Unit Title: The Rise and Fall of Reconstruction in Virginia

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School: ACPS
Time Estimated 7 to 10 days (50 minute classes)

Overview:
In this unit, a heterogeneous group of 4th grade students will examine the efforts made in Virginia to restore order following the Civil War, in the period known as Reconstruction. Previously, students have studied the Civil War and the surrender at Appomattox Court House. In this unit, they will examine the effectiveness of those efforts at Reconstruction, and how people in Virginia reacted to the dramatic changes unfolding at the time. Lessons will include primary documents to help expand student’s knowledge base and build vocabulary associated with the events.

Historical Background:
After the Civil War, the South had to rebuild its land, economy, and social structure. To help in the Reconstruction, Congress established the Freedmen's Bureau on March 3, 1865 placing it under the jurisdiction of the War Department. The Bureau was designed to provide aid to 4,000,000 newly freed African Americans in their transition from slavery to freedom. This included helping them find new homes and employment, improving educational opportunities, and providing health facilities. It could be considered the first federal welfare agency. One of the primary functions of the Bureau was to address the day-to-day problems of the freedmen and destitute whites. Numerous requests were received for aid in finding clothing, food, jobs, homes, and care for orphans and the aged. The Bureau had notable success in the education and health areas creating over 4,000 schools and 100 hospitals, but it was unable to establish lasting civil rights for African Americans.

Andrew Johnson became President after Lincoln’s assassination. As a politician with racist views and a proponent of states rights, he supported a lenient amnesty for ex-Confederates and though he supported abolition, he did not believe blacks should have the right to vote. Johnson’s stubborn refusal to compromise placed him constantly at odds with Congress who believed that ex-Confederates should be punished, ex-slaves should have civil rights, and provided with services to ease the transition from slavery to freedmen. When Civil Rights legislation was passed, Johnson vetoed it. A bitter power struggle ensued over the direction of Reconstruction and ultimately resulted in the impeachment of Johnson.

While these two parties were feuding, the South was struggling to recover. After the war, Union troops (including some African Americans) patrolled most southern cities. The white citizenry resented their occupation and conflicts ensued. As ex-slaves took action to maintain freedom, the former ruling class developed methods to slow the process. Black codes known as Jim Crow Laws were instituted, the KKK terrorized blacks and their sympathizers, and unfair sharecropping practices continued to keep ex-slaves and
poor whites at an economic disadvantage. Additionally, entrepreneurs, known as carpetbaggers, inundated the area taking advantage of the war-torn South.

Reconstruction was unsuccessful for several reasons. Andrew Johnson missed an historic opportunity to effect dramatic reform in the South. Johnson not only supported racist views prevalent in the South, he ignored the violence and discrimination that prevailed. Succeeding Republican administrations failed to sustain the Congressional plan for Reconstruction which officially ended in 1876 when troops were withdrawn from the South. Additionally, white Southerners never adjusted their attitudes toward the changed status of the freedmen, and they were never held accountable for continued inhumane behaviors.

**Major Understanding:**
Abraham Lincoln designed a compassionate plan for Reconstruction in an attempt to restore order and stability in the South and unite the country as soon as possible. The plan ultimately failed because of the confrontational approach of Andrew Johnson, the waning commitment of succeeding Republican administrations to guarantee civil rights for freedmen, and concern about the expansion of federal powers.

**Objectives:** Students will:
1. Recognize the degree of destruction in the cities, farms, plantations, railroads, bridges, and banks in Virginia following the Civil War.
2. Understand how the Freedmen’s Bureau was organized in an attempt to help find jobs, homes, and schools for freed blacks and poor whites in Virginia.
3. Explain how sharecropping worked by putting together a puzzle of what was once a large plantation.
4. Understand that a new Constitution was written in Virginia following the Civil War.
5. Draw conclusions from primary source documents that state different views about how to rebuild the South after the Civil War.
6. Assess the effectiveness of Reconstruction and why it failed.
7. Recognize Jim Crow laws and segregation as an outcome of the failure of Reconstruction.

**Standards of Learning:**
**Knowledge:**
VS.8 The student will demonstrate knowledge of the Reconstruction of Virginia following the Civil War by:
a) identifying the effects of Reconstruction on life in Virginia
b) identifying the effects of segregation and Jim Crow on life in Virginia

**Skills:**
VS.1 The student will develop skills for historical and geographical analysis including the ability to
a. identify and interpret artifacts and primary and secondary source documents to understand events in history;
b. determine cause and effect relationships;
d. student will draw conclusions and make generalizations.
e. make connections between past and present.
f. sequence events in Virginia history.
g. interpret ideas and events from different historical perspectives.