

**Assess the value of the source for revealing the aims of Reconstruction during Abraham Lincoln's presidency and the problems experienced by the state of Louisiana. [20]**

**Source 1: A speech by President Abraham Lincoln on Reconstruction made on 11 April 1865, three days before his assassination. He raises the issue of readmitting the Confederate state of Louisiana to the USA.**

We all agree that the seceded States are out of their proper practical relation with the Union; and that the sole object of the government, civil and military, in regard to those States it to again get them into that proper practical relation. It is unsatisfactory to some that the elective franchise is not given to the colored man. I would myself prefer that it were now conferred on the very intelligent, and on those who serve our cause as soldiers.

Some twelve thousand voters in the heretofore slave-state of Louisiana have sworn allegiance to the union, held elections, organized a State government, adopted a free-state constitution giving the benefit of public schools equally to black and white, and empowering the Legislature to confer the elective franchise upon the colored man. Their Legislature has already voted to ratify the constitutional amendment recently passed by Congress, abolishing slavery throughout the nation. These twelve thousand persons are thus fully committed to the Union, and to perpetual freedom in the state and they ask the nation's recognition, and its assistance to make good their committal. To the blacks we say 'This cup of liberty which these, your old masters, hold to your lips, we will dash from you, and leave you to the vague chance of gathering the spilled and scattered contents in some vague and undefined when, where, and how.' I have been unable to perceive it. If, on the contrary, we recognise and sustain the new government of Louisiana the converse of all this is made true. We encourage the hearts, and nerve the arms of the twelve thousand to adhere to their work, and argue for it, and proselyte for it, and fight for it, and feed it, and grow it, and ripen it to a complete success. The colored man too, in seeing all united for him, is inspired with vigilance, and energy and daring, to the same end. Grant that he desires the elective franchise, will he not attain it sooner by saving the already advanced steps towards it, than by running backward over them? Concede that the new government of Louisiana is only to what it should be as the egg is to the fowl, we shall sooner have the fowl by hatching the egg than by smashing it?

**Assess the value of the source for revealing the aims of Reconstruction during Abraham Lincoln's presidency and the problems experienced by the state of Louisiana. [20]**

Source 1 has considerable value for revealing the aims of Reconstruction during Lincoln's presidency. However, the source is less valuable for revealing the problems experienced by the state of Louisiana.

The main claim of the source is that in Lincoln's administration the primary aim was the restoration of the Union, with the Thirteenth Amendment ratified and thus freedom ensured for slaves throughout the country. Whilst Lincoln says he would personally 'prefer' the franchise was extended to some blacks, this is not a key initial aim of his Reconstruction plans. Rather, Lincoln believes with freedom blacks can campaign to gain the vote. Lincoln's desire for reuniting the states is clear when he says that it is the 'sole object of government' to bring them back into 'their proper relation' – the union. This reflects our broader understanding of Lincoln who we know initially fought the civil war not to end slavery, but to preserve his country. That Lincoln sees the Thirteenth Amendment as a key part of Reconstruction is evident when he argues that Louisiana should be re-admitted partly on the grounds that 'their Legislature has already voted to ratify' the amendment and that the twelve thousand people of that state were committed to 'perpetual freedom'. Indeed, Lincoln sees freedom as having to take priority over the vote. He fears that without the stability of the new government of Louisiana the 'cup of liberty' could be 'dash[ed]' from the lips of the blacks. Both Lincoln's focus on freedom and his only partial support for the vote are well-established. He described the Thirteenth Amendment as 'the king of all cures', indicating he believed freedom would solve all the problems African Americans face. Moreover, throughout the war he never declared support for the black vote as a necessary condition for re-admittance. Both the Emancipation Proclamation and the Ten Percent Plan focused on freedom and unity – not the franchise. Thus the main claim of the source broadly matches our wider understanding of Lincoln and his administration's aims.

However, there are some limitations to this source. Whilst the origin of the source – Lincoln himself – is obviously helpful to understanding his views, the president was giving his speech in 1865. It is both possible and likely that Lincoln's views on how to rebuild the country have evolved since the beginning of the Civil War. The views presented here may represent Lincoln's views at their most evolved. For instance, we know that, as Murphy has written, Lincoln began the war to save the Union; it only became a 'crusade to end slavery' after the issuing of the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863. Therefore the source loses value as it reveals Lincoln's views in 1865, in their fully formed state, rather than how they have changed over the course of his presidency. However, on balance, the source's claims about Reconstruction generally reflect our wider knowledge about Lincoln and his aims for the Union, so it does have considerable value for the first enquiry.

For the second enquiry, the source claims, albeit implicitly, that Louisiana's re-admittance is being met with considerable resistance as a result of not having given blacks the vote. Lincoln hints at this when he says it is 'unsatisfactory to some' that the 'franchise' is not given to former slaves. The strength of this resistance is also suggested by the fact Lincoln has to set out not only that he is personally sympathetic to the suffrage question, but also explains all the benefits to blacks Americans the new state constitution of Louisiana will provide. These include 'public schools' and a legislature empowered to 'confer the elective franchise'. Through inferences we can tentatively conclude that Louisiana faced resistance because many in the Union Congress believed it did not go far enough in advancing African American rights.

However, there are considerable limitations to this source in relation to the second enquiry. Firstly, we have to infer the problems Louisiana faced and are given no real specifics on them other than the fact their problems stem from not extending the franchise. We are left to infer the problems the state faced. Moreover, the source is limited by its nature and purpose. In a speech intended to persuade the probably Northern audience to admit Louisiana, Lincoln is likely going to focus on solutions – the freedom to campaign for the vote under the new constitution – rather than the problems. Hence why he optimistically notes that ‘the colored man...in seeing all united for him’ will be ‘inspired’ to fight for the vote. Lincoln would have been well aware of the deep wells of bitterness that the war would have left, but because he is trying to sway his audience to his thinking, he might have focused more on the positives than on the challenges. This reduces the value of the source because it is unlikely that Lincoln is providing a candid, balanced view of the issue. Overall, the fact that the source is relatively light on the detail of the problems Louisiana faced, as well as the significant limitations the source has, means it is of limited value for the second enquiry.

In conclusion, it must be argued that the source is more valuable for the first enquiry than the second. Lincoln is specific about what he believes to be the key parts of Reconstruction, and the claims made in the source are consistent with what we know about his beliefs during the Civil War. Although it has some limitations, it generally has considerable value. By contrast, for the second enquiry the source is of limited value as it is vague on the problems faced by Louisiana and is further undermined by its origin and likely audience.