

# Johnson's First Annual Message to Congress, December 1865

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**DIRECTIONS:** President Johnson explained his approach to Reconstruction (or “restoration,” as he preferred to call it) in his first Annual Message to Congress in December 1865. Fill in the following table to analyze excerpts from Johnson’s restoration plan. Use additional paper if needed.

TOPIC	EXCERPT	PUT THIS IN YOUR OWN WORDS	DO YOU BELIEVE JOHNSON INTERPRETED THE CONSTITUTION CORRECTLY? EXPLAIN.
<b>1. Permanence of the Union and Importance of the Constitution</b>	The Union of the United States of America was intended by its authors to last as long as the States themselves shall last. ...“To form a more perfect Union,” ...is the declared purpose of the Constitution. ...		
<b>2. Relationship of the States to the central government</b>	[I]t is not one of the rights of any State government to renounce its own place in the Union or to nullify the laws of the Union.... The best security for the perpetual existence of the States is the “supreme authority” of the Constitution of the United States...		
<b>3. The right to vote</b>	[The Founders] left each State to decide for itself the conditions for the enjoyment of the elective franchise.		

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<b>4. Amending the Constitution</b>	The adoption of the amendment reunites us beyond all power of disruption; it heals the wound that is still imperfectly closed: it removes slavery, the element which has so long perplexed and divided the country; it makes of us once more a united people....		
<b>5. Justice for the freedmen</b>	Good faith requires the security of the freedmen in their liberty and their property, their right to labor, and their right to claim the just return of their labor.		
<b>6. Equal laws</b>	Our Government springs from and was made for the people—not the people for the Government. ... Here there is no room for favored classes or monopolies; the principle of our Government is that of equal laws and freedom of industry.		