

Sample Student Responses to Question 1

Student Response 1: Excellent (Score of 9)

The years between 1860 and 1877 presented the people and politicians of the United States with a number of social and constitutional problems which had been mounting for decades. The Civil War and other events would bring each of these to a crisis point, necessitating a final resolution. These ~~resolutions~~ answers and the way in which they were found amounted to a revolution of the American ~~and~~ political and social landscape. Their ~~effects~~ They will effect many future actions in the U.S. and continue to do so today.

The greatest Constitutional conflicts of this time period ~~set were contested over~~ centered around states' rights and the power of the federal government. The line of division was usually between the north and south. This occurred because of their inherent differences, the north being free and industrial, the south being agricultural with slavery. States sometimes attempted to nullify unfavorable laws, such as South Carolina and the tariffs of the early 1800's. This rebellion against federal authority climaxed with the South Carolina secession of 1860. They contended that since the states had founded the Union, they could leave it. The north and the government stated that the people had founded the Union and the states had no right to secede. ~~The~~ South Carolina seceded because it believed the government had impeded on its rights, which were that "powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, are reserved to the states" (10th Amendment). After such drastic actions by South Carolina and the south, the question of states rights needed to be resolved. The victory of the Union in the Civil War provided the

opportunity for this. After this victory, nullification was no longer considered an option for states, while secession was shown to be illegal and unsuccessful. These results increased the power and authority of the federal government by ending the states' contentions over its actions.

The end of the Civil War also brought constitutional questions for the newly restored Union. The conditions of the newly freed blacks raised questions over the authority of the federal government to grant suffrage or legislate civil rights laws. States' rights argued that the Constitution had not delegated this power to the federal government, thereby leaving it to the states. The diary of Gideon Wells shows that these doubts even pervaded the federal government. However, Congress decided that only federal authority could guarantee ^a rights such as suffrage or to give useful civil rights. This was necessary to ensure ^{evenly} equal rights throughout the nation and prevent discrimination by states. The states ratified the 13th and 14th amendments, thereby ~~ceding~~ obdisting power in these areas to the federal government.

The overall results of these constitutional arguments was to increase and solidify the federal government's authority. The states options of nullification and secession were ended permanently. Also, power over suffrage and civil rights were given to the federal government. ~~this~~ This change would allow an amendment to grant women's suffrage by federal authority, allow further civil rights acts such as those under Johnson Lyndon Johnson, and generally increase the areas in which the federal

government would be permitted to legislate. The immensity of this change was noted at the time in the March 23, 1871 issue of Nation. It summarizes these new powers as "the duty ^{of} protecting life and property," and states that such power had not been held by the federal ~~govern~~ government before.

The end of the Civil War also brought social problems in the United States to a resolution point. The emancipation of the slaves presented the need for bestowing upon them the rights of other citizens. The federal government granted them citizenship, civil rights, and suffrage. This brought immense change to the lifestyle of the south. Blacks gained political power and elected many able leaders to spaces in government. Blacks had finally received the ~~regon~~ recognition and respect as Americans they had worked for. The Petition to the Union convention in Tennessee illustrates the great emotion blacks felt in this area. Blacks were also given a chance to improve their economic status by the Freedmen's Bureau. They received free education and other assistance. The Bureau, however, failed to distribute land in large amounts as it was promised to do. This hurt the chances of many blacks, but a large number was still able to reach success.

The reaction of many whites in the South signalled a deeper division there. The Klu Klux Klan moved to suppress the blacks. State government also did this with their Black Codes, which damaged many rights of blacks. These included voting restrictions which made it difficult for blacks to vote. Thomas Nast noted this division and the hatred it contained in his cartoon in Harper's Weekly in 1874.

The social changes of this time period brought many new rights and freedoms to blacks. They were able to attain the privileges of citizenship. However, the reaction of many whites in the South triggered a racial division there which would last for many years and cause many more problems. In this respect, the black revolution was not as complete or successful as had been hoped for.

The time period of ~~1960~~ and between 1860 and 1877 were times of great social change and constitutional evolution. The powers of the federal government were expanded. Blacks were elevated to citizen status and given their civil rights. However, the white reaction caused a racial divide there. These changes occurring simultaneously ~~are~~ certainly amount to a revolution in the American way of life.

Comment: This is a superb answer. It is perceptive, well-organized, and well-written. It uses the documents, mostly implicitly, and has an abundance of outside information. The student has a superior understanding of the revolutionary developments as well as the limitation of such changes.