

## The Freedmen's Bureau Student Worksheet

### Introduction:

At the end of the Civil War, Congress sought to find ways to assist ex-slaves (as well as some poor Southern whites) in rebuilding their lives. The answer was the Freedmen's Bureau, which worked to provide food and education services.

### **The Freedmen's Bureau Act**

1. First, look at the Freedmen's Bureau legislation resource. How did Congress describe the purpose of the act?
2. In the legislation, what cabinet position was in charge of running the Bureau, appointing a director, and directing the issue of clothing, food, and fuel?
3. According to the act, ex-slaves were designated as "freedmen." How were Southern whites covered under the act designated? Why do you think that term might have angered some Southern whites?
4. According to the terms of the act, what was to be provided in Sec. 2 of the Freedmen's Bureau law?
5. What provision did the act make regarding land?
6. Do you think the Freedmen's Bureau bill was a genuine attempt to assist freedmen and Southern whites, or was it simply an attempt to divide Southern loyalties in the last days of the Civil War? Explain your answer.

### **"The Lay of a Freedman": The *Staunton Spectator***

7. Describe this source: What type of source is it? Where did it come from? When during the Reconstruction period was it published?
8. According to this source, is freedom a "blessing" or a "curse"? Cite examples from the source to back your view.
9. Throughout the source, the words "white man" are featured in italics. Why do you think the poem's author did this?
10. How do you think the author of the *Staunton Spectator* source would have viewed the impact and importance of the Freedmen's Bureau legislation?