lie good, and for underpaying and mistreating their workers.

At the other end of the economic scale were those who labored in the nation's factories, on the nation's rails, and in the nation's mines. These laborers typically worked at least sixty hours a week for low wages, often in hazardous conditions. The percentage of self-employed workers in America fell from about half of the workforce in 1860 to one-third by 1900; consequently, more workers than ever before were dependent on wages for a living. Their dependency on wages, combined with the fact that they could be laid off or fired at any time, created a perilous economic situation for many workers and their families. Some workers responded by forming labor unions and engaging in strikes. However, while they laid foundations for future labor movement successes, most of these efforts failed in the face of intense business and legal opposition.

The expansion of industry in these years had some positive results for American workers. The general decline in prices, while harmful for farmers dependent on crop sales, meant that workers with steady jobs enjoyed rising real incomes to help them purchase the increasing variety of consumer goods. The industrial revolution supported a growing middle class, provided work opportunities for America's immigrants, and allowed more women to find wage jobs outside the home. Many Americans viewed the growth of the middle class and the ascent of such figures as Carnegie, who rose from an impoverished immigrant to a steel magnate, as proof that in America anyone who worked hard could succeed and become rich. However, as the century drew to a close, some people were concerned that America's industrialization was not helping the nation as a whole, and that the widening divide between rich and poor Americans threatened national ideals of freedom and equality. These questions continued to be part of the American dialogue as the nation approached the twentieth century.

Reconstruction

VIEWPOINT 1A

Reconstruction Should Be Harsh (1865)

William Mason Grosvenor (1835–1900)

William Mason Grosvenor, an abolitionist prior to the Civil War, commanded one of the first units of black soldiers organized to fight for the North in that conflict. During the war he observed firsthand the relatively lenient reconstruction process by which the state government of Louisiana was re-created under Northern military occupation, with little change in the political or economic status of blacks beyond the abolition of legal slavery. In an article published in the New Englander magazine in 1865, Grosvenor criticizes the state and local governments established during the Civil War. He also takes issue with the "abeyance" theory of reconstruction—the idea that the Confederate states, never having legally seceded from the Union, still possessed all their constitutional privileges and prerogatives as member states of America, and should be restored these temporarily suspended rights as speedily as possible.

On what foundation does the North have the right to dictate social changes within the South, according to Grosvenor? What is the central question he posits as needing to be answered for reconstruction to be successful? Why is the time opportune for changes in the South, according to Grosvenor?

It is fortunate that the political victory achieved in the re-election of President Lincoln is generally received, not with noisy exultation, but with calm and thoughtful thankfulness. It gives ground for hope that in rejoicing over triumphs gained and dangers escaped, the nation will not be blind to the severer trial yet to be met, and the fearful responsi-
abilities that will attend it.

There remains the... most serious test of all—the trial of wisdom and statesmanship. This is not merely a rebellion or a political contest with which we have to deal; it is a revolution. Our task is to obey and execute a fiat of the Almighty, written on the face of the Western hemisphere in the course of the Mississippi river: "There shall be, upon this broad domain, one nation and but one." The shock of arms revealed the fact that we had never been one people, and that a true nationality, embracing all States and sections, had never existed. Heterogeneous populations, hostile systems, and irreconcilable ideas had only been placed in contact, and held to bare juxtaposition by a constitutional compact. No chemical union had ever taken place; for that the white-hot crucible of civil war was found necessary. To keep up the fire until antagonistic elements are refined away and a perfect union is effected is needful, and is the deliberate purpose of the nation, expressed in the late election; but that is not all. To direct the process of amalgamation, to determine the time for each step, and to give shape to the new substance, will demand the most exalted statesmanship. A single error may cause a flaw that shall send the whole work back to the furnace.

A Higher Wisdom

To guide the restless forces, and to shun dangers on either hand—as well the Scylla of a too timid conservatism as the Charybdis of an all-destroying radicalism—to settle the thousand questions and meet the thousand difficulties that will arise, will assuredly call for a higher wisdom, a wider knowledge, a profounder foresight than has yet been needed. If we were unused to war, and had to create an army and master the art; if we had hitherto found no need of self-sacrificing patriotism in the halcyon days when love of country was an undeveloped and untested force, so it may almost be said that no statesmanship yet made manifest among us is equal to the needs of the swiftly advancing emergency. All the maxims of the past are obsolete. The teachings of the great minds of other days will be, in this trial, of little use as the old Constitution frigate with her car- ronades [short-range guns] in a battle of iron-clads. The machinery and framework of government may not improbably be found all too slender and weak for the mighty forces now evolved. A statesmanship will be needed that can steer by the compass instead of the lead-line, and can push boldly out of the narrow range of precedents and established forms into the deep water of first principles and permanent truths. It is work for a discoverer rather than for a pilot.

But whether the future nationality shall be equal to the glorious possibilities of free government, whether the harmony of forces and homogeneity of elements shall be complete, will depend upon the measure of statesmanship that may guide the work now close at hand. Already a great constitutional reform is demanded; and we are but dull scholars if we have not learned through all the severe experiences of this war, that no work of human device is perfect, and that nations, like children, will outgrow their clothes. Already the financial problem calls for something more than temporary expedients. Already questions of a standing army, of a permanent revenue, and of tariff or direct taxation, require re-examination by the light of new events and needs. Already the problem of the future of the negro race assumes the gravest importance, and can be deferred but a little longer. Questions of amnesty or punishment of public enemies already engage the attention of rulers and people. Behind these there throng in the anteroom whole troops of problems new and strange—of interests needing protection and claims clamoring for adjustment. The offing is full of questions, fast anchored once, but now cast adrift by the storm. The change to which we are called is radical. It is the new-birth of the nation.

In such a crisis it may be well to remember that the nation that governs itself has to pay for its blunders, and that it will not do to play at politics.

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"Punishment... shall be severe enough to prevent for all future time the recurrence of a crime so terribly destructive."

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Of all the unsolved problems the most important, and the one that demands most urgently thorough examination and final settlement, is that which concerns the present status of the rebellious States and the proper mode of reconstruction. It is too momentous a subject to be left to chance. Future generations will consider with amazement that, instead of first ascertaining the true theory, and guiding by that the decisions that shall serve as precedents for the future, we permit local, temporary, and often personal considerations to determine the decisions. Thus blind and often conflicting precedents are established; and the theory is left to some era of leisure when the political geologist, by patient delving and much study of the fossil remains, may perhaps pick it out of the chaotic record. The organic law of ten future States ought to be arrived at in some different fashion. But this blindness of action, and the prevalence of views peculiarly chaotic and vague, are not without excuse. The question is one of
no little difficulty; it goes deeper than all our statutes and deeper than the Constitution itself, and makes all precedents as useless as the trilobites. The very multitude of theories darkens counsel, and rarely, if ever, has the question been stripped of all extraneous matter and clearly stated. It has nothing to do with slavery or confiscation. It is simply this: 'Do the civil rights under our government, once vested in certain States and the citizens of those States, still exist, and, if so, in whom are they vested?' To discuss particular measures of reconstruction and attempt partial reorganizations, without first giving to this question a final and formal answer, is to put up a frame and finish off a wing before the shape of the building is fixed or the foundation laid.

It would surely be not a little to the credit of the nation to sweep away... all those paltry simulacra of elections and organizations which have hitherto started up like mushrooms in the track of our armies.... Have we not seen enough of these manufactured organizations, which 'live, move and have their being' in the baggage wagons of our army? They afford excellent chances for political chicanery; nice honors and fat offices are recovered from 'abeyance' by men whose surprising merit had not been discovered in times of peace, but is the Union cause materially helped or do the Union loving people of the South thereby obtain any substantial protection? Is it not time to ask if these sickly plants do not cost more than it is worth to rear them, and to look with favor on a theory, which, by removing all pretext for such premature growths, sweeps away the whole system of political jugglery so engendered?

Punishing Treason

Another consideration seems worthy of especial attention. Our law of treason is less effective or severe than that of other civilized nations. To the framers of the Constitution treason seemed a crime strangely horrid and improbable, and there doubtless appeared to be greater danger from an over rigorous loyalty, which, in times of excitement, might mistake reasonable freedom of thought and speech for hostility to the government.... But, were the South to lay down her arms to-day, and resume the rights which the abeyance theory conceives, there is no security that even these leaders would not find absolute immunity from punishment. Even the most notorious traitor could exercise every right of citizenship until he had been tried and convicted by a jury from his own State, and nothing in the laws of that State would exclude any other notorious traitor from the jury-box. What punishment would [Jefferson] Davis fear from a jury of Mississippian, of whom perhaps half had just laid aside smoking muskets and dripping swords to enter the panel? To place such immunity within the reach of rebels, who may abandon the contest whenever they find it hopeless, is to put a premium on treason. We are cramped by no legal forms of constitutional obligations, unless we choose, in punishing this rebellion. Rising to the proportions of a civil war, it has placed in the hands of the nation not only the remedial agencies of the courts, but the torch and sword of the conqueror. Rebels are now not rebels only, but public enemies; Gettysburg's slaughter and Sherman's march have a broader sweep than any enacted penalties; and the right of conquest cuts deeper than any conceivable measure of confiscation. The law of war becomes supreme, and of that law 'Vae Victis' ['Woe to the vanquished'] is the epitome. We have only to apply the principles of the decision above quoted to the work of reconstruction, to make sure that the punishment, for leaders at least, shall be severe enough to prevent for all future time the recurrence of a crime so terribly destructive to the national prosperity and the national honor.

Schemes of reconstruction which make possible immunity for the great conspirators, or instant return to all political privileges for traitors as well as loyalists, will not be such as the people will approve or the nation can safely adopt. Nor will it answer, in overflowing leniency for past offenses, to neglect security for healthy political action in the future. Men who have deliberately betrayed trusts guarded by all the sanctity of an oath are not safely to be trusted as loyal and true citizens, whenever they may choose to renew an obligation once violated. But the state constitutions only can effectually debar any from suffrage, office, or trust; under the abeyance theory each State can demand recognition with her old constitution and laws; nor is it easy to find authority for requiring particular changes as conditions of recognition. Instead of retaining these old constitutions, replete of the slave-act, defiled in every part by the use of traitors, and infested in every joint and crevice by claims that loyal men must loathe but can never wholly expirte, the erection and admission of new States demolishes all these relics of a shameful past, and secures new and spotless constitutions, each in harmony in every part with the spirit of the new era, and instinct and vital with freedom and loyalty.

Viewpoint 1B

Reconstruction Should Be Lenient (1866)

Herman Melville (1819–1891)

Northern-born writer Herman Melville, most famous for his novels including Moby-Dick, wrote a
short collection of poems inspired by the Civil War that was published in 1866. In a companion essay to the poetry collection, the antiwar and antislavery Melville argues for a humane and revenge-free reconstruction policy toward the defeated South.

Why should Southern rebels not be viewed as vile traitors, according to Melville? How does he believe the nation should approach the question of the status of black ex-slaves? Is he more or less realistic than Grosvener in his views of the South and its people?

There seems no reason why patriotism and narrowness should go together, or why intellectual impartiality should be confounded with political trimming, or why serviceable truth should keep cloistered because not partisan. Yet the work of reconstruction, if admitted to be feasible at all, demands little but common sense and Christian charity. Little but these? These are much.

**Southern Penitence**

Some of us are concerned because as yet the South shows no penitence. But what exactly do we mean by this? Since down to the close of the war she never confessed any for having it, the only penitence now left her is that which springs solely from the sense of discomfiture; and since this evidently would be a contrition hypocritical, it would be unworthy in us to demand it. Certain it is that penitence, in the sense of voluntary humiliation, will never be displayed. Nor does this afford just ground for unreserved condemnation. It is enough, for all practical purposes, if the South have been taught by the terrors of civil war to feel that secession, like slavery, is against destiny; that both now lie buried in one grave; that her fate is linked with ours; and that together we comprise the nation.

Patriotism is not baseness, neither is it insubordinacy. The mourners who this summer bear flowers to the mounds of the Virginian and Georgian dead are, in their domestic bereavement and proud affection, as sacred in the eye of heaven as are those who go with similar offerings of tender grief and love into the cemeteries of our Northern martyrs. And yet, in one aspect, how needless to point the contrast.

There were excesses which marked the conflict, most of which are perhaps inseparable from a civil strife so intense and prolonged, and involving warfare in some border countries new and imperfectly civilized. Barbarities also there were, for which the Southern people collectively can hardly be held responsible, though perpetrated by ruffians in their name. But surely other qualities—exalted ones—

courage and fortitude matchless, were likewise displayed, and largely, and justly may these be held the characteristic traits, and not the former.

In this view, what Northern writer, however patriotic, but must revolt from acting on paper a part anyway akin to that of the live dog to the dead lion; and yet it is right to rejoice for our triumph, so far as it may justly imply an advance for our whole country and for humanity.

Let it be held no reproach to anyone that he pleads for reasonable consideration for our late enemies, now stricken down and unavoidably debarred, for the time, from speaking through authorized agencies for themselves. Nothing has been urged here in the foolish hope of conciliating those men—few in number, we trust—who have resolved never to be reconciled to the Union. On such hearts everything is thrown away except it be religious commiseration, and the sincerest. Yet let them call to mind that unhappy secessionist [Edmund Ruffin], not a military man, who, with impious acrimony, fired the first shot of the Civil War at Sumter, and a little more than four years afterward fired the last one into his own heart at Richmond.

Noble was the gesture into which patriotic passion surprised the people in a utilitarian time and country; yet the glory of the war falls short of its pathos—a pathos which now at last ought to disarm all animosity.

How many and earnest thoughts still rise, and how hard to repress them. We feel what past years have been, and years, unretarded years, shall come. May we all have moderation; may we all show candor. Though, perhaps, nothing could ultimately have averted the strife and though to treat of human actions is to deal wholly with second causes, nevertheless, let us not cover up or try to extenuate what, humanly speaking, is the truth; namely, that those unfraternal denunciations, continued through years, and which at last inflamed to deeds that ended in bloodshed, were reciprocal; and that, had the preponderating strength and the prospect of its unlimited increase lain on the other side, on ours might have lain those actions which now in our late opponents we stigmatize under the name of Rebellion.

As frankly let us own—what it would be unbecoming to parade were foreigners concerned—that our triumph was won not more by skill and bravery than by superior resources and crushing numbers; that it was a triumph, too, over a people for years politically misled by designing men, and also by some honestly erring men, who, from their position, could not have been otherwise than broadly influential; a people who, though, indeed, they sought to perpetuate the curse of slavery, and even extend it, were not the authors of it but (less fortunate, not less righteous

From Herman Melville, *Battle-Pieces and Aspects of War* (New York, 1866).
than we) were the fated inheritors; a people who, having alike origin with ourselves, share essentially in whatever worthy qualities we may possess. No one can add to the lasting reproach which hopeless defeat has now cast upon secession by withholding the recognition of these virtues.

“No consideration should tempt us to pervert the national victory into oppression for the vanquished.”

Surely we ought to take it to heart that the kind of pacification, based upon principles operating equally all over the land, which lovers of their country yearn for, and which our arms, though signal triumph, did not bring about, and which lawmakers, however anxious or energetic or repressive, never by itself can achieve, may yet be largely aided by generosity of sentiment public and private. Some visionary legislation and adaptive is indispensable; but with this should harmoniously work another kind of prudence, not unaided with entire magnanimity. Benevolence and policy—Christianity and Machiavelli—dissuade from penal severities toward the subdued. Abstinence here is as obligatory as considerate care for our unfortunate fellowmen late in bonds, and, if observed, would equally prove to be wise forecast. The great qualities of the South, those attested in the war, we can perilously alienate, or we may make them nationally available at need.

The Place of Blacks

The blacks, in their infant pupillage to freedom, appeal to the sympathies of every humane mind. The paternal guardianship which, for the interval, government exercises over them was prompted equally by duty and benevolence. Yet such kindness should not be allowed to exclude kindness to communities who stand nearer to us in nature. For the future of the freed slaves we may well be concerned; but the future of the whole country, involving the future of the blacks, urges a paramount claim upon our anxiety. Effective benignity, like the Nile, is not narrow in its bounty, and true policy is always broad.

To be sure, it is vain to seek to glide, with molded words, over the difficulties of the situation. And for them who are neither partisans, nor enthusiasts, nor theorists, nor cynics, there are some doubts not readily to be solved. And there are fears. Why is not the cessation of war now at length attended with the settled calm of peace? Wherefore in a clear sky do we still turn our eyes toward the South, as the Neapolitan, months after the eruption, turns his toward Vesuvius? Do we dread lest the repose may be deceptive? In the recent convulsion has the crater but shifted?

Let us reverence that sacred uncertainty which forever impends over men and nations. Those of us who always abhorred slavery as an atheistical iniquity, gladly we join in the exulting chorus of humanity over its downfall. But we should remember that emancipation was accomplished not by deliberate legislation; only through agonized violence could so mighty a result be effected. In our natural solicitude to confirm the benefit of liberty to the blacks, let us forbear from measures of dubious constitutional righteousness toward our white countrymen—measures of a nature to provoke, among other of the last evils, exterminating hatred of race toward race.

In imagination let us place ourselves in the unprecedented position of the Southerners—their position as regards the millions of ignorant manumitted slaves in their midst, for whom some of us now claim the suffrage. Let us be Christians toward our fellow whites, as well as philanthropists toward the blacks, our fellowmen. In all things and toward all, we are enjoined to do as we would be done by. Nor should we forget that benevolent desires, after passing a certain point, cannot undertake their own fulfillment without incurring the risk of evils beyond those sought to be remedied. Something may well be left to the graduated care of future legislation, and to heaven.

But, so far as immediate measures looking toward permanent reestablishment are concerned, no consideration should tempt us to pervert the national victory into oppression for the vanquished. Should plausible promise of eventual good, or a deceptive or spurious sense of duty, lead us to essay this, count we must on serious consequences, not the least of which would be divisions among the Northern adherents of the Union.

Let us pray that the terrible historic tragedy of our time may not have been enacted without instructing our whole beloved country through terror and pity; and may fulfillment verify in the end those expectations which kindle the bards of progress and humanity.

For Further Reading

