

Presidential Advisory Committee to Andrew Johnson

By Barry Bachenheimer

Overview

This would be a pre-viewing activity for *The Rise and Fall of Jim Crow, Program One: Jim Crow Comes to Town (1864-1895)*. This lesson is a simulation of a meeting that "could have happened" in history. You have been asked by President Andrew Johnson to serve on a committee that will advise him on a "Reconstruction" program for the South and to propose suggestions about what the United States government should do about African Americans. This lesson will have groups of students' role play various members advising President Johnson in order for him to enact some policy decisions regarding African Americans.

Curriculum Standards

- Students will examine the Constitutional and Civil Rights issues involved with Reconstruction of the south after the Civil War
- Practicing public speaking

Time Required

Two to three class periods

Materials Needed

- "Letter" from Andrew Johnson (**provided below**)
- List of questions for committee to consider (should be placed on overhead projector)
- Role descriptions of committee members (**provided below**)

The Lesson

Anticipatory Set

A letter has been recovered that was allegedly written by President Lincoln before he was assassinated in regards to the future of the South after the Civil War. It reads: "Now that victory is near, I must make some difficult decisions. We have spent much of our wealth, much of our blood, and many tears during this terrible civil war. We must soon make a lasting peace between North and South, black and white, and rich and poor in order to preserve the union. Together we must all lead the nation to a brighter future." Based on this letter, President Johnson established the Presidential Reconstruction Advisory Committee.

Key question: Based upon Lincoln's letter, what specific things do you think need to be done to have a "lasting peace"?

Procedures

1. Discuss anticipatory set. (Note: If students have not studied the Civil War previously, this would be a good time to review the war, its causes, and its effects.)
2. Distribute "Letter from Andrew Johnson to students" and have them read it.
3. Distribute role playing cards to students. This may be done randomly or not. If you have more students than roles, create two committees with duplicate roles. Role playing cards **provided below**
4. Place the "key questions" on the overhead for student reference.

5. Place the students into the committees and have them discuss the key questions while in character. Their goal is to make a policy recommendation regarding African Americans to President Johnson.
6. When committees have reached a decision, have students "report out" to the President. (The teacher).
7. Have students go online to the jimcrowhistory.org Web Site to see "what really happened" and watch the first episode in *The Rise and Fall of Jim Crow: Jim Crow Comes to Town (1864-1895)*.

Assessment

1. Public speaking rubric provided below
2. Homework: In character, create a memo to President Johnson recommending to him a specific policy suggestion regarding African Americans along with reasons explaining why you think this policy is appropriate for the time period.

Interdisciplinary Connections

- Writing or speaking projects with language arts classes
- Video hearings if you have a TV production class

This lesson was submitted by Barry Bachenheimer, a social studies supervisor/teacher in Springfield, NJ.

(Letter from Andrew Johnson)

**The White House
Washington, DC**

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am appointing you to the Presidential Reconstruction Advisory Committee in order to help me rebuild the "New South" after our terrible civil war. Together with the other members of your committee, please make recommendations as to specific policies that should be enacted, especially in relation to African Americans. Key questions that you should consider are below:

1. Are the southerners who rebelled against the Union and who held slaves still to be considered citizens? Should they have the same rights and privileges as loyal Americans?
2. Are the newly freed slaves citizens? Should they have the same rights and privileges as white Americans?
3. How can I make sure that the South is governed by leaders who will be fair and just?
4. Should former slaves be allowed to vote?
5. Should former slave owners be paid for the loss of their "property"?
6. What can be done to protect slaves from vengeful whites?
7. What can be done to protect whites from vengeful ex-slaves?

I thank you in advance for your suggestions.

Truly yours,

Andrew Johnson
President of the United States of America

ROLES: Committee Members

1. Mr./Ms. Hardwick: 52- Rich Mill Owner from Delaware
Two of your sons fought in the war, and your youngest was killed while serving under General Grant. You manufacture shirts and have profited well from government war contracts. Those contracts have been cancelled since General Lee's surrender. Southern distributors still owe you \$40,000 in purchases made since before the war began.
2. Mr./Ms. Prescott: 58 -- Maryland Banker
You have many southern friends but always hated slavery and supported President Lincoln. Before the war, your bank made many loans to southern planters. Because of the war, these debts have not been repaid and you will lose your life savings if these southern planters don't pay back the \$180,000 they owe you.
3. Major General "Wildman" Wilson: 45 -- Union Army
Known for your coolness under fire, you are a highly decorated union army officer. One of your brigades was an all-black regiment. You believe that the southerners must be taught a lesson they will never forget. Though you admire and respect Robert E. Lee, you despise southern gentlemen and plantation owners. You have been quoted as saying that you would be happy to see them all hang from a tree.
4. Nurse Wilcox: 28 -- Bethesda Naval Hospital
You served as a nurse in a military hospital in Washington. You have seen enough blood and suffering to last you a lifetime. You believe in the mantra, "Forgive and Forget". You plan on going to the South to help educate freed black slaves as soon as this committee assignment is completed.
5. Senator York: 39 -- Republican from Indiana
You were elected with Lincoln and believe that there should be no slavery in the territories but that it could continue in the south. You believe that the leaders of the Confederacy are traitors and should be punished. You didn't serve in the army because you hired a substitute. You want to look good on this committee so you can be re-elected.
6. Ms. Eastland: 29 -- wife of a northern senator
You are a very vocal and active supporter of abolition and women's rights. Your father was a Union officer who was wounded in battle and now lives with you because he cannot take care of himself. You are very bitter about the changes made in your life by the war.
7. Mr./Ms. Goodman: 46 -- Deputy Secretary of Indian Affairs
You grew up in Washington where your father served in a cabinet position under President Jackson. You are married with two kids. Your husband/wife is from North Carolina and his/her wealthy plantation parents still live there. You received a letter from them saying that they survived the war, but their slaves ran off, money is running out, and life is very difficult.
8. Mr./Ms. Hooper: 37 -- The nation's best known black woman
You have published several books of poetry. Your family has lived in Boston since the revolution. You teach at a private girl's school and have never been politically active. Your major concern is that the newly emancipated slaves will not be able to survive freedom due to lack of education, money, and political power.
9. Reverend Stone: 43 -- Springfield, New Jersey
Deeply religious and chaplain of the 187th New Jersey Volunteers, you saw many men die and suffer wounds at Antietam. You went to college in Virginia and had several classmates who lived in the South. No one in your church was active in the abolition movement. You believe slavery is immoral, but that John Brown took things "too far".
10. Mr./Ms. Washington, Esq.: 35 -- New York City
Child of a runaway slave, you were educated at Yale University where you earned a law degree, were active in the Underground Railroad, and argued against enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Law. You were offered a commission in the U. S. Army but refused when you found that you would be assigned to an all-black regiment. You firmly believe in "liberty and justice for all," and you are deeply insulted when called "boy" or worse by

ignorant whites when you arrived in Washington to serve on the committee. Your brother was killed in South Carolina, fighting with the 54th Massachusetts.

	Score Point 1 Inadequate Command	Score Point 2 Limited Command	Score Point 3 Adequate Command	Score Point 4 Strong Command
Content/ Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has little or no focus on central idea or topic Offers insufficient or unrelated details May have an opening or closing - May have little or no conclusion/opinion Has little or no varied sentence structure and word choice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attempts to focus on a central idea or topic Lists related details but provides no elaborations May have an opening or closing Attempts to form a conclusion/opinion Has little varied sentence structure and word choice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conveys a central idea or topic Provides sufficient details; may have some elaboration Has an opening or closing Includes a conclusion/opinion that is linked to central idea or topic May use varied sentence structure and word choice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintains clear focus on a central idea or topic Elaborates details to support central idea Has an opening or closing Includes a clearly stated conclusion / opinion that is linked to central idea or topic Uses varied sentence structure and word choice
Delivery (Spoken)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exhibits little or no awareness of audience Speaks too softly or loudly with little or no expression; gives no evidence of pacing or intonation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exhibits some awareness of audience through minimal or excessive eye contact or gestures Speaks too softly or loudly with little or no expression; gives little evidence of pacing or intonation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attends to audience through eye contact and gestures Speaks audible with expression; attempts to use pacing and intonation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clearly attends to audience through good eye contact and gestures Speaks audibly with expression; uses pacing and intonation effectively

NR -- No response Student refuses or is unable to complete the speaking task

OT -- Off Topic The topic of the student's presentation is not linked to the speaking prompt
New Jersey State Department of Education