

# Emancipation Proclamation

## By The President of The United States Of America: A PROCLAMATION.

Whereas, on the twenty second day of September, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty two, a proclamation was issued by the President of the United States, containing, among other things, the following, to wit: "That on the first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, **all persons held as slaves within any State or designated part of a State, the people whereof shall then be in rebellion against the United States, shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free;** and the Executive Government of the United States, including the military and naval authority thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of such persons, and will do no act or acts to repress such persons, or any of them, in any efforts they may make for their actual freedom.

\*\*\*\*\*"That the Executive will, on the first day of January aforesaid, by proclamation, designate the States and parts of States, if any, in which the people thereof, respectively, shall then be in rebellion against the United States; and the fact that any State, or the people thereof, shall on that day be, in good faith, represented in the Congress of the United States by members chosen thereto at elections wherein a majority of the qualified voters of such State shall have participated, shall, in the absence of strong countervailing testimony, be deemed conclusive evidence that such State, and the people thereof, are not then in rebellion against the United States." (*Why is this paragraph important?*)\*\*\*\*\*

Now, therefore I, Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States, by virtue of the power in me vested as Commander-in-Chief, of the Army and Navy of the United States in time of actual armed rebellion against authority and government of the United States, and **as a fit and necessary war measure for suppressing said rebellion**, do, on this first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty three, and in accordance with my purpose so to do publicly proclaimed for the full period of one hundred days, from the day first above mentioned, order and designate as the States and parts of States wherein the people thereof respectively, are this day in rebellion against the United States, the following, to wit: Arkansas, Texas, Louisiana, (except the Parishes of St. Bernard, Plaquemines, Jefferson, St. Johns, St. Charles, St. James, Ascension, Assumption, Terrebonne, Lafourche, St. Mary, St. Martin, and Orleans, including the City of New-Orleans) Mississippi, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, South-Carolina, North-Carolina, and Virginia, (except the fortyeight counties designated as West Virginia, and also the counties of Berkley, Accomac, Northampton, Elizabeth-City, York, Princess Ann, and Norfolk, including the cities of Norfolk & Portsmouth); and which excepted parts are, for the present, left precisely as if this proclamation were not issued.

And by virtue of the power, and for the purpose aforesaid, **I do order and declare that all persons held as slaves within said designated States, and parts of States, are, and henceforward shall be free;** and that the Executive government of the United States, including the military and naval authorities thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of said persons.

\*\*\*\*\*And I hereby enjoin upon the people so declared to be free to abstain from all violence, unless in necessary self-defense; and I recommend to them that, in all cases when allowed, they labor faithfully for reasonable wages. (*Why is this paragraph important?*)\*\*\*\*\*

And I further declare and make known, that such persons of suitable condition, will be received into the armed service of the United States to garrison forts, positions, stations, and other places, and to man vessels of all sorts in said service.

And upon this act, sincerely believed to be an act of justice, warranted by the Constitution, upon military necessity, ***I invoke the considerate judgment of mankind, and the gracious favor of Almighty God.***

In witness whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the seal of the United States to be affixed. Done at the City of Washington, this first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty three, and of the Independence of the United States of America the eighty-seventh.



## WHAT IS YOUR OPINION OF THE EMANCIPATION PROCLAMATION?

Read the Emancipation Proclamation carefully. **Bold phrases** are seen as strengths and underlined sections are weaknesses.

**Is it one of the greatest documents in American History?**

**OR Is it a convoluted piece of political jargon filled with compromise and empty promises?**

**State your opinion in your own words:**

**The Emancipation Proclamation is**

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**because**

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**List the three reasons you believe this, and include quotes to support your opinion:**

**1.**

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**2.**

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**3.**

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**On a separate sheet elaborate on these reasons and then restate your opinion in different words.**

**HERE IS WHAT OTHERS HAVE SAID:**



"If the Proclamation of Emancipation was essentially a war measure, it had the desired effect of creating confusion in the South and depriving the Confederacy of much of its valuable laboring force. If it was a diplomatic document, it succeeded in rallying to the Northern cause thousands of English and European laborers who were anxious to see workers gain their freedom throughout the world. If it was a humanitarian document, it gave hope to millions of Negroes that a better day lay ahead, and it renewed the faith of thousands of crusaders who had fought long to win freedom in America," **Historian John Hope Franklin.**

"To fight against slaveholders, without fighting against slavery, is but a half-hearted business. War for the destruction of liberty must be met with war for the destruction of slavery." **Frederick Douglass.**

**Other Lincoln Quotes:**

"When I hear anyone arguing for slavery, I feel a strong impulse to see it tried on him personally."

"A house divided against itself cannot stand. I believe this government cannot endure permanently half slave and half free."

**All of the quotes on this page are from this excellent web site: [www.mrlincolnanandfreedom.org](http://www.mrlincolnanandfreedom.org)**

**Allow students to read the Emancipation Proclamation within the context of a small group and then discuss their interpretation.** Challenge them to pick it apart, paragraph by paragraph, paying particular attention to the sections that I underlined or made bold. Please note **bold sections** are generally viewed as **positive** and underlined sections are seen as weaknesses. As their teacher write your own opinion paper as an example and share mine with your students **AFTER** they have written their persuasive essays.



***Here is My Opinion:***

The Declaration of Independence proclaimed our freedom as a nation, and the Emancipation Proclamation declared that in fact, all men should share in these freedoms. The Emancipation Proclamation is one of the cornerstones of democracy, a document as important as the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of these United States.

Abraham Lincoln is remembered as the great emancipator for good reasons, by proclaiming that ALL men are free he moved our nation several steps down the road towards the high ideals set forth by the founding fathers. Though these ideals are not yet fully realized, The Emancipation Proclamation made it clear that we need to free the slaves, asking for “the judgment of mankind and the gracious favor of God” that this is the right thing to do.

Some might erroneously argue that it is a legal document fraught with compromise, loopholes and empty promises. Yes, he wisely made compromises, but this was clearly a first step. As Lincoln said, “A House divided against itself cannot stand. I believe this government cannot endure permanently half slave and half free.” Though the Proclamation is a legal document with clauses and exceptions, Lincoln

never took his eyes from the prize. He worked tirelessly to end slavery, knowing that small steps forward lead in the right direction.

Some might say he only freed the slaves in the Confederate states, where he had no power. Lincoln exercised the power vested in him as the Commander-in-Chief. He never recognized the Confederate states as a separate nation, they were part of the Union in rebellion, so he rightfully believed he still had power over them. He freed the slaves in the rebellious states as a first step. Though it was left unsaid, it would be hard to believe he planned to allow the Border states to keep their slaves. Clearly he did not wish to offend the Border states, who were still part of the union; he did not want them to join the rebellion. But they had to know that eventually slavery would be banished there as well.

Lincoln made the best choice for the moment. He made a bold step forward when the time was right. As historian John Hope Franklin so succinctly explained "If the Proclamation of Emancipation was essentially a war measure, it had the desired effect of creating confusion in the South and depriving the Confederacy of much of its valuable laboring force. If it was a diplomatic document, it succeeded in rallying to the Northern cause thousands of English and European laborers who were anxious to see workers gain their freedom throughout the world. If it was a humanitarian document, it gave hope to millions of Negroes that a better day lay ahead, and it renewed the faith of thousands of crusaders who had fought long to win freedom in America."

Furthermore, by encouraging the freed men to join the fight he added to the ranks. Most scholars would agree that the colored troops tipped the scale. These former slaves were not just fighting for some high ideal or lofty goal, it was a passionate struggle for their personal freedom and for the freedom of their families. When Lincoln said, “And I further declare and make known, that such persons of suitable condition, will be received into the armed service of the United States,” the Emancipation Proclamation became a call to arms, a tool for recruiting the men who would eventually help Lincoln ‘suppress the rebellion.’

He also astutely allayed the fears of those who remembered John Brown’s rebellion by stating that he “enjoin upon the people so declared to be free to abstain from all violence, unless in necessary self-defense.” He eased the concerns of workers that worried about a glut of cheap labor: “and I recommend to them that, in all cases when allowed, they labor faithfully for reasonable wages.”

As a political document to ease the concerns of opponents, as a military document and means of winning the war, and most importantly as a moral document expressing the highest ideals of humanity, the Emancipation Proclamation succeeded on all fronts. It deserves its place as one of the most important cornerstones of freedom and democracy!

By **Brian “Fox” Ellis**