

Blacks in the Reconstruction Era

How did life change for Black Americans in the years that followed the Civil War? These fiction and nonfiction books will help you learn more about this topic. Because of the time periods in which they were written, some listed items may include content or language that might be upsetting to some readers. It's okay to be upset, because some things are upsetting. But it's important to understand the wrongs of the past to learn how we can make the future better.

Black Reconstruction in America, 1860–1880

W. E. B. Du Bois

One of the most celebrated Black scholars in American history, Du Bois challenged what had been until his time the prevailing view of Reconstruction as a failure. Although scorned when it was released in the 1930s, the book has become a classic view of the lives of Black Americans in this period.

The Second Founding: How the Civil War and Reconstruction Remade the Constitution

Eric Foner

In this text, renowned historian of Reconstruction Eric Foner makes the case that the men who drafted the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments intended to remake America as an equal society; he outlines how we have failed to live up to those ideals.

Stony the Road: Reconstruction, White Supremacy, and the Rise of Jim Crow

Henry Louis Gates, Jr.

Through a review of the images and ideas used to portray African Americans, Henry Louis Gates, Jr. lays out the history of Reconstruction and the rise of Jim Crow.

Stolen Justice: The Struggle for African American Voting Rights

Lawrence Goldstone

Although the Fifteenth Amendment gave Black men the right to vote, many states and local officials took steps to restrict that right. Read about the long struggle to gain and regain voting rights in this historical study, which traces voting rights from Reconstruction and the Jim Crow era.

Give Me Wings: How a Choir of Former Slaves Took on the World

Kathy Lowinger

Formed in part to raise money to help their financially struggling university, the Fisk Jubilee Singers became an international sensation. In this nonfiction narrative, learn about the group's fascinating history through the experiences of one of its founding members.

Beloved

Toni Morrison

In this Pulitzer Prize-winning masterpiece, the past is inescapable. Even in freedom, the novel's main character is enslaved by her memories.

Sarny: A Life Remembered

Gary Paulsen

The main character of Paulsen's treasured novel *Night-john* returns in this sequel, which describes her life after the abolition of slavery.

The Original Black Elite: Daniel Murray and the Story of a Forgotten Era

Elizabeth Dowling Taylor

Did you know that during Reconstruction a new class of Black Americans found good jobs and prominent government positions, amassed huge fortunes, and mingled with the country's most celebrated families? Read about their dramatic rise—and the Jim Crow restrictions that robbed them of their fortunes—in this study.

A Fool's Errand

Albion W. Tourgée

In this autobiographical novel written in 1879, Albion W. Tourgée recounts a fictionalized version of his personal experiences as a northern migrant in the South during Reconstruction. The book outlines threats against his life from the Ku Klux Klan and how racism and violence obstructed the fight for equality in the South.

Jubilee

Margaret Walker

This classic novel based on the author's family history traces the life of a woman born into slavery as she navigates the scuttled promises of Reconstruction with fortitude and resilience.