

Name _____

Family _____

USHG-Mr. Tavarez

Date _____

Winter Break Packet: How do we remember Reconstruction?

Objective: What shaped the memory and legacy of Reconstruction? How do we remember Reconstruction?

Brain Dump: Answer the four reflection questions below.

1) What do the words *memory* and *legacy* mean?

2) How or why does our memory of some events change over time?

3) Whose job is it to make sure that the memory and legacy of Reconstruction is kept alive and shared with future generations?

4) What about the story of Reconstruction do you think is most important for people to remember today?

Excerpted from *Black Reconstruction in America* (1935)

Sourcing/Contextualization: W.E.B. DuBois was an African American historian and civil rights activist, most active during the early to mid 1900's. He was one of the founders of the NAACP.

What are American children taught today about Reconstruction?...[A]n American youth attending college today would learn from current textbooks of history that the Constitution recognized slavery; that the chance of getting rid of slavery by peaceful methods was ruined by the Abolitionists; that after the period of Andrew Jackson, the two sections of the United States “had become fully conscious of their conflicting interests. Two irreconcilable forms of civilization...[with] the democratic...in the South, a more stationary and aristocratic civilization.” He would read that Harriet Beecher Stowe brought on the Civil War... and that Negroes were the only people to achieve emancipation with no effort on their part. That Reconstruction was a disgraceful attempt to subject white people to ignorant Negro rule...

In other words, he would in all probability complete his education without any idea of the part which the black race has played in America; of the tremendous moral problem of abolition; of the cause and meaning of the Civil War...

...If history is going to be scientific, if the record of human action is going to be set down with the accuracy and faithfulness of detail which will allow its use as a measuring rod and guidepost for the future of nations, there must be set some standards of ethics in research and interpretation.

If, on the other hand, we are going to use history for our pleasure and amusement, for inflating our national ego, and giving us a false but pleasurable sense of accomplishment, then we must give up the idea of history as a science or as an art using the results of science, and admit frankly that we are using a version of historic fact in order to influence and educate the new generation along the way we wish.

It is propaganda like this that has led men in the past to insist that history is “lies agreed upon”; and to point out the danger in such misinformation. It is indeed extremely doubtful if any permanent benefit comes to the world through such action. Nations reel and stagger on their way; they make hideous mistakes; they commit frightful wrongs; they do great and beautiful things. And shall we not best guide humanity by telling the truth about all this, so far as the truth is ascertainable?

Analysis Questions:

1) *Sourcing and Contextualization:* Who is the author of this excerpt?

2) *Close Reading and Analysis:* What concern does the author express about the memory and/or legacy of Reconstruction in the first two paragraphs?

3) *Close Reading:* Explain the debate the author poses in the third and fourth paragraphs. How does that debate relate to the concerns he mentions in the first two paragraphs?

4) *Analysis:* What does the phrase “history is lies agreed upon” mean?

5) *Analysis:* Based on this excerpt, how do you think the author would suggest we remember Reconstruction as a society?
