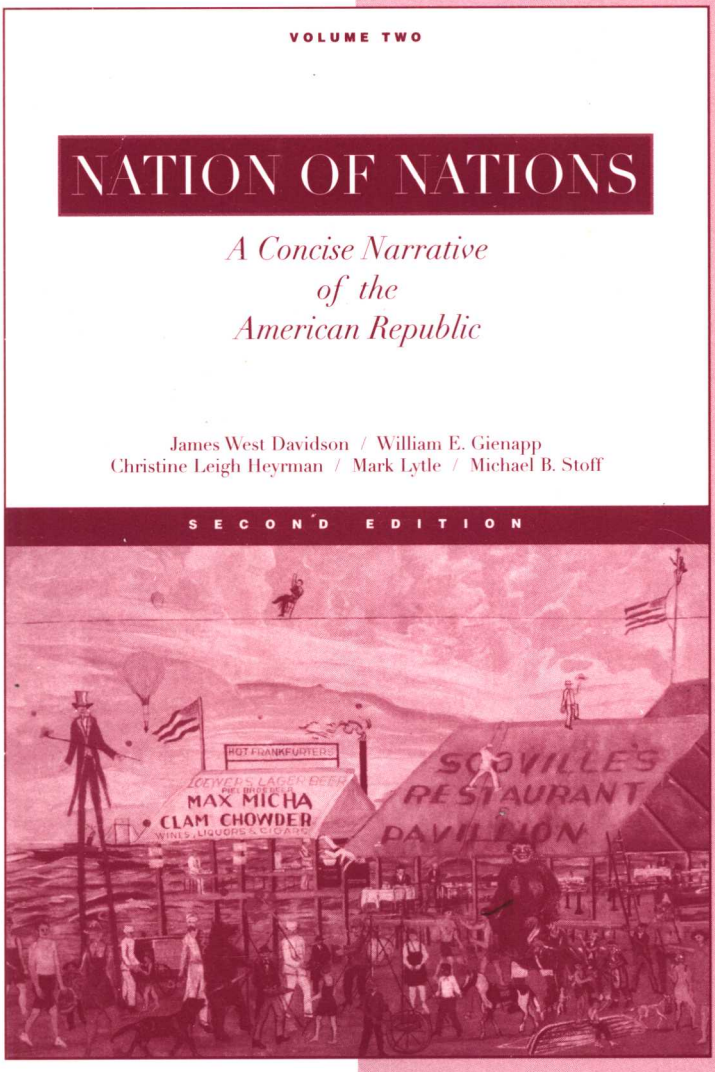
Student Study Guide

to accompany

Volume Two



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Student Study Guide

to accompany

Nation of Nations

A Concise Narrative of the American Republic

Second Edition

Volume Two

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INTRODUCTION

This Study Guide is designed to accompany ***Nation of Nations: A Concise Narrative of the American Republic***. In it, we try to help you organize more clearly the facts and themes presented in the text and to present that material more cogently in exams and papers. Ultimately, we hope, the guide may even help you to come to grips with the history of a nation that has shaped us all in countless ways. To quote from the preface of the text itself, "History supplies our very identity--a sense of the social groups to which we belong, whether family, ethnic group, race, class, or gender. It reveals to us the foundations of our deepest religious beliefs and traces the roots of our economic and political systems. It explores how we celebrate or grieve, sing the songs we sing, weather the illnesses to which time and chance subject us. It commands our attention for these good reasons and for no good reason at all, other than a fascination with the way the myriad tales play out."

A CRITICAL APPROACH TO READING HISTORY

In the days before the consumer movement dictated that warnings be affixed to hazardous products, the traditional attitude of most sellers was summed up in the Latin motto, *caveat emptor*: let the buyer beware. We have not affixed warning labels to our text, but we would like to make it clear that buyers should be more than a little wary when reading any history--including our own.

Why? All history is presented in a way that is slightly seductive. Textbooks come dressed out in the full trappings of authority. They present the printed word on crisp white pages, provide a host of detailed maps, charts, and appendices, plus a list of authors with university affiliations after their names. The subliminal message behind all these trappings is: *This book is authoritative. This is history the way it* <u>really</u> *happened. Read and believe.* When, of course, the truth is much more complicated.

Look, for example, at the following paragraph, taken from Chapter 2 of ***Nation of Nations***.

Even the most skeptical immigrants must have been shocked at what they found. The death rate in Virginia in the 1620s was higher than in England during times of epidemic disease. The life expectancy for Chesapeake men who reached the age of 20 was a mere 48 years; for women it was lower still. Servants fared worst of all, since malnutrition, overwork, and abuse made them vulnerable to disease. As masters scrambled to make quick profits, they extracted the

maximum amount of work before death carried off their laborers. An estimated 40 percent of servants never regained their freedom because they did not survive to the end of their indentured terms.

On the face of it, the paragraph seems straightforward. It is not an impassioned argument filled with value judgments about whether Christopher Columbus was a hero or a villain or whether the Civil War could have been avoided. It merely describes the harsh conditions of life in early Virginia.

But the word *merely* is misleading. This paragraph lists a number of statistics as if they were obvious, easily documented truths. For example it says that male Virginians who reached the age of 20 had, on average, a life expectancy of only 48. None of these "facts" are recorded in some official *Virginia Book of Records*, like Guinness's famous collection. And none of the authors of this text have themselves combed through the old documents, records of births and deaths, records of the plague in England, to make these computations. We have relied on other historians who have done this work and published it, just as they rely on our work in other specialized areas. Often, years of research lie behind such apparently simple statements. The computations are often difficult and full of uncertainty. Yet readers of a text like this will quickly read and digest those few sentences and quickly move on to another paragraph--equally full of uncertainties. *Read and believe.*

There is no way, of course, for readers to skeptically check the research behind hundreds of different subjects and thousands of paragraphs in any history text. Yet it is worth understanding, right at the start, that a text is inevitably misleading in its presentation. To compress an account of American history even into an ample 1000 pages means leaving out most of the uncertainties behind any statement of "facts."

Beyond that, larger uncertainties await in matters of interpretation. The authors have had to make hard choices about presenting and interpreting American history. These decisions must be made chapter by chapter, and even sentence by sentence. How much biographical information should one include of pivotal figures like Washington, Lincoln, or King? How much on the history of anonymous Americans like shoemakers in nineteenth century Massachusetts? Such decisions are not merely questions of space. They involve larger issues of interpretation. Do individual actions shape history more than broad social forces and trends? Is it more important to talk about the rise of a market economy or the rise of the modern presidency? Putting words to paper involves making choices about a host of different issues, both large and small.

In the limited space available to a textbook, it is impossible to explore in any detail so many differences of interpretation. But, as alert readers, you should be aware that those differences remain, always lurking below the narrative's confident surface. One goal of this Study Guide is to help students become more sensitive to the choices historians must inevitably make.

HOW TO USE THIS STUDY GUIDE

The guide provides both **Review Questions** that are designed to help you review for exams as well as a **Critical Thinking** section designed to hone skills that are crucial for analyzing historical problems and writing concise, coherent essays, research papers and examinations. The material is presented as follows:

The Chapter in Perspective places the chapter under review within the larger context of American history. It provides links to materials discussed in previous chapters and/or identifies trends that will become important in future chapters.

Overview. This provides a summary of the chapter's major themes, using the same headings that appear in the chapter itself. You may wish to read the Overview before beginning your reading, as a preview of the material. Or read afterward, the Overview serves as a tool for review. Summaries like these do not include all the facts and interpretive material that you will need to discuss key themes and topics. They do focus attention on those areas you would naturally elaborate upon in an exam.

Key Events are time line chronologies. Use them as a checklist of important occurrences and trends, but also consider how they relate to each other in sequence, in order to develop a sense of the pacing of history. How long were the Pilgrims in Massachusetts before John Winthrop's Puritans arrived? (Chapter 3) Time lines allow you to better sense the progression of events and the matter of historical timing.

Learning Objectives. These list the chapter's five or six most important themes. They serve as a means of reviewing key material that is likely to be covered on exams. In fact, they could be treated as exam questions: if you find you can't answer each of them coherently, you need additional preparation.

Multiple Choice Questions. Although the questions cover a representative range of topics, they are not meant to be exhaustive--only to provide a general feel for the *type* of factual questions that may be asked on an exam. Following each item is a page reference, indicating where the answer may be found.

Identifications. These include terms, concepts, individuals, and places. If you can explain the significance of all of them, you should be well prepared to handle the factual aspects of the chapter material. In addition, many chapters include an outline map, where you are asked to locate significant places or other geographic information central to the period.

Essay Questions. These cover a range of topics of the sort that might be on any exam. In using the questions for review, it may not be necessary to write out an entire sample essay, although putting something to paper is always a superior way to organize your thoughts. (It is remarkable how ideas that seem brilliant when floating around in one's brain, end up looking vague and imprecise when committed to paper.) Another way to review would be to jot down a brief outline of the points that the essay would cover, and talk them through orally. Jotting an outline down before beginning an essay is always a good practice.

Evaluating Evidence (Maps, Illustrations, and Charts). Each Critical Thinking section begins with questions asking for evaluation or analysis of the text's illustrative material. As authors, we feel strongly that students, professors, and even the writers of many textbooks do not pay close enough attention to the materials that accompany the core narrative. We have included the maps, graphs and illustrations not merely as window dressing, but as ways to make clearer the points in the text.

Critical Analysis. This section reprints a portion of the text itself that bears rereading, for two reasons. First, it has often been selected because it is pivotal, making a point that is likely to be encountered on an exam question. Second, the questions that follow the selection are designed to test your skills as a reader. If you can answer them easily, then your reading of other portions of the narrative has most likely been equally sharp. If they prove more difficult to answer, or require a rereading of the passage, you may need to work on reading skills indispensable not only for analyzing ***Nation of Nations***, but any historical narrative or argument.

Primary Source. Each chapter concludes with a primary source excerpt that illustrates one of the chapter's themes. A *primary source* is one that has been written (or made, or left behind in some way) by historical subjects themselves. It could be a diary, a song, a last will and testament, or the sketch on the back of an envelope. Primary sources are the raw materials of history: those pieces of the puzzle from which all history books are pieced together. We include a selection of them in order to underline what a chancy business interpreting history is. The "lessons" history provides are usually not so evident in the primary sources as they are in a textbook. To understand a subject in depth, we

must all become our own historians, going to the primary sources to put together the story for ourselves.

Obviously, in such a short space we can provide only a hint of what that process involves, just as in ***Nation of Nations***, we can only sketch the major outlines of American history. But in the text and Study Guide, we hope we have provided enough of both the sinews and the savor of the historian's task so that you may wish to continue your own explorations of history. Like it or not, the events shaping this teeming nation of nations have also defined and shaped us, and we can look to our future more intelligibly the better we understand the contours of our past.

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RECONSTRUCTING THE UNION

THE CHAPTER IN PERSPECTIVE

The Civil War resolved several long-standing problems in the Republic. For one, the threat of secession had been laid to rest; the Union was perpetual, as Andrew Jackson had proclaimed in 1832. Slavery had also been destroyed, and with it the most "peculiar" feature of the culture of the Old South. With the agrarian South vanquished and impoverished, the industrial North was now the dominant section politically and economically, and the nation's course toward full industrialization was established. But the war had also created new problems. What rights the former slaves would have, and what their place would be in American society, was unclear. Similarly, the process by which the former states of the Confederacy would regain their previous rights was uncertain. These two interrelated issues constituted the "problem of Reconstruction."

Yet if the potential for far-reaching change existed at the end of the war, key elements of the American political tradition continued to exert a restraining influence. For example, although the federal government exercised greater power after the war than before, most Americans continued to believe that protecting individual rights was the responsibility of the states. In addition, the fear of a standing army, a heritage of the Revolution, remained undiminished. Not only had the Union army been quickly demobilized, but Northerners were uncomfortable at the thought of a prolonged military occupation of the South or the active intervention of the army in domestic affairs. Finally, bolstered by the market revolution, Americans remained wedded to the doctrines of private property, self-reliance, and individual achievement, values that worked against any program of government assistance to the freed slaves. It was within this mix of change and tradition--of the possibility to overthrow the past and the desire to conserve it--that Reconstruction would take shape and eventually unravel:

OVERVIEW

Shortly after the war, Benjamin Montgomery, an extraordinary ex-slave, purchased the plantation of Confederate president Jefferson Davis. Through energy and hard work, Montgomery became a leading planter in the postwar South during the period of Reconstruction, when the South was in the process of resuming its place in the Union. Montgomery's hopes and aspirations symbolized both the possibilities for significant change in the South and the ultimate challenge of Reconstruction. Would the newly freed slaves gain economic opportunity--and the political power needed to secure it? More broadly, how would victorious North and vanquished South readjust their economic and political relations?

Presidential Reconstruction

Even during the war, Lincoln formulated plans for the restoration of the Union once the fighting was over. Lincoln favored a generous peace, since he was eager to bring states back into the Union and wanted to build up a Republican party in the South by attracting former Whigs. Radical Republicans in Congress, concerned about protecting the rights of former slaves and convinced that Congress should control re-admission, found Lincoln's plan too lenient. Lincoln vetoed a Radical plan in 1864, but by war's end he seemed to be moving in the direction of the Radicals.

Lincoln's assassination elevated Andrew Johnson, a War Democrat from Tennessee, to the presidency. Johnson moved in the summer of 1865 to implement a program less stringent even than Lincoln's original plan. Under Johnson's guidelines, all the former states of the Confederacy established new state governments in 1865. Yet southern whites refused to give blacks any political rights, instead passing a series of black codes, laws designed to keep blacks an uneducated, propertyless, agricultural laboring class. In addition, white southerners defiantly elected prominent former Confederates to office.

Congressional Radicals strongly disagreed with Johnson over securing the place of African-Americans in American society. Congress repudiated Johnson's program in December 1865, refusing to seat representatives from the former Confederate states. Moderate Republicans, who favored protecting black rights if not remaking Southern society (as the Radical minority wanted), were driven by presidential vetoes into an alliance with the Radicals. Together they extended the life of the Freedmen's Bureau over Johnson's veto in order to provide assistance to former slaves and passed the Fourteenth Amendment. This amendment made blacks citizens, and extended basic civil rights to all citizens, indirectly opening the possibility for black male suffrage. Tennessee ratified the

amendment, and was promptly readmitted to the Union. The remaining 10 states of the old Confederacy refused, and remained under military rule. Johnson took his case against Congress to the northern people in the fall elections of 1866. To his dismay, Republicans won a sweeping victory; with two-thirds majorities in both houses of Congress, they could now override any presidential veto.

Congressional Reconstruction

Given a popular mandate, Republicans in Congress proceeded to enact their own program of Reconstruction, requiring the unreconstructed states to ratify the Fourteenth Amendment and adopt black suffrage. States that delayed the process were forced to do so. Congress refused, however, to redistribute land to freed slaves, believing that giving blacks the ballot was sufficient.

Johnson tried to obstruct the Congressional program by interpreting laws as narrowly as possible. When the president attempted to remove Secretary of War Edwin Stanton, a Radical, in defiance of the new Tenure of Office Act, the House finally impeached Johnson. He was acquitted in the Senate by one vote. Those who voted for acquittal were uneasy about using the impeachment process to resolve a political dispute between the two branches of government.

Reconstruction in the South

Under Congress' program, radical governments, representing new Republican coalitions, assumed power in the South. None was controlled by black southerners, though blacks did serve. Ranging widely in ability, black officeholders generally came from the top rungs of African-American society.

In most southern states, black voters were not sufficient to form a majority. Republicans needed white support as well. Native white southerners who joined the party were branded scalawags; they were often Unionists from the hill counties or former Whigs attracted by the party's economic nationalism. Northerners who came South after the war and held public office were derisively referred to as carpetbaggers. Contrary to their image, they were not all poor and self-interested. Less swayed by racial feelings than were southern-born white Republicans, they disproportionately held the highest offices in the Republican regimes.

The new southern state constitutions adopted some important reforms, most notably the establishment of public schools, and granted black suffrage. But they were cautious on the issue of social equality and did not forbid segregation.

The southern Republican governments confronted the problem of rebuilding the war-ravaged South. They sought to encourage industrialization and expand the railroad network. Taxes went up with expenditures, and these governments came under heavy attack for corruption. Corruption certainly existed--indeed, it was a nationwide problem--but opponents exaggerated its extent for partisan purposes. In truth, the major objection of opponents to these governments was that they shared power with blacks.

Black Aspirations

Initially, black southerners thought of freedom largely as a contrast to slavery: the freedom to move about to work where they wished, to be free from physical punishment and the breakup of families. In freedom, blacks moved to strengthen their families, pursue education, and establish their own churches. They negotiated new working conditions with white landlords, refusing to live in the old slave quarters or work in gangs under the supervision of an overseer. Eventually the system of sharecropping evolved as the way to organize black agricultural labor--a higher status arrangement but harshly exploitative. The Freedmen's Bureau supervised the contracts between white landlords and black workers, and special Freedmen's Courts adjudicated disputes. The Bureau's record in protecting blacks varied considerably, but in general it had only limited success, due largely to the fact that Congress let it expire.

Planters responded to emancipation by seeking physical and psychological separation from former slaves. They discarded the old paternalist ideal in favor of segregation. Less prosperous than before the war, they developed a new way of life based on segregation and sharecropping.

The Abandonment of Reconstruction

In 1868 the Republicans successfully nominated Ulysses S. Grant for president. Grant would come to symbolize a waning of the zeal to enforce and maintain Reconstruction. Republicans tried to make Reconstruction more secure by passing the Fifteenth Amendment, which forbade a state from denying the right to vote on grounds of race, though women's suffrage advocates regretted that discrimination based on gender was not included.

Grant lacked the skill or moral commitment to make Reconstruction succeed. A series of scandals rocked his administration, creating widespread popular disenchantment and fostering the Liberal Republican revolt in 1872. As charges of corruption swelled and public disorder continued unabated in the South, northern public opinion, which never had much faith in the abilities of former slaves, became increasingly disillusioned with Reconstruction. In

addition, the beginning of a severe depression in 1874 directed public attention closer to home and gave Democrats control of the House for the first time since 1861.

With the northern commitment weakening, white southerners stepped up their assault on the radical governments in the South. They used social ostracism, economic pressure, and racist appeals to undermine Republican support. Their most effective weapon, however, was terror and violence directed against Republican leaders and black voters. The constant violence in the South during elections further weakened the northern commitment to Reconstruction.

In the end, this combination of southern white terror and northern white weariness--and a political deal--combined to end Reconstruction. The 1876 presidential election failed to produce a clear winner. A special electoral commission by a straight party vote declared Republican Rutherford B. Hayes the winner. To secure their victory, in private negotiations Republicans had agreed to restore home rule in the South in exchange for Hayes' election. This deal became known as the Compromise of 1877. Once in office, Hayes dutifully withdrew support for the remaining radical governments in the South and they collapsed. Every southern state had been "redeemed" by 1877; Reconstruction was at an end. The ante-bellum reform impulse had eroded; a new materialism turned attention from protecting black rights; Republicans split over tactics: blacks themselves lacked education and experience. But primarily, by both weakening northern resolve and stimulating southern white resistance, racism played a major role in the failure of Reconstruction. One isolated symbol of this failure came in 1878, when Benjamin Montgomery lost his land--to Jefferson Davis.

KEY EVENTS

1863 *Lincoln outlines Reconstruction program:* moves to establish loyal governments based on loyal white population

1864 *Lincoln vetoes Wade-Davis bill:* Radicals bitterly denounce the president

Louisiana, Arkansas, and Tennessee establish governments under Lincoln's plan: none grant suffrage to blacks

1865 *Freedmen's Bureau established:* to provide temporary assistance in the South

Johnson becomes president: puts his program of Reconstruction in place in the summer of 1865

Congress excludes representatives of Johnson's governments: southern defiance, Johnson's lenient program disturbs Republicans in Congress

Thirteenth Amendment ratified: slavery abolished in the United States without compensation

Joint Committee on Reconstruction established: Congress demands say in shaping Reconstruction policy

1865-1866 *Black codes enacted:* southern states limit rights of former slaves

1866 *Civil Rights bill passed over Johnson's veto:* Congress extends basic civil rights to former slaves

Memphis and New Orleans riots: anti-black and anti-Republican violence alarms northern public opinion

Fourteenth Amendment passes Congress: indirectly provides for black suffrage in southern states

Freedmen's Bureau extended: granted stronger powers to protect black rights

Tennessee readmitted to Congress: first Confederate state to regain representation after ratifying the Fourteenth Amendment

Republicans victorious in congressional elections: northern voters repudiate Johnson and his program of Reconstruction

1867 *Congressional Reconstruction:* Congress enacts program of Reconstruction based on black suffrage

Tenure of Office Act: Congress tries to prevent Johnson from removing Secretary of War Edwin Stanton from the cabinet

Ku Klux Klan organized: southern white resistance to Reconstruction turns to violence

1867-1868 *Constitutional conventions in the South:* new, progressive state constitutions adopted

African Americans vote in southern elections

1868 *Johnson impeached but acquitted:* Radical power peaks in Republican party

Fourteenth Amendment ratified: Congress seems to protect black rights, impose black suffrage only on southern states

Grant elected president: Republicans shocked at closeness of the election

1869 *Fifteenth Amendment passes Congress:* Republicans seek to make black suffrage constitutionally secure

1870 *Last southern states readmitted to Congress:* remaining states required to ratify both the Fourteenth and the Fifteenth Amendment

1871 *Ku Klux Klan Act:* government moves to break up the Ku Klux Klan

1872 *General Amnesty Act:* all but a handful of prominent Confederate leaders pardoned

Freedmen's Bureau dismantled: protection of black rights in the South undermined

Liberal Republican revolt: scandals weaken Grant's hold on party

1873-1877 *Panic and depression:* Republican party hurt by hard times

1874 *Democrats win control of the House:* Republicans increasingly concerned about maintaining support in the North

1875	*Civil Rights Act:* Congress seeks to protect black rights, but the Supreme Court eventually strikes down most of its provisions
	Mississippi Plan: Democrats resort to violence to carry the state
1876	*Disputed Hayes-Tilden election:* outcome in three southern states in doubt
1877	*Compromise of 1877:* Hayes declared winner of electoral vote, last Republican governments in South fall

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

When you have finished studying this chapter, you should be able to:

1. Discuss the twofold challenge of Reconstruction following the defeat of the Confederacy.
2. Describe Lincoln's and Johnson's plans of Reconstruction, and the failure of Johnson's program.
3. Describe the growing conflict between Johnson and Congress over Reconstruction.
4. Discuss the nature of Congressional Reconstruction, including the principal laws and amendments passed as part of this program.
5. Discuss the course of Reconstruction in the southern states, including the aspirations and experiences of black southerners.
6. Describe the abandonment of Reconstruction, the causes for its failure, and its racial legacy.