



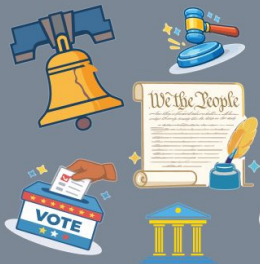
Student Workbook

Course 5

Grades 6–8

The Civil War
& the Fight to Live
Up to Our Ideals





The Civil War

& the Fight to Live Up to Our Ideals

Table of Contents

Chapter 1

Challenge to Founding Principles

Jump In: When America's Ideals Collided with Reality *page 2*

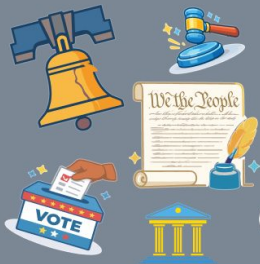
Show: When America's Promises Were Tested *pages 3-5*

Chapter 2

Growth Through Constitutional Change

Jump In: Freedom Had to Be Rebuilt *pages 6-7*

Show: Rewriting Freedom - The Reconstruction Amendments Challenge *pages 8-12*



The Civil War

& the Fight to Live Up to Our Ideals

Jump In

When America's Ideals Collided with Reality...

Imagine walking into a museum where the walls are covered with words like freedom, equality, and justice. As you move through the exhibits, you discover that many people in the country were denied those very rights.

How can a nation believe in equality while allowing inequality to continue?

This contradiction shaped life in the United States before the Civil War, as the nation struggled to reconcile its founding ideals with the reality of slavery and unequal treatment.

In chapter 3, you were asked whether the Preamble promises — justice, liberty, the general welfare — had been kept. The Civil War is where that question came to a breaking point.

In this chapter, you'll explore how the Civil War exposed the gap between America's ideals and reality, and why the effort to live up to those ideals continued long after the war ended.



Answer this question in the response box below:

Why do you think people continue to challenge unfair systems, even when change is difficult?

Civil War Contradictions

When America's Promises Were Tested...

Short Videos & Pre-Viewing Guide



54th Massachusetts Infantry [LOC]

Soldiers of one of the first Black regiments to fight for the Union, risking their lives for a country that did not yet recognize them as full citizens.

Pre-Viewing Guide

As you watch your selected video, consider these critical questions:

- Which American ideals are being challenged?
- Who was denied rights or freedoms?
- How does the event connect to the Declaration of Independence, Constitution, or Bill of Rights?
- What does this event reveal about the gap between America's ideals and reality?

Slavery & Freedom

- **Harriet Robinson Scott:** How Filing for Freedom Triggered the Civil War
- **Black Soldiers:** And the Fight for Citizenship
- **Harriet Tubman:** Civil War Spy
- **Did a Book Spark** the Civil War?

Human Experience

- **Battle for Bread:** The Southern Bread Riots
- **The Camera:** How Photography Exposed the Reality of War

Expanding Perspectives

- **Choosing Sides:** Native Americans and the Civil War
- **Battle for the West:** Territorial Conflict
- **Hot Air Balloons:** The Union's Secret Weapon

What is the title of the video you are selecting?

After previewing the short videos, select one for your reflection and analysis for questions 1-4 on the next pages.

Civil War Contradictions

Student Reflection & Analysis Guide

1. Founding Document

Which document connects most to the event? (circle one)

Declaration of Independence

U.S. Constitution

Bill of Rights

2. Key Ideal or Right

Which ideal or right is involved? (circle one or more)

- liberty
- equality
- citizenship
- freedom
- self-government

3. Contradictions in America's Ideals

Analyze how the event exposed a contradiction between America's ideals and reality.

Think carefully about the difference between what America promised in its founding documents and what people actually experienced during the Civil War era.

Ask yourself:

- Who was denied freedom, equality, citizenship, or protection?
- Which promises were not being fully upheld?
- How did this event expose unfairness or exclusion?

Your Analysis

(Answer below in 3-4 complete sentences)

Civil War Contradictions

Designing a Better Future

4. Propose a Solution or Change

Imagine you were a lawmaker, activist, or citizen during this time period. What change could have helped the country move closer to its ideals of liberty, equality, and self-government?

Your solution could involve:

- A new law
- A constitutional amendment
- A protection of rights
- A civic action or reform

Your Proposed Solution

(Answer below in 3-4 complete sentences)

Civil War Contradictions

Historian Self-Check

Become a Strong Historian

Strong historians do more than summarize events. They analyze contradictions, connect evidence to larger ideas, and think critically about how history could have unfolded differently.

Use this checklist before turning in your work to make sure your responses go beyond simple recall and show thoughtful historical thinking about freedom, equality, citizenship, and fairness.

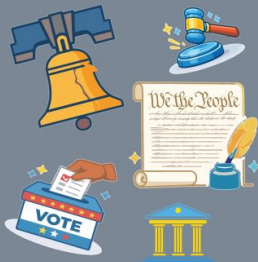
Before You Submit, Ask Yourself:

Review your written responses against the criteria below.

- ☐ I clearly connected the event to a founding document and explained why it mattered.
- ☐ I identified which American ideal or right was being challenged, limited, or denied.
- ☐ I explained the contradiction between America's promises and people's real experiences during the Civil War era.
- ☐ I proposed a realistic amendment, reform, law, or civic action that could help address the unfairness.
- ☐ My responses use evidence, complete sentences, and thoughtful historical reasoning — not just opinions.

Finished early?

If you finish early and have additional time, challenge yourself by selecting a second clip and completing another analysis.



The U.S. Constitution

Road Map for Freedom

Jump In Freedom Had to Be Rebuilt



Imagine your school announces a new rule: every student now has equal access to the library. But the library door stays locked most of the day. The only key belongs to someone who does not want you in there. And no adult ever checks whether the rule is being followed.

The rule is real. It is written down. Is it working?

That gap — between a promise written down and a promise kept — is the story of this entire chapter.

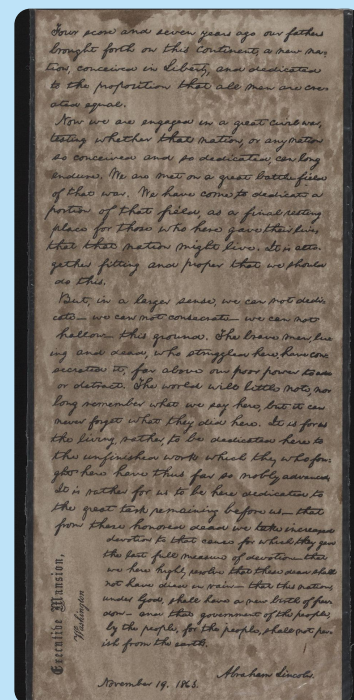
A Promise Made in the Middle of a War

In November 1863, the Civil War was only half over. Nobody knew who was going to win.

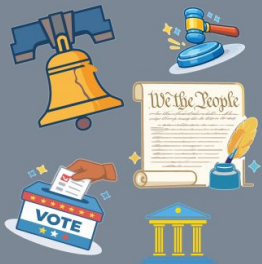
President Abraham Lincoln traveled to a battlefield near Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, where more than 50,000 soldiers had been killed, wounded, or gone missing in three days of fighting. In a speech that lasted about two minutes, he said the war was no longer only about holding the country together. It was a test of whether a nation founded on the idea that "all men are created equal" could survive at all.

He said the country deserved "a new birth of freedom."

Lincoln made that promise in the middle of the war. He did not live to see what happened to it. The Union won in April 1865 — and five days after the fighting stopped, Lincoln was assassinated. The job of turning his promise into law fell to Congress, to the states, and to the American people.



This is the whole speech, in Lincoln's handwriting. Lincoln spoke for about two minutes.



The U.S. Constitution

Road Map for Freedom



Jump In Freedom Had to Be Rebuilt

Reflect

1. Lincoln called for a "new birth of freedom." Why do you think he chose the word new? Wasn't freedom already supposed to be part of the country's promise?

2. Think back to the library rule at the beginning of this lesson. What would have to change before that rule became real for every student? What does that tell you about laws in general?

Rewriting Freedom:

The Reconstruction Amendments Challenge

What You're Doing

After the Civil War, Congress changed the Constitution three times in five years. The 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments abolished slavery, defined citizenship, and protected voting rights.

This was a huge step but the amendments were also incomplete. Each amendment contained words that left someone out.

Today, you are a lawmaker in 1868. You'll read the actual words, find the limit, and rewrite it to protect more people.

What "Realistic" Means Here

Your revision has to be something people in the 1860s could actually have argued for. This leaves plenty of room!

Voting rights for women were openly debated while the 15th Amendment was being written. Giving land to freed families was proposed, then taken back. Removing the 13th's exception was as simple as deleting six words.

This is a simulation — you are imagining 1868 going differently to protect more people.

The Reconstruction Amendments

Before you start, read all three amendments below. They work together — a change you make to one may affect what you want to do with another.

13th Amendment (1865)

*"Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, **except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted**, shall exist..."*

In plain words: Slavery is illegal — unless a person has been convicted of a crime.

14th Amendment (1868)

*"All persons born or naturalized... and **subject to the jurisdiction thereof**, are citizens... No State shall... deny... equal protection..."*

In plain words: Almost everyone born here is a citizen, and states must treat people fairly.

15th Amendment (1870)

*"The right... to vote shall not be denied... on **account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude**."*

In plain words: States cannot stop a man from voting because of race or former enslavement.

How to Do This — An Example

Remember the library rule from the beginning of this chapter?

The Rule: "Every student has equal access to the library."

The Gap: It says students have access. It doesn't say the library has to be open, or who enforces it.

The Rewrite: "Every student has equal access to the library. The library must be open during school hours, and the principal is responsible for enforcing this rule."

Why It's Better: The first version was a promise. The second version says who has to actually do something.

The Formula: Find the gap → Change the words → Explain who it protects.

You'll do this three times — once for each amendment. Make sure your version still sounds like a law!

The 13th Amendment (1865)

*"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."*

Find the gap → change the words → explain who it protects.

1. What did this amendment do?

.....

2. That sentence has an exception in the middle of it. What did the exception allow states to do?

.....

.....

3. Underline the words in the amendment that created the problem.

4. Write your version. Finish the starter, or write your own from scratch.

"Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude _____
_____ shall exist within the United States."

5. Why is your version better? Who would it have protected?

.....

.....

.....

Word Bank

Stuck on question 2 or 5? Any of these may help. Refer back here for the 14th and 15th amendment rewrites as well.

women • Native Americans living on tribal lands • the "punishment for crime" exception • convict leasing • Black Codes • the Ku Klux Klan • threats and violence at the polls • poll taxes • reading tests • grandfather clauses • no land, money, or schools for newly freed families

The 14th Amendment (1868)

Find the gap → change the words → explain who it protects.

*"All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and **subject to the jurisdiction thereof**, are citizens of the United States... No State shall... deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws."*

1. What did this amendment do?

.....

2. This amendment made almost everyone born here a citizen — but not quite everyone. Which group was not covered?

.....

.....

3. Underline the words in the amendment that created the problem.

4. Write your version. Finish the starter, or write your own from scratch.

"All persons born or naturalized in the United States _____
_____ are citizens of the United States."

5. Why is your version better? Who would it have protected?

.....

.....

Word Bank

Stuck on question 2 or 5? Any of these may help.

women • Native Americans living on tribal lands • the "punishment for crime" exception • convict leasing • Black Codes • the Ku Klux Klan • threats and violence at the polls • poll taxes • reading tests • grandfather clauses • no land, money, or schools for newly freed families

The 15th Amendment (1870)

*"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.**"*

Find the gap → change the words → explain who it protects.

1. What did this amendment do?

.....

2. This amendment gives a list of reasons a state cannot use to stop someone from voting. Whose is still excluded from voting rights?

.....

3. Underline the words in the amendment above that created the problem.

4. Write your version. Finish the starter, or write your own from scratch.

"The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged...

on account of

5. Why is your version better? Who would it have protected?....."

.....

.....

One More Thing

The 15th Amendment said states could not stop a man from voting because of his race. But many Black men still could not vote. What got in the way? Name at least two things from the lesson.

Would your revision have fixed that problem? Why or why not?

Assessment Rubric

Criteria	Reconstruction Scholar 3 pts	Historical Thinker 2 pts	Emerging Historian 1 pt
Understanding the Amendments	You clearly explain what each amendment did and name the specific freedom, protection, or right it created.	You explain most amendments correctly. Some details are unclear or missing. Next step: name the specific right each one created.	Your explanations are incomplete or mixed up. Next step: reread the text on each page and match each amendment to one right.
Finding the Limits	You name specific groups who were left out and specific barriers that got in the way, using evidence from the lesson.	You name some limits, but they are general rather than specific. Next step: name <i>who</i> was affected and <i>how</i> .	You name few or no limits. Next step: use the word bank below.
Rewriting & Reasoning	Your revision changes the actual wording, fits what lawmakers could have argued for in the 1860s, and your explanation connects it to liberty, equality, or citizenship.	Your revision makes sense, but the wording or the reasoning needs more detail. Next step: explain who your version would have protected.	Your revision is unclear, or doesn't change the wording, or has no reasoning attached. Next step: try the starter sentences.

Score Guide

- **8–9 points** → **Reconstruction Scholar**. You showed strong historical thinking and a real understanding of how constitutional language works.
- **5–7 points** → **Historical Thinker**. Good understanding and analysis. Push your reasoning one level deeper.
- **3–4 points** → **Emerging Historian**. You're building your understanding of Reconstruction and constitutional change.