**The Impeachment of Andrew Johnson**

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| **WHY WAS ANDREW JOHNSON IMPEACHED?**The impeachment of President Andrew Johnson was a result of political conflict and the rupture of ideologies in the aftermath of the American Civil War. It rose from uncompromised beliefs and a contest for power in a nation struggling with re-unity.Before Abraham Lincoln was assassinated in 1865, he had formulated a plan of reconstruction that would be lenient toward the defeated South as it rejoined the Union. He planned to grant a general amnesty to those who pledged an oath of loyalty to the United States and agreed to obey all federal laws pertaining to slavery. (The exclusion to the general amnesty would be high-ranking Confederate officials and military leaders.)Lincoln's plan also stated that when a tenth of the voters who had taken part in the 1860 election had agreed to the oath within a particular state, then that state could formulate a new government and start sending representatives to Congress.Andrew Johnson was intent on carrying out this plan when he assumed the Presidency. This policy, however, did not sit well with certain radical Republicans in Congress who wanted to set up military governments and implement more stringent terms for readmission of the seceded states. As neither side was willing to compromise, a clash of wills ensued.The political backing to begin impeachment came when Johnson breached the Tenure of Office Act by removing Edwin Stanton, Secretary of War, from his cabinet. The Tenure of Office Act had been passed over Johnson's veto in 1867 and stated that a President could not dismiss appointed officials without the consent of Congress.Both Lincoln and Johnson had experienced problems with Stanton, an ally of the Radicals in Congress. Stanton's removal, therefore, was not only a political decision made to relieve the discord between the President and his cabinet, but a test for the Tenure of Office Act as well. Johnson believed the Tenure of Office Act was unconstitutional and wanted it to be legally tried in the courts. It was the President, himself, however, who was brought to trial.The House of Representatives voted impeachment and the Senate tried the case. The trial lasted from March to May, 1868. In May, the Senate voted to acquit Andrew Johnson by a margin of 35 guilty to 19 not guilty - one vote short of the two-thirds needed to convict.In 1926 the Supreme Court ruled all Tenure of Office Acts unconstitutional. |



*Andrew Johnson was injured in a train wreck in 1857. Afterwards his right elbow was virtually immobile and he often used a signature stamp for documents.*