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# DISCUSSION GUIDE

## HENRY LOUIS GATES, JR.

with Tonya Bolden

**Grades 4–7**

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The Common Core State Standards addressed by the discussion questions and activities in this guide are listed below. For more information on the Common Core, visit [corestandards.org](http://corestandards.org).  
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.4.1–7.1;  
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.1–7.1;  
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.4.2–7.2

# DARK SKY RISING

RECONSTRUCTION AND  
THE DAWN OF JIM CROW

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# ACTIVITIES FOR STUDENTS

- Read “The Road to War” on pages 18–19 to understand the sequence of events that led to the Civil War. Use this information to create an illustrated timeline that details these key contributing factors. Include captions and dates as part of your timeline.
- Black men were not the only ones attempting to affect monumental change in America during and after the Civil War. Many women participated in the effort to end slavery and to help educate those marginalized by a slave-owning society. Read “Women Warriors” on pages 36–39 and select one woman to research in more depth. Write an informative piece describing her life and accomplishments.
- Thaddeus Stevens, a congressman from Pennsylvania, questioned the policies of President Andrew Johnson. Stevens argued his opinion that Congress was morally obligated to protect freed people: “If we leave them to the legislation of their late masters, we had better have left them in bondage.” Write a persuasive piece that begins with Stevens’s opinion and then builds an argument that supports his opinion by citing specific examples of how Johnson’s policies affected the freed people.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- How did three runaway slaves—Frank Baker, Shepard Mallory, and James Townsend—force the issue of what to do about slavery onto the national agenda when they arrived at Fort Monroe and requested sanctuary?
- General Butler firmly stated that the Civil War was not “a black man’s war” when speaking to Harry Jarvis, who had arrived at Freedom’s Fortress after escaping from his cruel owner. Jarvis maintained that it “would be a black man’s war before they got through.” What events soon proved Jarvis’s words to be true?
- President Lincoln attempted to stitch together a country ravaged by civil war with his Proclamation of Amnesty and Reconstruction, which also included the president’s Ten Percent Plan. Describe the details of Lincoln’s plan. Why did many members of Lincoln’s own party oppose it?
- In a discussion with the Secretary of War in 1865, former slave Garrison Frazier was asked how the government could help former slaves maintain their freedom. Frazier responded quickly: Land! How did the government attempt to help former slaves realize land ownership? What was the Freedmen’s Bureau?
- After the assassination of President Lincoln by Confederate sympathizer John Wilkes Booth, Andrew Johnson became president of the United States. Describe the type of leader Johnson was and how his decisions affected the newly freed slaves.

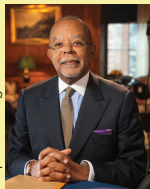
- In 1865, Southern governments began implementing “Black Codes.” What were the Black Codes and how did they economically oppress black people?
- What did the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment achieve? How did it set a trap in terms of convict labor?
- Describe the importance of the Fourteenth Amendment. Why was it necessary? How does it remain relevant today?
- Many African Americans felt hope as Congress sought to support their rights through the three Reconstruction Acts of 1867. How did each of these Reconstruction Acts differ from one another?
- At first, Reconstruction offered black Americans hope for a better life in this country. Discuss the effectiveness of black political mobilization. How did black representation affect constitutional conventions in Southern states? To what public offices were black men elected? Describe the signal achievements of Reconstruction.
- Who was Frederick Douglass? What role did he play in persuading President Lincoln to allow black men to fight in the US Army during the Civil War? Why did he meet with Lincoln’s successor, President Johnson? What right was he determined to secure for black Americans?
- In the late 1870s, many black Southerners left the continued oppression in their home states and headed west toward Kansas. Contrast the lives of those who journeyed west with those who stayed in the South and continued to toil in the fields as sharecroppers.
- How did Mississippi attempt to go around the intent of the Fifteenth Amendment to suppress the black vote in 1890?
- What important topic was examined in detail by black journalist Ida B. Wells?
- Who was the character of Jim Crow? How did Jim Crow come to represent the unfair treatment of black people? How did the Supreme Court’s ruling in *Plessy v. Ferguson* reinforce Jim Crow rule and uphold racial segregation?
- Describe the role of the National Association of Colored Women, W. E. B. Du Bois, and the American Negro Academy in helping African Americans persevere through the injustice of Jim Crow.
- Reread “Lift Every Voice and Sing,” the National Black Anthem, on page 171. How do the lyrics of this anthem capture the spirit of the past and hope for the future for black Americans?
- Who was Carter G. Woodson? Why is he an important figure in black history?
- What was the Lincoln Jubilee? How did it showcase the contributions of black Americans?
- Was Reconstruction a success or a failure? Support your opinion with examples.

# DARK SKY RISING: Reconstruction and the Dawn of Jim Crow

By Henry Louis Gates, Jr., with Tonya Bolden

Henry Louis Gates, Jr., presents a captivating journey through America's turbulent past and our nation's attempts at renewal in this dynamic look at one of history's most pivotal and misunderstood chapters—the Civil War's conclusion, Reconstruction, and the rise of Jim Crow segregation. Real-life accounts humanize the people and events of Reconstruction's noble democratic experiment, its tragic undermining, and the drawing of a new "color line" in the long Jim Crow era that followed.

Stephanie Berger



**Professor Henry Louis Gates, Jr.**, is the Alphonse Fletcher University Professor and Director of the Hutchins Center for African & African American Research at Harvard. He is an acclaimed author and critic who has produced, written, and hosted an array of films for public television, including *Africa's Great Civilizations*, *Finding Your Roots*, *Black America Since MLK: And Still I Rise*, and *The African Americans: Many Rivers to Cross*. Professor Gates is the recipient of fifty-five honorary degrees. A member of the first class awarded "genius grants" by the MacArthur Foundation in 1981, he was, in 1998, the first African American scholar to be awarded the National Humanities Medal. He was named to *Time*'s "25 Most Influential Americans" list in 1997, *Ebony*'s "Power 150" list in 2009, and *Ebony*'s "Power 100" list in 2010 and 2012.

**Tonya Bolden** is the award-winning author of many notable books for children and young adults, among them the Coretta Scott King Author Honor-winning *Maritcha: A Nineteenth Century American Girl*, which was also a James Madison Book Award Winner and CCBC Best Book of the Year. Ms. Bolden's *Emancipation Proclamation: Lincoln and the Dawn of Liberty* was named a Bank Street College of Education Best Book of the Year and is the recipient of the Carter G. Woodson Book Award. Ms. Bolden is a two-time NAACP Image Award nominee, and winner of the 2016 Children's Book Guild of Washington, DC's Nonfiction Award for Body of Work.



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## Praise for **DARK SKY RISING**

★ "[B]ring[s] depth to the history . . . "

—*School Library Journal*, starred review

**"Brilliant and more necessary now than ever before.** This is a book that should be on every bedside table and in every classroom in America. It's a history that belongs to all of us. In Gates's and Bolden's hands, it is a deeply comprehensive, beautifully illustrated, and moving narrative of survival."

—Jacqueline Woodson, National Ambassador for Young People's Literature & National Book Award Winner