

Lesson 9: End of War and Reconstruction

☐ Getting Started

As you've seen in earlier lessons, America had been torn apart by the Civil War. When the war finally ended, it would be no easy task to pull the country back together again as one unified nation. For enslaved people, the end of the Civil War brought about what they had hoped for all their lives — freedom! In this lesson, you'll learn about the end of the Civil War and Reconstruction, the period that immediately followed the war.

Stuff You Need

- ✓ *A History of US Volume 6: War, Terrible War 1855-1865* by Joy Hakim
- ✓ dictionary
- ✓ tape or glue
- ✓ crayons, markers, or colored pencils
- ✓ scissors

Ideas to Think About

- How do differences in geography, population, wealth, natural resources, and economic capacity influence a society's power to force the resolution of conflicts in its own favor?
- When a major conflict has ended, what are the challenges of peacemaking and reunion?

Things to Know

- The Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution (1865) prohibited slavery.
- The Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution (1868) provided equal protection under the law for every American citizen.
- The Fifteenth Amendment to the Constitution (1870) affirmed that all citizens have the right to vote.

☐ Reading and Questions

Read chapters 28-31 in *A History of US: War, Terrible War 1855-1865*. Then read the information at the following weblink about the lives of former slaves, the Freedmen's Bureau, and the Black Codes. You'll start on page 2 and read through page 5. When you're done, answer these questions.

Web Link:

<https://www.movingbeyondthepage.com/link/9094/>

1. What happened in Wilmer McLean's parlor?

2. What were the terms of surrender offered to Robert E. Lee by Ulysses S. Grant?

3. What challenges did former slaves face in the South after the war?

Activities

☐ Activity 1: Civil War Timeline

Add any important events from the reading you completed to your Civil War timeline. Be sure to use the blank timeline cards provided to create cards for any events that you think are important enough to include but that do not have a card.

☐ **Activity 2: Reconstruction Amendments**

The end of the Civil War brought dramatic changes to the United States. Three key amendments to the Constitution were passed between 1865 and 1870. On the "Reconstruction Amendments" page, you will read the texts of those amendments and determine their meaning. It may be helpful to have a dictionary handy to help you look up any unfamiliar terms. Be sure to ask a parent if there are passages that are unclear, even after you have looked up unfamiliar terms in your dictionary.

☐ **Activity 3: The Meaning of Freedom**

The end of the Civil War was a critical event for the entire nation, but for people who had been forced to live as slaves prior to the Civil War, the war's end and the final end of the system of slavery was a cause for tremendous celebration. African-American people in southern states had freedom at the war's end, but they still needed education, land, and jobs to make new lives for themselves. They also still faced racism and discrimination. Many continued to work as sharecroppers on the land where they had once been slaves for low wages and under poor conditions, finding that freedom from slavery did not necessarily mean freedom from unfair treatment. But even with these challenges, former slaves celebrated their new freedom, knowing that they could never again be considered property and that the Constitution now acknowledged them as equal citizens under the law. In this activity, you will consider the ways that freed people's lives changed when the Civil War ended and slavery was finally abolished.

First, review your readings and activity pages from Lesson 2 to refresh your memory about life during slavery. Next, look over the information about the end of the Civil War from *A History of Us: War, Terrible War 1855-1865*. Be sure to consider both the excitement that must have accompanied freedom but also the challenges that freed people faced. Select one of the following options.

Option 1

For Option 1, you will use "The Meaning of Freedom" pages to draw two contrasting images, one showing an enslaved family before the Civil War and another showing that same family after freedom. Your images should show significant details about the family's life. Were they all together or separated? What were their daily lives like? What might people have been feeling while enslaved and then when they became free?

Option 2

For Option 2, you will use your own paper to write an outline for a short story about a family's transition from slavery to freedom. This short story will be a work of **historical fiction**, which is a special genre of literature. In historical fiction, the setting of the story is sometime in the past, and the author of the story has done historical research about the time, place, and people involved to make sure that he or she is describing them accurately. Historical fiction is still fiction, though, and so unlike a non-fiction historical account written by a historian, the author's imagination is used to create the story, make up parts of the plot, invent characters, and fill in any details that we can't know from the historical record. Some historical fiction stories stick very closely to historical facts while others venture further away from historical reality. In your story, you will be making up the family and what happens to them from your own imagination, but you will use your historical research to make sure that the things you mention are things that could reasonably have happened to a family during this time period.

You might plan for your story to first describe life in slavery for the family and then tell about the family's hopes and dreams (and also any challenges or concerns) as they become free. Think about the historical details you might include to help your reader understand the differences between life under slavery and life after freedom was declared. Use the "Plot Diagram: Meaning of Freedom" page to outline your story. Next, explain the story verbally to a parent.

To extend this activity, you can turn your outline into a completed short story and illustrate it or write up your story idea as the script for a trailer advertising the movie version of your story.

☐ **Wrapping Up**

Hundreds of thousands of Americans were killed during the Civil War. Afterward, violence during Reconstruction killed thousands more. But the war had preserved the Union, ended the horrors of slavery, and reunified a country that, in the decades before the war, had been torn apart by conflict over slavery. In the decades that followed, the United States would become a major world power, and the Civil War would be remembered as a defining event in American history.

Reconstruction Amendments

13th Amendment

Passed by Congress January 31, 1865
Ratified December 6, 1865

Section 1.

Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.

Section 2.

Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.

Restate this amendment in your own words.

Why do you think this amendment was important?

14th Amendment

Passed by Congress June 13, 1866
Ratified July 9, 1868

Section 1.

All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside. No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws. (Section 2-5)*

Restate this amendment in your own words.

Why do you think this amendment was important?

15th Amendment

Passed by Congress February 26, 1869
Ratified February 3, 1870

Section 1.

The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude--

Section 2.

The Congress shall have the power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.

Restate this amendment in your own words.

Why do you think this amendment was important?

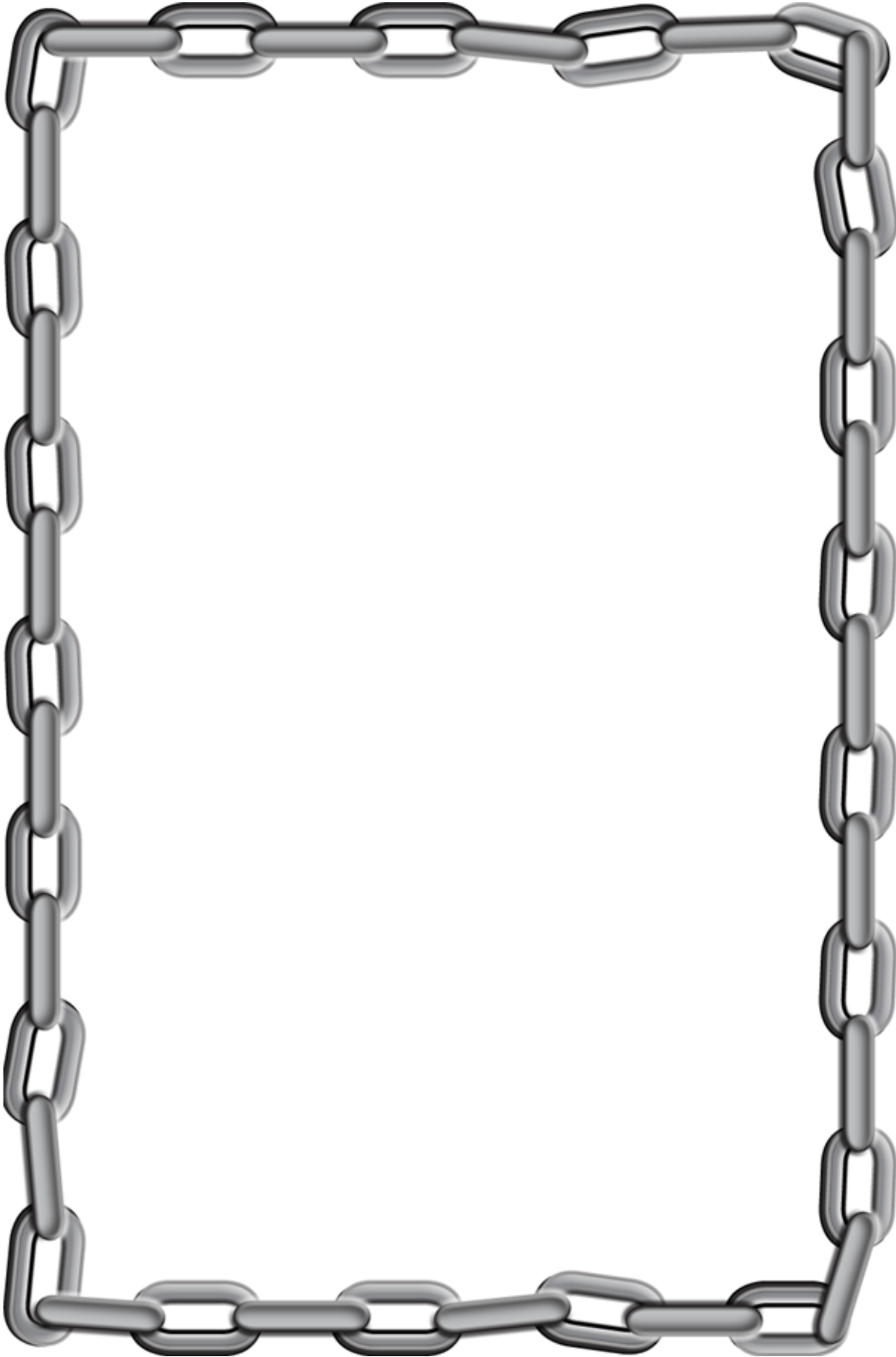
* You can find the full text of the U.S. Constitution and detailed information on all of its amendments from the Charters of Freedom site at the National Archives:

<http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/constitution.html>

The Meaning of Freedom

1

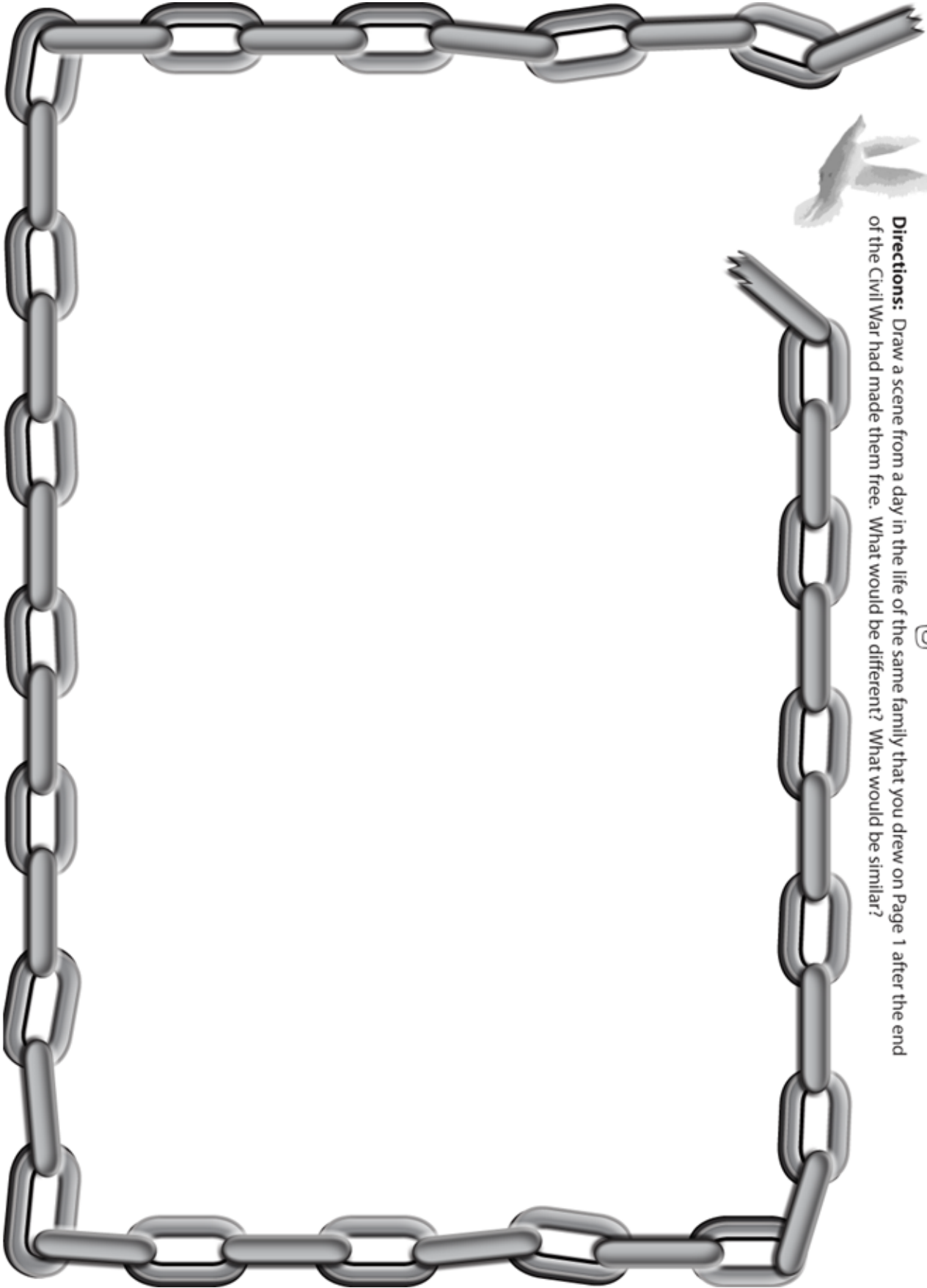
Directions: Draw a scene from a day in the life of an enslaved family before the Civil War. Include as many details as you can and try to convey both the positive and the negative aspects of people's lives.



The Meaning of Freedom

2

Directions: Draw a scene from a day in the life of the same family that you drew on Page 1 after the end of the Civil War had made them free. What would be different? What would be similar?



Plot Diagram: The Meaning of Freedom

Characters:

Setting:

Directions: Fill out the plot diagram sheet and identify the major events, the problem, the climax, and the resolution of the story.

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

Rising Action

Falling Action

Climax:



Problem:

Solution:

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Getting Started

? Big Ideas

- How do differences in geography, population, wealth, natural resources, and economic capacity influence a society's power to force the resolution of conflicts in its own favor?
- When a major conflict has ended, what are the challenges of peacemaking and reunion?



Facts and Definitions

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Skills

- Explain the reasons for and rights provided by the 13th, 14th, and 15th amendments to the U.S. Constitution. (SS)
- Analyze the political, economic, and social impact of Reconstruction and identify the reasons why Reconstruction came to an end. (SS)

Introducing the Lesson

In this lesson, your child will learn about the end of the Civil War and about Reconstruction. Encourage your child to think, while working through this lesson, about what the end of the war would mean to all of the people he has learned about — slaves, slave owners, Northern factory workers, soldiers on both sides, politicians, military commanders, families on the homefront, etc.

Reading and Questions (Answers)

1. What happened in Wilmer McLean's parlor?
 - Robert E. Lee surrendered to Ulysses S. Grant on April 9, 1865.
2. What were the terms of surrender offered to Robert E. Lee by Ulysses S. Grant?
 - The Confederate soldiers had to surrender their guns and promise never to fight against the United States again, but they could take their horses and return home without fear of being tried for treason. Officers like Lee were allowed to keep their side arms.
3. What challenges did former slaves face in the South after the war?
 - Answers may include difficulty finding work, the Freedmen's Bureau shutting down, continued racism and violence from white southerners, and difficulties of caused by the unjust Black Codes.

Activities

Activity 1: Civil War Timeline

Your child will add events to his timeline. Encourage him to create his own timeline cards for any events that he wants to include that do not already have pre-made cards. He will add the 13th, 14th and 15th Amendments, Lee's surrender, and the assassination of Abraham Lincoln. He may also add additional cards that he has created based on the readings.

Activity 2: Reconstruction Amendments

Your child will read the text of the 13th, 14th, and 15th amendments and then summarize them in his own words and write about why each was important. He should have a dictionary handy for this activity so that he can look up any words that are unfamiliar. You may want to be available to help your child with these readings as well.

Activity 3: The Meaning of Freedom

In this activity, your child will compare and contrast the experiences of an imagined family living in slavery with the experiences of the same family after emancipation.

Option 1

In Option 1 your child will show the changes from slavery to freedom in detailed drawings showing significant details mentioned in the books he has read for this unit. Your child's drawing may emphasize how much things changed after emancipation or it might show what remained the same. For example, he may show a scene of a slave auction with families being torn apart in one image and a happy reunion in the other, or he may show a family doing field work on a large plantation in both images with more minor changes such as the absence of an abusive overseer after emancipation or some of the family's children heading to school instead of to the fields. Whatever your child draws, talk to him about his images and be sure that he understands that emancipation was a tremendous cause for celebration, allowing families to reunite and (for a brief period) African Americans to participate in the political process in the South, but that African-American families still faced racism and discrimination and often still did similar work under challenging conditions after freedom was declared.

Option 2

In Option 2, your child will write use a plot diagram to outline of a fictional story that reveals similar contrasts through a narrative instead of images. Option 2 may take longer to create, but it will allow students who enjoy creative writing to develop their own fictional account and try their hand at writing historical fiction. Your child's story may emphasize how much things changed after emancipation or it might show what remained the same. For example, he may describe a slave auction with a family being torn apart at the beginning of the story and conclude with a happy reunion, or he may describe the family's hard work on a plantation both before and after slavery, mentioning more subtle differences such as the availability of schools or the transition from slave labor to sharecropping. Whatever your child writes, talk to him about his choices and be sure that he understands that emancipation was a tremendous cause for celebration, allowing families to reunite and (for a brief period) African Americans to participate in the political process in the south, but that African-American families still faced racism and discrimination and often still did similar work under challenging conditions after freedom was declared.

Wrapping Up**Questions to Discuss**

- Why do you think the North won the Civil War?
- What did the Reconstruction amendments accomplish? (The 13th amendment prohibited slavery. The 14th amendment affirmed that all Americans have equal protection under the law. The 15th amendment affirmed that all citizens have the right to vote.)
- When the war ended, how did life change for people who had been slaves in the antebellum period? Did anything remain similar? Did they face any new challenges or dangers? (Your child should understand that emancipation meant freedom from slavery — all people were considered free and equal under the law and former slaves could reunite their families, move if they chose to do so, and vote in the years immediately following the Civil War. But the Civil War did not end racism or mean an end to hardship. Your child should understand that many African Americans needed education, land, housing, and jobs to be successful and many people continued working on the same plantations where they had been slaves, often for little pay and under harsh conditions.)

Things to Review

Read your child's summary of the Reconstruction Amendments and be sure that he understands the meaning and importance of each.

Pay special attention to your child's creative response to Activity 3. Take the time to talk about the choices he made, the emotional impact he tried to convey, and the incidents that he chose to depict in his drawings or story outline.