

The Aftermath of War

Student Name _____ Date _____

Activity #1: The Conditions in the South at the End of the War

Directions (Group C—Louisiana): For this activity, you have been assigned to a group with a document to review. You will also use the interactive maps [temporarily located at <http://civclients.com/nehint/recon/>] in this activity. Each group will review a document authored by someone affected by the devastation of the Civil War. The authors were selected to show a variety of contrasting views and also to reflect the different ways that reconstruction affected various states. While one document cannot speak to the effects of the war on an entire state, it will give you an insight into what may have represented a common experience and reaction to the War and its aftermath.

In your group, you will analyze the impact of the Civil War through the claims in your document and as they relate to your assigned state. To do this, you will also work through the interactive maps, pictures and quotes as you complete the worksheet that follows.

Upon receiving your document assignment, your group should read and discuss the meaning of your document. Then locate the interactive maps for this lesson [temporarily located at <http://civclients.com/nehint/recon/>] and begin working through the worksheet that follows.

Excerpt from the Diary of Sarah Morgan Dawson, March 31, 1863 (Louisiana):
<http://docsouth.unc.edu/fpn/dawson/dawson.html>

The process of reconstruction began early in those parts of the South that had been conquered by Union forces. New Orleans, the Confederacy's most important port, was captured in April 1862, and remained under Union occupation for the remainder of the war. This left the population of the rest of Louisiana—including Sarah Morgan Dawson—with a difficult choice to make.

"To be, or not to be; that's the question." Whether 't is nobler in the Confederacy to suffer the pangs of unappeasable hunger and never-ending trouble, or to take passage to a Yankee port, and there remaining, end them. Which is best? I am so near daft that I cannot pretend to say; I only know that I shudder at the thought of going to New Orleans, and that my heart fails me when I think of the probable consequence to mother if I allow a mere outward sign of patriotism to overbalance what should be my first consideration - her health. For Clinton is growing no better rapidly. To be hungry is there an everyday occurrence. For ten days, mother writes, they have lived off just hominy enough to keep their bodies and souls from parting, without being able to procure another article - not even a potato. Mother is not in a condition to stand such privation; day by day she grows weaker on her new regimen; I am satisfied that two months more of danger, difficulties, perplexities, and starvation will lay her in her grave. The latter alone is enough to put a speedy end to her days. Lilly has been obliged to put her children to bed to make them forget they were supperless, and when she followed their example, could not sleep herself, for very hunger.

We have tried in vain to find another home in the Confederacy. After three days spent in searching Augusta, Gibbes wrote that it was impossible to find a vacant room for us, as the city was already crowded with refugees. A kind Providence must have destined that disappointment in order to save my life, if there is any reason for Colonel Steadman's fears. We next wrote to Mobile, Brandon, and even that horrid little Liberty, besides making inquiries of every one we met, while Charlie, too, was endeavoring to find a place, and everywhere received the same answer - not a vacant room, and provisions hardly to be obtained at all.

The question has now resolved itself to whether we shall see mother die for want of food in Clinton, or, by sacrificing an outward show of patriotism (the inward sentiment cannot be changed), go with her to New Orleans, as Brother begs in the few letters he contrives to smuggle through. It looks simple enough. Ought not mother's life to be our first consideration? Undoubtedly! But suppose we could preserve her life and our free sentiments at the same time? If we could only find a resting-place in the Confederacy! This, though, is impossible. But to go to New Orleans; to cease singing "Dixie"; to be obliged to keep your sentiments to yourself - for I would not wound Brother by any Ultra-Secession speech, and such could do me no good and only injure him - *if* he is as friendly with the Federals as they say he is; to listen to the scurrilous abuse heaped on those fighting for our homes and liberties, among them my three brothers - could I endure it? I fear not. Even if I did not go crazy, I would grow so restless, homesick, and miserable, that I would pray for even Clinton again. Oh, I don't, don't want to go! If mother would only go alone, and leave us with Lilly! But she is as anxious to obtain Dr. Stone's advice for me as we are to secure her a comfortable home; and I won't go anywhere without Miriam, so we must all go together. Yet there is no disguising the fact that such a move will place us in a very doubtful position to both friends and enemies. However, all our friends here warmly advocate the move, and Will Pinckney and Frank both promised to knock down any one who shrugged their shoulders and said anything about it. But what would the boys say? The fear of displeasing them is my chief distress. George writes in the greatest distress about my prolonged illness, and his alarm about my condition. "Of one thing I am sure," he writes, "and that is that she deserves to recover; for a better little sister never lived." God bless him! My eyes grew right moist over those few words. Loving words bring tears to them sooner than angry ones. Would he object to such a step when he knows that the very medicines necessary for my recovery are not to be procured in the whole country? Would he rather have mother dead and me a cripple, in the Confederacy, than both well, out of it? I feel that if we go we are wrong; but I am satisfied that it is worse to stay. It is a distressing dilemma to be placed in, as we are certain to be blamed whichever course we pursue. But I don't want to go to New Orleans!