

Reconstruction HW: “The Bottom Rail is Now On Top”
From *Freedom’s Unfinished Revolution* by The American Social History Project

Directions: Read the attached article (which begins at the bottom of this page) and answer the following questions in complete sentences on a separate sheet of paper.

1. Who made the statement: “The bottom rail is now on top” and what does this statement mean? (EXPLAIN)
2. What were the biggest issues in the post-Civil War period?
3. Who had the most to GAIN by change? What did they want? EXPLAIN.
4. Who had the most to LOSE by change? What did they want? EXPLAIN.
5. With whom did the poor whites side: ex-planters or ex-slaves? EXPLAIN
6. In what ways were abolitionists, radicals and other northern Republican friends of freed people pulled in different directions?
7. What role did the federal government play in affecting what happened in the South during Reconstruction?

BEGIN HERE, then continue with the handout...

When the Confederate Army surrendered in April 1865, the planters who ruled the South had lost more than a war. Stripped of political power, their slaves now free, their land ravaged, and their investments in Confederate war bonds worthless, the planters stood naked before a world seemingly turned upside down. As one ex-slave put it, “The bottom rail is now on top.” The defeat of the planter class disrupted social, political, and economic relationships built over the previous 250 years of southern

TURN TO NEXT PAGE TO CONTINUE READING

