



REUNITING A NATION

North, South faced enormous social, political challenges during Reconstruction

By Jason Navarro, Educator, Wheaton High School, Wheaton, Mo.

PRIMARY SOURCE

Critical Thinking

Most of the Civil War bushwhackers were killed during or shortly after the war. Some escaped to Mexico. A few went on to careers as outlaws. The most famous of these was Jesse James, who terrorized the Reconstruction era with his bank and train robberies. While James mostly cared about the money he could steal, he acted as if he cared about Reconstruction politics. In this letter, likely written by Jesse himself, he sought to justify his violence.

"Just let a party of men commit a bold robbery, and the cry is hang them, but Grant and his party can steal millions, and it is all right... Some editors call us thieves. We are not thieves — we are bold robbers. It hurts me very much to be called a thief. It makes me feel like they were trying to put me on a par with Grant and his party. We are bold robbers, and I am proud of the name, for Alexander the Great was a bold robber, and Julius Caesar, and Napoleon Bonaparte, and Sir William Wallace — not old Ben Wallace — and Robert Emmet. Please rank me with these, and not with the Grantites. Grant's party has no respect for anyone. They rob the poor and rich, and we rob the rich and give to the poor. I will close by hoping that Horace Greeley will defeat Grant, and then I can make an honest living, and then I will not have to rob, as taxes will not be so heavy."



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CRITICAL THINKING QUESTIONS

1. Why is this letter often called the "Robin Hood" letter?
2. What do you think the letter meant when it accused President Ulysses S. Grant and his party of "stealing millions?"
3. Why was Jesse James against Grant and his presidency?
4. Did Jesse James really care about politics? Why or why not?

SEARCH THE WEB

Following the Civil War, the reunited nation was faced with working through enormous social, political and economic issues. For an in-depth look at Reconstruction along with teacher lesson plans, timelines and much more, visit PBS at:

www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/reconstruction/



VOCABULARY

Place the letter of the vocabulary word on the line next to its definition. Write a sentence using each word.

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|-------------------|---------|---|
| A. Treason | ___ 1. | The process of reorganizing the former Confederate states back into the Union after the Civil War |
| B. Reconstruction | ___ 2. | To kill as a means of punishment |
| C. Assassinate | ___ 3. | Taking action against one's country |
| D. Disenfranchise | ___ 4. | Former slaves who were given freedom after the Civil War |
| E. Intimidate | ___ 5. | To combine and give equal opportunity |
| F. Scalawag | ___ 6. | Very unfriendly, characterized by ill will |
| G. Lenient | ___ 7. | Mild, not severe |
| H. Dispute | ___ 8. | To murder an important person, usually for political purposes |
| I. Execute | ___ 9. | Drastic or extreme |
| J. Supremacy | ___ 10. | Full personal rights of equality that come with citizenship |
| K. Segregation | ___ 11. | The power of an executive to reject a legislative action |
| L. Integrate | ___ 12. | To charge a public official with misconduct |
| M. Hostile | ___ 13. | A southerner who sympathized with the Republicans |
| N. Veto | ___ 14. | A northerner who moved to the South to participate in Reconstruction |
| O. Allegations | ___ 15. | To take away one's voting rights |
| P. Radical | ___ 16. | To scare by the use of force or threat of force |
| Q. Civil Rights | ___ 17. | Delicate; easily damaged or broken |
| R. Carpetbagger | ___ 18. | An argument or quarrel |
| S. Impeach | ___ 19. | Accusations of wrongdoing against someone that haven't been proved |
| T. Freedmen | ___ 20. | The process of separating the races |
| U. Fragile | ___ 21. | Highest in importance and rank |

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