After the Civil War, Virginia was a very different place. The war caused a lot of destruction. Towns, cities, bridges, railroads, crops, buildings, homes, and much more had been destroyed or damaged during the war. Virginia was a wreck. Virginians faced serious problems in rebuilding the state after the Civil War.

**WHAT IS RECONSTRUCTION?**

Reconstruction was the period of time following the Civil War in which Congress passed laws designed to help rebuild the country and bring the southern states back into the Union.

Virginians had to begin the long difficult job of rebuilding their communities and rejoining the United States. It took many years to rebuild Virginia’s government and communities. Reconstruction lasted until Virginia finally rejoined the United States.

**WERE AFRICAN AMERICANS TREATED FAIRLY DURING RECONSTRUCTION?**

Yes, at first. During Reconstruction, African Americans began to have power in Virginia’s government, and men of all races could vote. African American men held elected offices as well as were able to vote for the first time in our history.

**WHAT PROBLEMS DID AFRICAN AMERICAN VIRGINIANS FACE DURING RECONSTRUCTION?**

Millions of freed African Americans needed:

- housing
- education
- food
- clothing
- jobs
WHAT PROBLEMS DID VIRGINIANS FACE DURING RECONSTRUCTION?

Virginia’s economy was in ruins. The money issued by the Confederacy was worthless. The money they had had no value.

Banks were closed

WHAT HAD BEEN DESTROYED DURING THE CIVIL WAR?

- railroads
- bridges
- plantations
- crops

WHAT WAS DONE TO HELP SOLVE THESE PROBLEMS?

To help free African Americans and others in Virginia, the Freedman’s Bureau (it was named this because former slaves were known as freedmen and freedwomen) was a government agency that offered food, schools, and medical care to former slaves. The
Freedman’s Bureau provided food, medical care, and schools for freed African Americans and others in Virginia.

**SHARE CROPPING DEVELOPED. WHAT IS SHARECROPPING?**

Sharecropping was a system very common in Virginia after the war in which freemen and poor white farmers rented land from a landowner by promising to pay back the owner with a share of the crop.

A **Sharecropper** was a person who rented land, farmed it, and paid the landowner with a share of the crop.

In return for a share of the crops, landowners provided the sharecroppers with small houses.

Landowners might also give them mules, tools, and seeds on credit. After the crop was sold, the landowner took part of the money, usually half, along with the money owed for supplies.

Most sharecroppers often earned barely enough money to survive.

**AFTER THE CIVIL WAR, WHEN DID VIRGINIA FINALLY REJOIN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA?**

In January of 1870, Virginia once again became part of the United States of America. This marked the end of Reconstruction in Virginia.

**AFTER RECONSTRUCTION, DID THE GAINS THAT AFRICAN AMERICANS MADE DURING RECONSTRUCTION CONTINUE?**

No. After Reconstruction these gains were lost. Some people in Virginia and in the south did not believe that African Americans should have the same rights as white people. In time former slave owners and Confederates took back control of the state
government. They passed laws that would limit or take away rights and freedom from African Americans.

These laws were called “Jim Crow” Laws. These laws were intended to limited or take away the rights and freedom of African Americans.

“Jim Crow Laws” legally established segregation.

WHAT IS SEGREGATION?

Segregation is the separation of the races, usually based on race or religion. Segregation reinforced prejudices held by white people. (You learned about this when you studied Martin Luther King Jr.) It is separation based on race or religion.

WHAT IS DISCRIMINATION?

Discrimination is the unfair difference in the treatment of people usually based on race or religion.

WHAT EFFECT DID “JIM CROW” LAWS HAVE ON AFRICAN AMERICAN?

“Jim Crow” laws made it very difficult for African Americans to vote or hold public office. Because few could vote, African American men lost their say in government. They lost the power they had gained during Reconstruction.

“Jim Crow” laws were a way to get around the law. It was illegal to keep any man from voting. So to get around this, Southern states, like Virginia established unfair laws to keep African American men from voting. Examples of these unfair “Jim Crow” laws were poll Taxes and voting tests.

POLL TAXES were taxes that people had to pay before they could vote. Many African Americans and poor whites could not afford to pay to vote.
**VOTING TESTS** were unfair tests that people were made to take before they could vote. People who wanted to vote had to apply in writing. The African Americans and poor who could not read or write could not pass this test and would not be allowed to vote.

You might also have to answer some questions. Often African Americans would be asked more difficult questions than that of whites. If they answered the question incorrectly they would not be allowed to vote.

Another example of “Jim Crow” laws occurred when law makers passed segregation laws. These laws forced African Americans to use separate, poor-quality facilities and services, such as drinking fountains, restrooms, and restaurants.

African Americans and white children attended different schools.

**WHAT EFFECT DID “JIM CROW” LAWS HAVE ON AMERICANS INDIANS?**

“Jim Crow” laws also had a negative effect on American Indians. These laws both segregated and discriminated against American Indians.

**WHAT CHANGES TOOK PLACE IN VIRGINIA TO HELP THE ECONOMIC GROWTH ($) AFTER THE CIVIL WAR AND HELPED BRING AN END TO THE TIME OF RECONSTRUCTION?**

After the Civil War, Virginia began to grow in many ways.

Virginia’s cities grew with people, businesses, and factories.
Railroads were the key to expansion of business, agriculture, and industry.

Railroads facilitated the growth of small towns to cities.

WHAT ELSE CAUSED VIRGINIA TO GROW?

Other parts of Virginia grew as other industries developed. In Tazewell County, coal deposits were discovered.

As Virginia grew, the need for more and better roads increased.

Tobacco farming and the manufacture of tobacco products became an important Virginia Industries.