

## Emancipation Proclamation

**WebQuest Description:** In this webquest, students will analyze primary source documents to learn the reasons behind the Emancipation Proclamation, measure its success, and determine the degree to which historians are accurate when they say that the Proclamation changed the purpose of the Civil War.

**Grade Level:** 9-12

**Curriculum:** Social Studies

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### Introduction

President Abraham Lincoln drafted and issued the Emancipation Proclamation at the beginning of 1863, stating that slaves in rebel states were free. Historians view this document as a turning point in the Civil War, changing the purpose of the war from preserving the Union to ending the institution of slavery. The Proclamation was but the first step toward ending slavery in the United States, which happened with Amendment 13 two years later.

### Tasks

You will read a number of documents written by various historical figures and answer questions pertaining to them. You will then use your answers to guide you to answer the overarching questions posed by the webquest: What led President Lincoln to draft the Emancipation Proclamation? What short-term and long-term effects did the Proclamation have? Did the Proclamation, as many historians believe, really change the purpose of the Civil War? Did the Proclamation achieve Lincoln's goals?

### Process

Students, To gain a deeper understanding of President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, you will navigate to the following documents and answer the questions for each document. After you have answered these questions, write a one-page reflection to answer the overall questions: What led President Lincoln to draft the Emancipation Proclamation? What short-term and long-term effects did the Proclamation have? Did the Proclamation, as many historians believe, really change the purpose of the Civil War? Did the Proclamation achieve Lincoln's goals? Emancipation Proclamation text <https://www.archives.gov/exhibits/featured-documents/emancipation-proclamation/transcript.html>

1. Upon what authority does Lincoln issue this proclamation?
2. Why is emancipation proclaimed as a "fit and necessary war measure"?
3. Lincoln does not mention the border states of Delaware, Kentucky, Maryland, and Missouri, all of which had slaves, but remained part of the Union. What happened to slaves in these states, according to the Proclamation?
4. Comment on the relatively limited emancipation Lincoln proclaimed.
5. How does language of this document contrast with that of Lincoln's more famous speeches like the Gettysburg Address or the Second Inaugural? Why might the Proclamation's language be more appropriate in this situation and its purpose?

Letter of Mother of a Northern Black Soldier to the President <http://www.freedmen.umd.edu/hjohnsn.htm>

1. Why was this letter written, i.e., what action(s) does the author request of President Lincoln?
2. Upon what grounds does she make her request?
3. What most concerns her regarding the Proclamation?
4. What do we learn from this letter about emancipation?
5. How would you describe the tone of this letter? Is the tone important? Why or why not?

Frederick Douglass's recollection of his meeting with Lincoln after the Proclamation had been announced [http://american\\_almanac.tripod.com/fredlinc.htm](http://american_almanac.tripod.com/fredlinc.htm)

1. What was happening in the North in 1863, according to Douglass?
2. What was Lincoln worried about?
3. What is Douglass's conclusion about Lincoln and the Proclamation?

CSA President Davis's Response to the Proclamation The public journals of the North have been received containing a proclamation dated on the first day of the present month signed by the President of the United States in which he orders and declares all slaves within ten States of the Confederacy to be free, except such as are found in certain districts now occupied in part by the armed forces of the enemy. We may well leave it to the instincts of that common humanity which a beneficent Creator has implanted in the breasts of our fellowmen of all countries to pass judgement on a measure by which several millions of human beings of an inferior race, peaceful and contented laborers in their sphere, are doomed to extermination, while at the same time they are encouraged to a general assassination of their masters by the insidious recommendation to abstain from violence unless in necessary self-defense. Our own detestation of those who have attempted the most execrable measure recorded in the history of guilty man is tempered by profound contempt for the impotent rage which it discloses. So far as regards the action of this Government on such criminals as may attempt its execution I confine myself to informing you that I shall unless in your wisdom you deem some other course more expedient deliver to the several State authorities all commissioned officers of the United States that may hereafter be captured by our forces in any of the States embraced in the proclamation that they may be dealt with in accordance with the laws of those States providing for the punishment of criminals engaged in exciting servile insurrection. The enlisted soldiers I shall continue to treat as unwilling instruments in the commission of these crimes and shall direct their discharge and return to their homes on the proper and usual parole.

1. What does Davis fear will happen to slave owners?
2. What is Davis's threat to Union officers who command Black soldiers?
3. What does Davis say about Blacks as a race?

## Evaluation

Students will be evaluated based on their completion of the questions pertaining to the documents and their concluding one-page reflection in response to the overarching questions of this assignment.

Category and Score	0	1	2	5	Score
Document Questions	Not all questions answered	Questions answered without much thought	Many questions answered throughly	All questions answered thoroughly	5
Concluding paper	Paper neither is correct length or answers all questions	Paper is either one page or answers some questions, but not both	Paper is one-page and answers some of the questions	Paper is one page and answers all questions	5
				Total Score	10

## Conclusion

Americans still argue about the causes and the meanings of the Civil War. We see this in the current debates over the Confederate battle flag, as well as with statues of Confederate soldiers and commanders. People answer these questions differently depending on where they live and how they understand the Civil War. The goal of this webquest has been to equip you with a deep understanding of the Emancipation Proclamation, how it affected the war's purpose, and its long-term effects. To learn more about the Proclamation's lasting impact, Lincoln's reputation of the Great Emancipator, and to hear from former slaves themselves, take a look at the fantastic Backstory podcasts at <https://www.backstoryradio.org/shows/henceforth-free/>.

## Teacher Page

Understanding the Emancipation Proclamation is crucial to understanding the answer to the oft-asked question: Why was the Civil War fought? Lincoln considered the document his crowning achievement, saying, "it is the central act of my administration and the great event of the nineteenth century." This webquest will help students understand this often-confusing document, its background, and its consequences by exploring the writing of people who both praised and degraded it.

### Standards

Common Core Standards CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information. CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.2 Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text. CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.9-10.1 Write arguments focused on discipline-specific content. CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.9-10.7 Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation. National History Standards for Grades 5-12: Era 5: Civil War and Reconstruction (1850-1877) STANDARD 2A: The course and character of the Civil War and its effects on the American people. Identify the turning points of the war and evaluate how political, military, and diplomatic leadership affected the outcome of the conflict. [Assess the importance of the individual in history] Evaluate provisions of the Emancipation Proclamation, Lincoln's reasons for issuing it, and its significance. [Examine the influence of ideas]

### Credits

Thank you to SHEG and Edsitement for gathering some of the sources used for this webquest.

### Other