



History

Paper 1K (AS) Specimen Question Paper

Question 02 Student 2

Specimen Answer and Commentary

V1.0 11/11/15

Specimen Answer plus commentary

The following student response is intended to illustrate approaches to assessment. This response has not been completed under timed examination conditions. It is not intended to be viewed as a 'model' answer and the marking has not been subject to the usual standardisation process.

Paper 1K (AS): Specimen question paper

02 'The end of Reconstruction by 1877 was due to the violence of the Southern segregationists.'

Explain why you agree or disagree with this view.

[25 marks]

Student response

The age of reconstruction following the American Civil War lasted twelve years but finally ended up in failure. In my opinion, there were four factors that caused the failure, which were Southern segregationists' opposition to Republican Party, weakness of Republican Party, Republican War weariness and, as well, US President Johnson's actions and personality. Among all, I personally think that the unwillingness for Southerners to accept African-Americans as their equals is the main cause of the end and failure of reconstruction.

These Southern segregationists included white terrorists groups such as the Ku Klux Klan and the White League. The Southern blacks faced intimidation and violence from KKK, especially the white racists, were active in several states, threatening African Americans not to vote by beating and lynching the people. In the summer of 1866 there were major race riots in Memphis, New Orleans and other Southern cities and as a result, nearly a hundred African Americans were killed with their houses damaged. Additionally, another 1000 freedmen were killed in 1868, Louisiana, which was supported by the police. The violence forced the black to vote for Democrats, therefore a large amount of 'support' was transferred from Republicans to Democrats.

On the other hand, there were also 'redeemers' in the South who fought for 'redemption', to free the Southern states from Republican governments was their aim and they were made up mostly by powerful conservative Southern Democrats. It was the entrenched belief in hierarchy (keeping slavery) and unwillingness to accept new reform that made many Southerners oppose to Republican Party. Finally, by 1876, all but 2 Southern states had Democratic restored, which suggests how strongly the Southern Democrats are opposed to Republicans and it was the main reason why the radical reconstruction failed.

Some actions the US President Johnson made have contributed to the failure as well. As he wanted to restore the Southern states as quickly as possible, he favoured leniency and even had no wish to promote the position of ex-slaves. He introduced the Black Codes which were laws passed by South that restricted African Americans' rights and freedom, plus his veto against the Freedom Bureau. These made the course of Radical Equality even harder. Moreover, he tried to stop old Aristocracy but actually did not take any action; he eventually issued approximately 13,000 pardons to Southerners in order to make Confederate return to political office. Johnson is generally considered among the worst American presidents for his opposition to federally guarantee rights for African Americans, which leads to the failure of reconstruction.

Alternatively, some might argue that the incapable Republican Party was the most responsible factor.

Although the new elected President was successful in many respects, such as his military victories in the civil war, Grant's terms in office were dominated by many serious scandals, which affected the Republicans Government unfavourably. Grant's position was also weakened by the economic depression that followed the stock market panic of 1873. Furthermore, the Indian Issue, the outbreaks of war in Red River and the Black Hills War, distracted him from concentrating on reconstruction. More importantly, wide-spread corruption, among Southern Republicans disappointed many voters.

Finally, the Republican War weariness – the troop withdrawal from Southern military districts effectively ended the reconstruction. After the Civil Rights Acts of 1875, there were many sympathisers with Southern opposition and some Liberal Republicans were reluctant to keep on using federal troops (20,000 soldiers) to suppress Southern discontent because of the huge amount of money spent maintaining it. There was also an Amnesty Act of 1872 that allowed many ex-Confederates to return to political life, which fastened the collapse of reconstruction.

Overall, all of the 4 factors contributed to the end of reconstruction, however, the violence of the Southern segregationists was the main cause. While the war weariness was important to some extent, this could not have happened without the division of five military districts which is involved in the Radical Reconstruction. It is also clear that the Radical Reconstruction directed by Congress could not have existed if Johnson had been competent enough to take charge of the reconstruction. In this time period, many 'Acts' which related to the violence of the Southern segregationists, or to say, the Southerners' perception of racial inequality, were issued, therefore, it was the main problem of reconstruction as well as the main cause.

Commentary – Level 5

This is a strong and effective answer. The introduction clearly sets out the argument and conclusion to be assessed. It makes a perceptive distinction between violent and non-violent Southerners and how each opposed Reconstruction. The rest of the response is comprehensive dealing appropriately with a range of issues. The answer would be enhanced with slightly more supporting information, and it is not always accurate: Johnson did not introduce Black Codes, for example. It does not develop fully what would have been an excellent point made only in the conclusion, that a different type of Reconstruction might have worked. Despite the limitations, this is an excellent response.