



Public Relations Director: The Reconstruction Era

Adventure Description:

In this adventure, students will think like a public relations director and create a press release for a new museum exhibit on Reconstruction.

Activity

Step 1: Background on Reconstruction (5 minutes)

- Show [Video: Reconstruction](#).
- As a class, discuss how the Reconstruction Era was a time when the United States was rebuilding and recovering from the Civil War. Discuss how the United States had to rebuild because large areas of the South were destroyed after the Civil War. For example, many cities, railroads, bridges, roads, buildings, and homes were damaged.
- Ask students why they think the government wanted to help rebuild the South (e.g., the government wanted to bring the nation back together as quickly as possible, the South needed a lot of help to rebuild).

Step 2: Activity Set Up (5 minutes)

- Explain to students that they will imagine they are public relations directors who work at different history museums. They will read about three upcoming exhibits on Reconstruction and decide which one they want to create a press release for.
- Provide students with [Handout: Steps to Make a Press Release](#). As a class, read through the steps.
- Provide students with [Handout: Sources on Reconstruction](#). Students will use the sources in the next step.
- Teacher note: students can work in pairs, individually, or in small groups.

Step 3: Creating a Press Release (20+ minutes)

- Have students follow the steps to create their press release.
- As students are working, discuss the following:
 - Why is it important that we continue to study the Reconstruction Era today?
 - The 13th Amendment ended slavery, but it did not define freedom for African Americans. Why was the passage of more amendments needed?
 - What were freedmen and women able to do after Emancipation?
 - What obstacles challenged African Americans during the Reconstruction period?
 - Why were Southern whites so hostile towards African Americans and Reconstruction politics? How did they express that discontent?

Step 4: Responding to Negative Press (10 minutes)

- Explain to students that PR directors also respond to negative press about their projects.
- Show [Handout: Examples of Negative Press](#). Ask students how they would respond to each piece of negative press.
- Discuss how PR directors have to be very careful about how they respond to negative press. PR directors can't get into an online fight with someone that leaves a negative review on their museum. Instead, PR directors need to do their best to fix the problem that a reviewer had with the museum.

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- Explain to students that PR directors need to apologize to customers that had a bad experience, even if it was not the museum's fault. PR directors might offer a customer that had a bad experience in a museum to come back at a discounted rate or they might offer the customer a free lunch or parking voucher. Often, offering a discount or other gift can change a customer's opinion of the museum.
- Provide groups with [Handout: Responding to Negative Press](#). Explain to students that they will respond to each negative Twitter or Instagram post about the upcoming exhibit.
- As students are working, discuss the following:
 - Why is it important to have someone whose job is to respond to negative press for a business?
 - What might happen if a business did not respond to negative press?
 - How is responding to negative comments connected to a business similar or different from responding to negative comments on personal social media?

Materials List

Provided online:

- Video: Reconstruction
- Handout: Steps to Make a Press Release
- Handout: Sources on Reconstruction
- Handout: Examples of Negative Press
- Handout: Responding to Negative Press

Not Provided Online:

- Art Supplies
- Optional: Tablet or Smartphone

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