

NAME _____ DATE _____

Performance Task – Tying Evidence to Thesis: Reconstruction & Identity

Goal of task

Target Concept: I can incorporate evidence from primary source materials to support a thesis. I can explain the cultural context underpinning the developments of southern resistance to Reconstruction, sharecropping, and segregation, and explain how these developments affected African American identity during Reconstruction.

For this task, you will be evaluated on your ability to:

- Use the audience, point of view, purpose, or historical context of a document to make supportable inferences based on the context of the material.
- Explain the cultural context underpinning the political and economic developments of Southern resistance to Reconstruction, sharecropping, and segregation from 1865 to 1877, and how these developments affected African American identity during Reconstruction.

Task summary

The activities in this building block are designed to assist you in using extended analysis, including analyzing primary source materials for historical context, audience, purpose, and point of view, in supporting a thesis on a free response prompt like the Document-Based Question (DBQ). Additionally, you will further examine how the Civil War and Reconstruction shaped the identity of African Americans on aspirational and practical levels as they struggled to find a place in the larger society.

Activity 1: Analysis of United States Census Data in 1870 (individual and class share)

- Working on your own, take three minutes to analyze the 1870 census data of the states that had seceded at the onset of the Civil War. Using the data and your knowledge of the time period 1860 to 1877, identify one or two challenges that African Americans might encounter in finding a place in Southern society. In analyzing the data, think about the relative percentage of each racial group in a particular state and the primary reason for the Civil War. Also consider the demands that were made by the newly freed and enfranchised peoples.

State Population by Race (1870)

State	Whites	African American
Alabama	521,384	475,510
Arkansas	362,115	122,169
Florida	96,057	91,689
Georgia	688,926	545,142
Louisiana	362,065	364,210
Mississippi	382,896	444,201
North Carolina	678,470	391,650
South Carolina	289,667	415,814
Tennessee	936,110	322,331
Texas	564,700	253,475
Virginia	712,089	512,841

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, http://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/1880a_v1-13.pdf

- Share your observations with the class.
- How might the demographic realities in the South have influenced African American thinking about their identity as freemen and Americans? Be prepared to have an explanation to support your thinking. Share your thinking with the class.

Activity 2: Analysis of Three Documents on the Changing African American Identity in the South (share-pair and individual)

1. Working with a partner, one person will read and analyze the Civil Rights Act of 1866 and the other person will read and analyze the letter from Melton R. Linton to *The South Carolina Leader*. Frame your analysis through the question: **How would the end of the Civil War alter African Americans identity as Southerners and Americans?** Use the HAPP-Y document analysis sheet to help you complete an extended analysis of the document. When done, discuss your analysis of the document and how you might use it to understand how African Americans were changing their sense of place and identity in the South of during Reconstruction.

1866 Civil Rights Act [edited]

April 9, 1866 A.D.

An Act to protect all Persons in the United States in their Civil Rights, and furnish the Means of their Vindication

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That all persons born in the United States and not subject to any foreign power ... are hereby declared to be citizens of the United States; and such citizens, of every race and color, without regard to any previous condition of slavery or involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime ..., shall have the same right, in every State and Territory in the United States ... as is enjoyed by white citizens ...

Sec. 2. *And be it further enacted,* That any person who, under color of any law, statute, ordinance, regulation, or custom, shall subject ... any inhabitant of any State or Territory to the deprivation of any right secured or protected by this act, or to different punishment ... on account of such person having at any time been held in a condition of slavery or involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime ..., or by reason of his color or race, than is prescribed for the punishment of white persons, shall be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor, and, on conviction, shall be punished by fine not exceeding one thousand dollars, or imprisonment not exceeding one year, or both, in the discretion of the court. ...

Source: *Civil Rights Act 1866 (Statutes at Large, 39th Cong., 1st sess., p. 27ff)*. <http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=llsl&fileName=014/llsl014.db&recNum=58>

Document Author or Source:		Y: Why does this help you answer the question?
H: Historical Context		
A: Intended Audience		
P: Purpose		
P: Point of View		
<p>Which of the components best helps you answer the prompt? Explain why.</p>		

Letter from Melton R. Linton to a the *South Carolina Leader*

The South Carolina Leader was an African American-owned Republican newspaper published in Charleston, SC from 1865 to 1876. The newspaper was committed to the “interests of free labor and general reform.” At its peak, the newspaper claimed 2,000 subscriptions and was distributed in South Carolina, North Carolina, and Georgia. It reported on national and regional stories of interest to the African American community, including education and suffrage rights.

Edisto Island, March 26, 1866

Mr. Editor:

I hope soon to be called a citizen of the U.S. and have the rights of a citizen. I am opposed myself to working under a contract. I am as much at liberty to hire a white man to work as he to hire me. I expect to stay in the South after I am mustered out of service, but not to hire myself to a planter.

I have seen some men hired who were turned off without being paid. They try to pull us down faster than we can climb up. They have no reason to say that we will not work, for we raised them and sent them to school and bought their land. Now it is as little as they can do to give us some of their land—be it little or much.

Melton R. Linton, Co. H. 35th Regiment,
U. S. Colored Troops

Source: *South Carolina Leader*, March 31, 1866, cited at <https://chnm.gmu.edu/courses/122/recon/linton.html>

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- Working on your own, read and analyze Robert B. Elliott on Civil Rights (1874). Use the HAPP-Y document analysis sheet.

Robert B. Elliott on Civil Rights (1874)

Robert B. Elliott was a prominent black politician, who appears to have been born in England, and came to Boston before the Civil War. He moved to South Carolina in 1867, established a law office, and was elected to several offices including the U.S. House of Representatives, in the 1870s. This speech was made on the floor of the House in support of the bill that eventually became the Civil Rights Act of 1875.

... Sir, equality before the law is now the broad, universal, glorious rule and mandate of the Republic. No State can violate that. Kentucky and Georgia may crown their state-books with retrograde and barbarous legislation; ... but if Congress shall do its duty, if Congress shall enforce the great guarantees, ... then their unwise and unenlightened conduct will fall with the same weight upon the gentlemen from those States who now lend their influence to defeat this [Civil Rights] bill, as upon the poorest slave who once had no rights which the honorable gentlemen were bound to respect. . . .

. . . I have the honor in part to represent . . . the race which pleads for justice at your hands to-day, forgetful of their inhuman and brutalizing servitude at the South their degradation and ostracism at the North [they] flew willingly and gallantly to the support of the national government. Their sufferings, assistance, privations, and trials in the swamps and in the rice-fields, their valor on the land and on the sea, is a part of the ever-glorious record which makes us the history of a nation preserved, and might . . . incline you to respect and guarantee their rights and privileges as citizens of our common Republic. But I also remember that valor, devotion, and loyalty are not always rewarded according to their just desserts, and that after the battle some who have borne the brunt of the fray may . . . be assigned to a subordinate place, while the enemies in war may be preferred to the sufferers.

The results of the war, as seen in reconstruction, have settled forever the political status of my race. The passage of this bill will determine the civil status, not only of the negro, but of any other class of citizens who may feel themselves discriminated against. It will form the cap-stone of that temple of liberty, begun on this continent under discouraging circumstances, carried on in spite of the sneers of monarchists and the cavils of pretended friends of freedom, until at last it stands in all its beautiful symmetry and proportions, a building the grandest which the world has ever seen, realizing the most sanguine expectations and the highest hopes of those who, in the name of equal, impartial, and universal liberty, laid the foundation stones.

Source: Civil Rights. Speech of Hon. Robert B. Elliott, of South Carolina in the House of Representatives, January 6, 1874 (Washington, DC, 1874), pp. 1-8; cited in Voices of Freedom, ed. Eric Foner (New York: Norton, 2008), pp. 26-29.

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Check your understanding

- How do the documents inform your understanding of how the end of the Civil War affected the notion of place and identity African Americans had during Reconstruction?

- How might Melton R. Linton's ideas of equality differ from that of Elliott? What ideas might they share?

Activity 3: Apply your understanding

1. Use your HAPP-Y document analysis sheets to respond to following prompt in an argumentative paragraph.

To what extent did the end of the Civil War and Federal government actions alter the expectations and realities of African Americans in the South?

2. Be sure to cite evidence from your documents to support your thesis.
3. Be sure to explain the significance of one of the categories from your HAPP-Y chart for each document to your thesis.
4. Provide additional examples or specific evidence beyond those found in the documents to support or qualify your claim.
This might include:
 - Ku Klux Klan
 - Sharecropping
 - Slaughterhouse cases
 - U.S. v. Reese
 - U.S. v. Cruikshank
 - Mississippi Plan
 - Exodusters
 - Election of 1876