



Freedmen's Bureau Reading Comprehension

The Freedmen's Bureau was an agency created by the United States government in 1865, shortly before the end of the Civil War on March 3, 1865. Its primary purpose was to assist newly freed African American slaves in transitioning to freedom and citizenship, as well as to provide humanitarian aid and educational opportunities. The Bureau was headed by a commissioner, who was appointed by the President, and it operated under the authority of the War Department.

One of the main functions of the Freedmen's Bureau was to provide assistance to newly freed slaves, including food, clothing, and medical care. The Bureau also helped African Americans find work, and it established schools to provide educational opportunities for the newly freed population. In addition, the Bureau provided legal assistance to African Americans who were being denied their rights, including the right to vote.

The Bureau was also tasked with settling disputes between former slaves and their former masters. This was particularly important in cases where former slaves had been promised land or other resources as compensation for their years of forced labor. The Bureau helped to mediate these disputes and ensure that former slaves received what was rightfully theirs.

Despite its noble mission, the Freedmen's Bureau was not without its problems. It was often understaffed and underfunded, which made it difficult to provide the necessary services to the millions of newly freed slaves. Additionally, many white Southerners were hostile to the Bureau and resented its efforts to assist African Americans.

The Freedmen's Bureau was also plagued by corruption, as some Bureau officials used their positions to enrich themselves at the expense of the people they were supposed to be helping. In some cases, Bureau officials colluded with white Southerners to perpetuate the discriminatory practices of the past.

Despite these challenges, the Freedmen's Bureau played a crucial role in the early years of Reconstruction. It provided vital support to newly freed slaves and helped to lay the groundwork for the eventual end of slavery and the full citizenship rights of African Americans. Today, the Freedmen's Bureau is remembered as an important chapter in the struggle for civil rights in the United States.

1. Who headed the Freedmen's Bureau?

- a) The President
- b) A Commissioner
- c) A General
- d) The Vice-president

2. Which was NOT a function of the Freedmen's Bureau?

- a) Provide food for former slaves.
- b) Provide legal help for former slaves.
- c) Establish schools for former slaves.
- d) Provide campaign contributions for former slaves running for office.

3. Read the following paragraph:

The Bureau was also tasked with settling disputes between former slaves and their former masters. This was particularly important in cases where former slaves had been promised land or other resources as compensation for their years of forced labor. The Bureau helped to mediate these disputes and ensure that former slaves received what was rightfully theirs.

In the second sentence, which of the following words could replace "compensation"?

- a) punishment
- b) fairness
- c) payment
- d) supplies

4. Read the following paragraph:

The Freedmen's Bureau was an agency created by the United States government in 1865, shortly after the end of the Civil War. Its primary purpose was to assist newly freed African American slaves in transitioning to freedom and citizenship, as well as to provide humanitarian aid and educational opportunities.

What can be inferred?

- a) The Freedmen's Bureau was created in 1865, shortly before the end of the Civil War.
- b) While the main objective of the Freedmen's Bureau was to provide support to former slaves, it has other, less important functions as well.
- c) The Freedmen's Bureau main objective was actually to find jobs for former slaves.
- d) The actual purpose of the Freedmen's Bureau was difficult to understand.

5. Which of the following is an example of corruption within the Freedmen's Bureau.

- a) The Bureau was often understaffed.
- b) The Bureau often lacked money to carry out its mission.
- c) People often used the Bureau's money to enrich themselves.
- d) The Bureau was sometimes unsuccessful in securing jobs for former slaves.

6. Which of the following best describes the attitude that many Southerners held toward the efforts of the Freedmen's Bureau?

- a) They had a very negative attitude and resisted its efforts.
- b) They had a very negative attitude but did not resist its efforts.
- c) Attitudes were generally positive, which allowed the Freedmen's Bureau to accomplish its goals.
- d) Attitudes were generally positive, although the Freedmen's Bureau had trouble

accomplishing its goals.

7. Select all of the following that were true about the Freedmen's Bureau.

- a) The Freedmen's Bureau was established before the end of the Civil War.
- b) It was under the authority of the State Department.
- c) It often didn't have the people or money it needed to accomplish its goals.
- d) The Freedmen's Bureau was plagued with various problems.

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1. (b)
2. (d)
3. (c)
4. (b)
5. (c)
6. (a)
7. (a) (c) (d)