African Americans continue to work on plantations?

2. Why was building new working relationships with freed African Americans difficult for many plantation owners?

3. On what kinds of plantations was it easiest for freed African Americans and planters to build new relationships? Which group of planters strongly resisted the changes?

4. What demands did the freed African American workers on the Watson plantation make? What new system of labor emerged on the plantation?

5. **Critical Thinking** Why might planters like Watson have felt they could not manage the workers on their plantations without complete control?

ACTIVITY 13

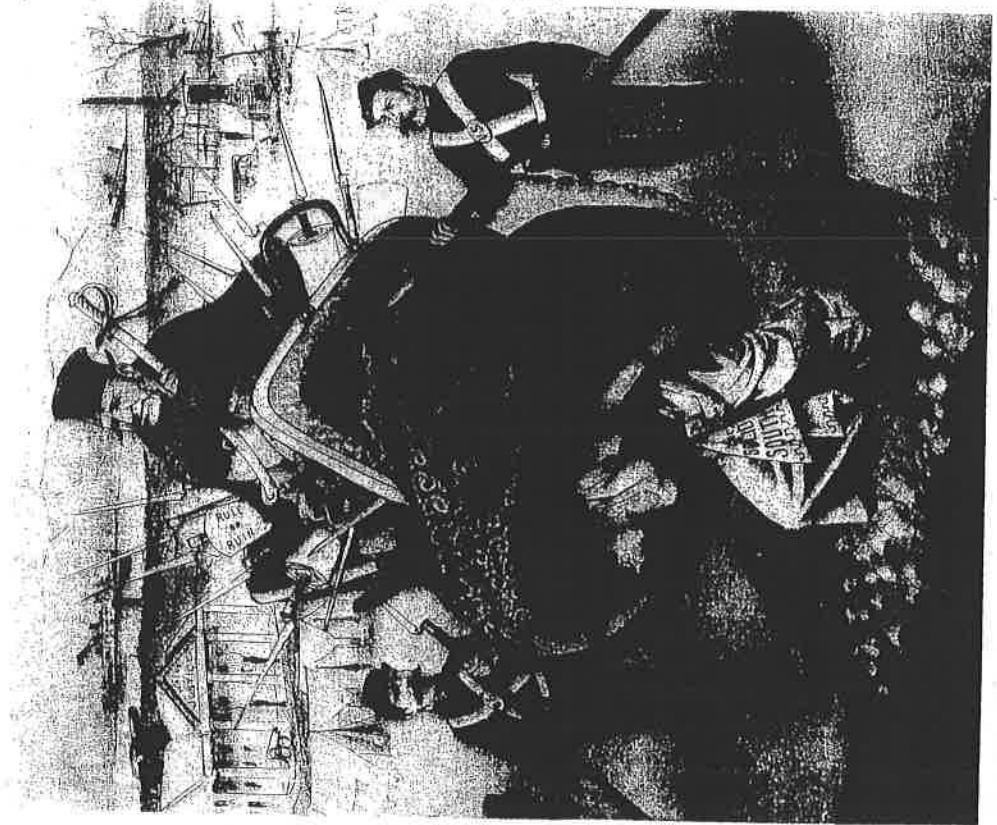
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**Reconstruction and Carpetbaggers**

As the South began to rebuild after the Civil War, opposition arose among white Southerners to the Reconstruction governments imposed on the former Confederacy by the North. The rise of the Ku Klux Klan created additional pressure on the federal government to end the violence. People in the North also began to tire of efforts to change the South.

The cartoon on this page is from an 1872 newspaper. Study the cartoon, then answer the questions that follow.



Culver Pictures

**Analyzing the Cartoon**

1. Who does the woman in the cartoon represent? How do you know this? Why is she shown in a bent-over posture?
2. What is the burden she is carrying?
3. What is the role of the two soldiers in the cartoon? Why is the woman chained to the rifles of the soldiers?
4. What details does the cartoonist include in the background to show the economic situation in the South?

**CRITICAL THINKING**

5. Identifying Central Issues What is the meaning of the paper "Rule or Ruin" tucked in among the bayonets?
6. Determining Cause and Effect How did interpretations such as the one shown here affect the outcome of the election of 1876?
7. Evaluating Information The cartoon on the opposite page is from a Northern newspaper. What does its appearance in 1872 indicate about how Northern opinion had changed since 1865?