

UNIT 1 ESSAY PROMPT

Essay Prompt

"In bringing about the end of slavery, the Emancipation Proclamation of 1863 was not nearly as important as the 13th Amendment of 1865." Assess the validity of this statement.

Use your knowledge on the issue of slavery, the end of slavery and the Emancipation Proclamation along with the documents to prepare a response to the question in a 5 paragraph essay.

The Emancipation Proclamation

On July 22, 1862, as the Civil War raged, President Abraham Lincoln told his Cabinet he had decided to issue a proclamation the key part of which stated the following:

"All persons held as slaves within any state or designated part of a state, the people whereof shall be in rebellion against the United States, shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free ..."

Except for the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution, no other official document may have been more important in shaping the nation's future than this one, the Emancipation Proclamation.

In the summer of 1862, the Civil War was not going well for the North. At first, Lincoln had said he was fighting the South to save the Union, not to end slavery. He feared that freeing slaves now might be seen as a sign of weakness and Northern despair. So he waited for a key Northern victory in the war. In September of 1862, the North stopped General Robert E. Lee's forces in Maryland at the battle of Antietam. Hence, on September 22, Lincoln issued a preliminary Emancipation Proclamation. It gave the South until January 1, 1863, (one hundred days) to stop its rebellion.

When January 1, 1863, arrived, the official Emancipation Proclamation freed slaves in all areas still in rebellion. It was a day of celebration, a day after which Lincoln began to be called "The Great Emancipator." Abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison called the proclamation "a great historic event, sublime, in its magnitude, momentous and beneficent in its far-reaching consequences."

Yet not all historians have been this kind. After all, the proclamation only freed slaves in areas still in rebellion. It left slavery alone in the border states that Lincoln desperately wanted to keep on the North's side. The

slaves it freed were mainly out of reach in rebel-held areas. Nor did the proclamation include grand principles or ringing phrases condemning slavery outright. It freed only some slaves, and only as a war measure at a time of national crisis.

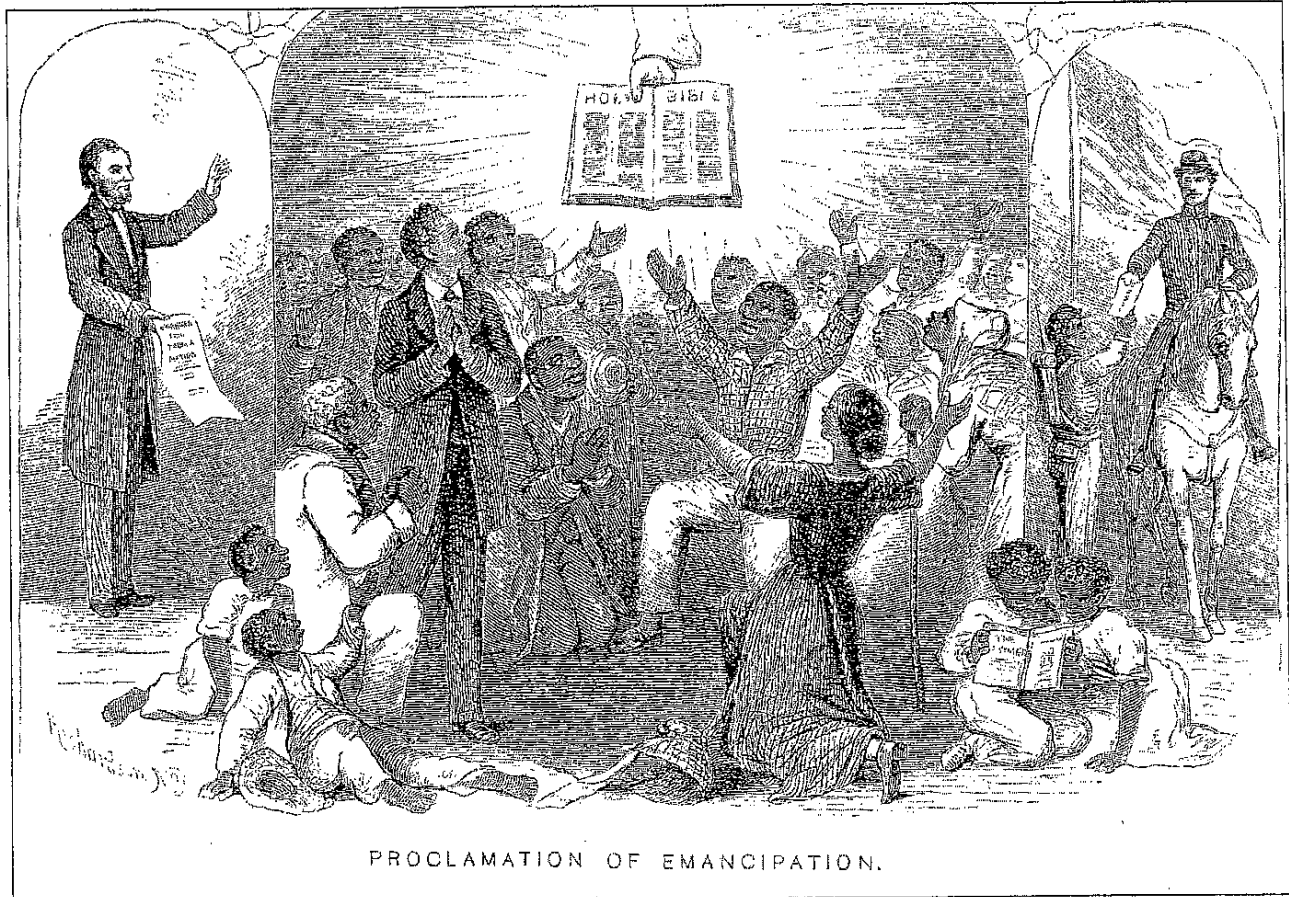
Historians also suggest that Lincoln never really cared about slavery all that much and only freed the slaves to help achieve his real goal, saving the Union. After all, in a letter to editor Horace Greely, Lincoln himself said, "If I could save the Union without freeing any slave, I would do it, and if I could save it by freeing all the slaves, I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing some and leaving others alone I would also do that."

Yet in recent years, some historians have offered a different view of all this. They make the case that Lincoln had in fact always seen slavery as a great wrong and did want to end it. However, they say Lincoln was just as concerned about the means used to achieve that goal as he was about the goal itself. These means had to be strictly constitutional. Lincoln felt duty-bound to act constitutionally. If he did not, he also felt his actions would be overturned by courts or in some other way.

This is why he stopped some of his generals when they freed slaves on their own. And he himself waited to act until he could justify the step as absolutely necessary to winning the war. At that point, he could then use his powers as Commander in Chief of the Army and Navy to order an end to slavery — but still only in areas where doing so would aid the war effort. However, according to this view, even this more limited step doomed slavery in the long run anyway.

The four documents here should help you take part intelligently in this ongoing debate about Lincoln, slavery and the Emancipation Proclamation.

Primary Source Document 1



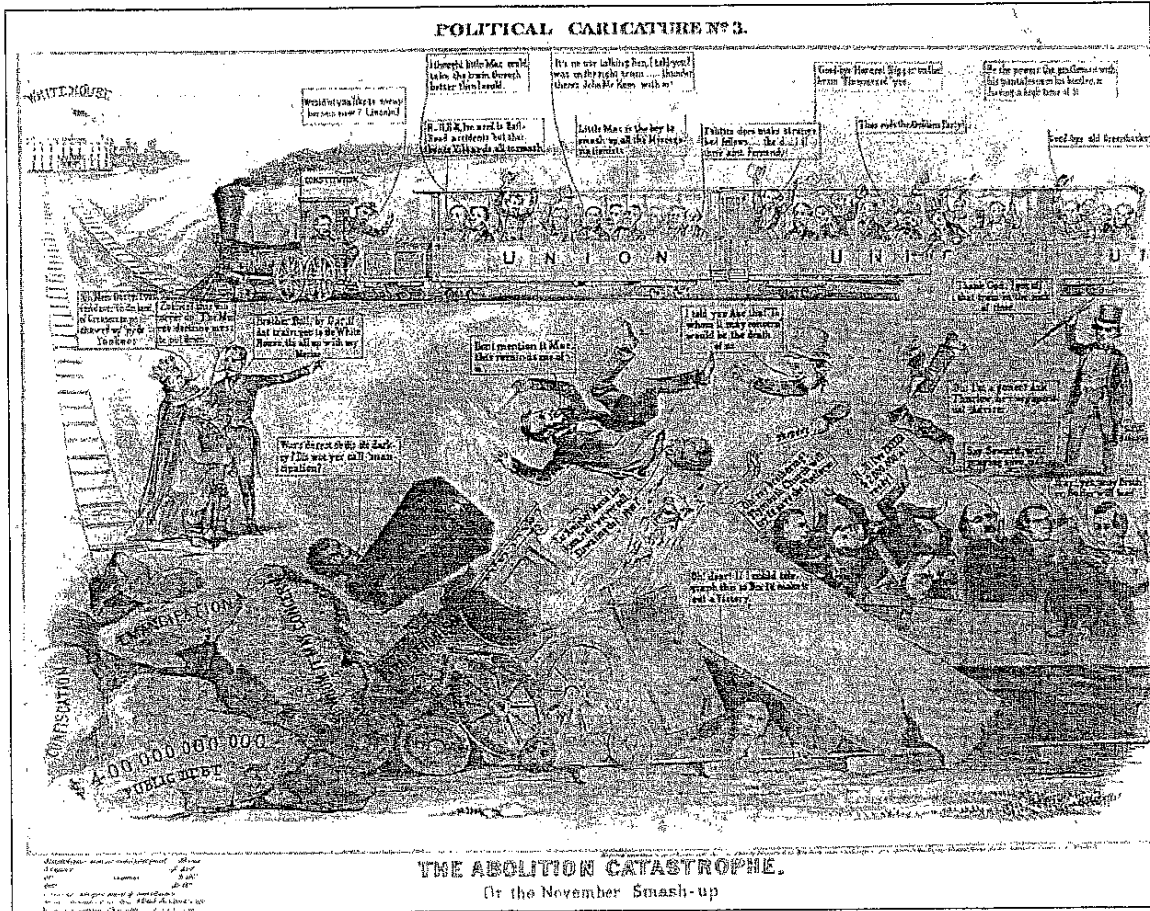
Courtesy of the Library of Congress

Information on Document

This drawing was created and published sometime between 1865 and 1880. It is titled "Proclamation of Emancipation." In its center panel, liberated black slaves kneel and rejoice, looking up to the Holy Bible being held above them. In the left panel, Abraham Lincoln holds up the Emancipation

Proclamation. In the right panel, a soldier on horseback hands a paper of some sort down to a black soldier standing beside him. This probably refers to one part of the Emancipation Proclamation allowing the freed slaves into the armed services to help fight for the Union in the Civil War.

Primary Source Document 2



1864, Bromley & Co., New York. Courtesy of the Library of Congress

Information on Document

This 1864 cartoon is titled "The Abolition Catastrophe." 1864 was an election year. In the cartoon, Democratic candidate George B. McClellan waves from the engine of a train heading straight for the White House. The engine flies a flag labeled "Constitution." The other cars are labeled "Union" and are filled with happy Democrats. McClellan taunts, "Wouldn't you like to swap horses now? Lincoln?" (probably a reference to Lincoln's replacement of him as commander of the Army of the Potomac). Several passengers comment on the wreck of the Republican train

below. These comments refer to many different politicians and issues of the day, many not that important to the cartoon's main message. One figure announces, "Little Mac is the boy to smash up all the Miscegenationists." Another says, "Thus ends the Abolition Party!" Below, Lincoln's train has crashed on rocks labeled "Confiscation," "Emancipation," "\$400,000,000,000 Public Debt," "Abolitionism," etc. Lincoln himself is hurled into the air, a black man crushed in the wreck mocks Lincoln, asking him if this is what he means by emancipation.

Primary Source Document 3

Information on Document

This is the major portion of an April 4, 1864, letter President Lincoln sent to three important leaders in Kentucky. Earlier in March, these three had met to discuss border state problems with the president and had asked him for a summary of that discussion. This letter was his summary. The "border states" were Kentucky, Maryland, Delaware and Missouri. These were slave-holding states along the border with the North whose loyalties were either with the North or were divided in various ways.

"I am naturally anti-slavery. If slavery is not wrong, nothing is wrong. I can not remember when I did not so think, and feel. And yet I have never understood that the Presidency conferred upon me an unrestricted right to act officially upon this judgment and feeling. It was in the oath I took that I would, to the best of my ability, preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution of the United States. I could not take the office without taking the oath. Nor was it my view that I might take an oath to get power, and break the oath using the power. I understood, too, that in ordinary civil administration this oath even forbade me to practically indulge my primary abstract judgment on the moral question of slavery. ...

"I did understand, however, that my oath to preserve the Constitution to the best of my ability, imposed upon me the duty of preserving, by every indispensable means, that government — that nation — of which that Constitution was the organic law. ... I could not feel that, to the best of my ability, I had even tried to preserve the Constitution, if, to save slavery, or any minor matter, I should permit the wreck of government, country, and Constitution all together. When, early in the war, Gen. Fremont attempted military emancipation, I forbade it, because I did not then think it an indispensable necessity. When a little later, Gen. Cameron, then Secretary of War, suggested the arming of the blacks, I objected, because I did not yet think it an

indispensable necessity. When, still later, Gen. Hunter attempted military emancipation, I again forbade it, because I did not yet think the indispensable necessity had come. When, in March, and May, and July 1862 I made earnest, and successive appeals to the border states to favor compensated emancipation, I believed the indispensable necessity for military emancipation, and arming the blacks would come, unless averted by that measure. They declined the proposition; and I was, in my best judgment, driven to the alternative of either surrendering the Union, and with it, the Constitution, or of laying strong hand upon the colored element. I chose the latter. ...

"I add a word which was not in the verbal conversation. In telling this tale I attempt no compliment to my own sagacity. I claim not to have controlled events, but confess plainly that events have controlled me. Now, at the end of three years struggle the nation's condition is not what either party, or any man devised, or expected. God alone can claim it. Whither it is tending seems plain. If God now wills the removal of a great wrong, and wills also that we of the North as well as you of the South, shall pay fairly for our complicity in that wrong, impartial history will find therein new cause to attest and revere the justice and goodness of God."

Primary Source Document 4

Information on Document

These are the lyrics to "Emancipation: Song and Chorus," published by Oliver Ditson & co., in Boston, Massachusetts, sometime in 1864. The title page of the songsheet includes the heading, "Dedicated to all Lovers of Freedom." The Emancipation Proclamation did not free all the slaves. That only occurred with the passage of the 13th Amendment to the Constitution in 1865. Nevertheless, this song strongly suggests that full freedom for all the slaves was inevitable.

Emancipation: Song and Chorus

In this land of the free, not a slave shall there be
As a cause for rebellion or treason
Each fetter and chain in the sod shall be lain
For this, if for no other reason.

Chorus:

As brothers all, then follow the call,
For Freedom and Emancipation;
A man is a man, deny it who can,
It shall be so at least in this nation.

Oh, who is so vile as to linger and smile
When a man to the slave pen is driven,
And sold like a beast, his poor body at least,
Tho' his soul may be ransomed in Heaven.

With the blood of the slain, we'll wipe out the stain
Which forced men to blush for this nation
That bartered and sold men and women for gold
Who oft were of kindred relation.

A white slave or black, is a man for all that,
Tho' the law may deny him his station,
The birthright of all is to join in the call
For God and for Emancipation.

We offer the hand to all in this land
Who are fighting for our preservation,
Upholding just laws and Freedoms' great cause
And the Union of all this great nation.

The nation shall grow and to other lands show,
This Republic is firm in foundation,
And Despots shall feel that republican steel,
Is sharp in defense of this nation.

This land of the free still a refuge shall be
For all the oppress'd who are driven
To exile from home, to as many as come,
To each an asylum is given.

Then join in the cry 'till it reaches the sky,
And there is recorded forever,
There'll not be a slave, in this "home of the brave"
If there is, we his fetters will sever.

Primary Source Document 5

Information on Document

The 13th amendment, which formally abolished slavery in the United States, passed the Senate on April 8, 1864, and the House on January 31, 1865. On February 1, 1865, President Abraham Lincoln approved the Joint Resolution of Congress submitting the proposed amendment to the state legislatures. The necessary number of states ratified it by December 6, 1865. The 13th amendment to the United States Constitution provides that "Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction."

In 1863 President Lincoln had issued the Emancipation Proclamation declaring "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." Nonetheless, the Emancipation Proclamation did not end slavery in the nation. Lincoln recognized that the Emancipation Proclamation would have to be followed by a constitutional amendment in order to guarantee the abolishment of slavery.

The 13th amendment was passed at the end of the Civil War before the Southern states had been restored to the Union and should have easily passed the Congress. Although the Senate passed it in April 1864, the House did not. At that point, Lincoln took an active role to ensure passage through congress. He insisted that passage of the 13th amendment be added to the Republican Party platform for the upcoming Presidential elections. His efforts met with success when the House passed the bill in January 1865 with a vote of 119–56.

With the adoption of the 13th amendment, the United States found a final constitutional solution to the issue of slavery. The 13th amendment, along with the 14th and 15th, is one of the trio of Civil War amendments that greatly expanded the civil rights of Americans.

AMENDMENT XIII

Section 1.

Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.

Section 2.

Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.

Passed by Congress January 31, 1865. Ratified December 6, 1865.

Note: A portion of Article IV, section 2, of the Constitution was superseded by the 13th amendment.