

#EPNow

Within weeks of moving to his Cottage, President Lincoln began to craft the Emancipation Proclamation, which paved the way to freedom for millions of slaves in the United States. Supporters of the document viewed it as a crucial step toward greater freedom, while detractors declared it a violation of the U.S. Constitution and civil liberties. President Lincoln revised the Emancipation Proclamation until the day it was issued; however, many consider that the document lacked the eloquence we typically associate with the wartime President.

The Emancipation Proclamation remains a testament to Lincoln's hope for an America free from slavery. This exercise will acquaint students with the rhetorical tools used in the Emancipation Proclamation, and help them understand its lasting meaning for their lives today.

This exercise is designed for students in grades 6-12 and can be adapted to address curriculum areas in social studies, language arts, and technology.

Materials

- ~ Transcribed copies of the January 1, 1863 Emancipation Proclamation found at www.lincolncottage.org/visit/education
- ~ Facilitator notes found at www.lincolncottage.org/visit/education

Directions

- ~ Prior to the exercise, print a transcribed copy of the Emancipation Proclamation for each student. This transcription, as well as a printable version of the January 1, 1863 Proclamation.
- ~ Distribute a copy of the Emancipation Proclamation to each student and explain that you will analyze the document by doing a close reading of Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation
 - A close reading is defined as the careful, sustained interpretation of a passage of text
- ~ Have students volunteer to read the Proclamation aloud, line-by-line.

- ~ After each sentence, lead students in an analysis of that sentence by asking questions that encourage them to consider each sentence in its legal, historical, and rhetorical context
- ~ At the conclusion of the close reading, ask students to write a “tweet” that answers the question: How has the Emancipation Proclamation affected my life today?
 - A “tweet” is a status or post on the popular social networking site, Twitter. Tweets are brief and must contain 140 characters (letters, numbers, symbols, etc.) or less. Tweets are organized by a hashtag (#) and are used to mark key words or topics in a tweet. For this exercise, tweets are used to challenge students to synthesize and make meaning of the Emancipation Proclamation in their lives today in a concise, thoughtful way.
- ~ Once each student has written and shared their tweets with the rest of the class, email the results to President Lincoln’s Cottage at LincolnEd@savingplaces.org. Cottage staff will tweet each response from their Twitter account ([Twitter.com/emancipation150](https://twitter.com/emancipation150)) using the hashtag #EPNow. Remember, hashtags count toward the total number of characters used, so students will only have 132 characters available! (President Lincoln’s Cottage may need to change the exact wording of some tweets to make sure they fit the character limit.)

.....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.

The Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation was issued on September 22, 1862, but the civil War started in April, 1861. Why do you think Lincoln waited so long to strike a blow against slavery?

In this first passage, the words "person" and "people" appear several times. During the Civil War, who was excluded from the legal definitions of these words?

How might the government "recognize and maintain" the new-found freedom given to "such persons" in the Emancipation Proclamation? Until this point, how had the government repressed such persons? Why did Lincoln feel compelled to add this to the Proclamation?

"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."

What does the word "rebellion" mean? Why did President Lincoln declare that only slaves held in states rebelling against the Union would be free? At the time the Emancipation Proclamation was written, who was in rebellion against the United States? Why do you think Lincoln left slavery alone in these states?

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 the 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. John, 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 forty-eight 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 and Portsmouth)], and which excepted parts, are for the present, left precisely as if this proclamation were not issued.

In this passage, Lincoln invoked his power not only as President of the United States, but also as Commander in Chief of the Union Army and Navy. Why did he include both? Which document gave him that power? What does this tell you about Lincoln's goals with regard to the war?

Why was Lincoln careful to exempt several states or parts of states from the Emancipation Proclamation?

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.

Lincoln was concerned about including the phrase "forever free" in the final Emancipation Proclamation as he had done in the Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation, and instead says that slaves "are, and henceforward shall be free" in the final version. Why do you think Lincoln was concerned about using the word "free"? What might prevent "forever" from becoming a reality?

And I hereby enjoin upon the people so declared to be free to abstain from all violence, unless in necessary self-defence; and I recommend to them that, in all cases when allowed, they labor faithfully for reasonable wages.

Why do you think Lincoln felt it necessary to warn those newly freed against violent acts? Who do you think might have been his secondary audience? Why do you think

Lincoln encouraged them also to “labor faithfully”? Why might this be an important concept to Lincoln?

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.

What do you think Lincoln meant by “suitable conditions”? What aspect of military duty is not explicitly mentioned in the Emancipation Proclamation?

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.

Is it important that the phrases “an act of justice” and “warranted by the Constitution, upon military necessity,” appear in this particular order? Why or why not? Does this reveal anything about Lincoln’s motives?

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.

One hundred days passed between the Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation and the final Emancipation Proclamation that went into effect on January 1, 1863. Why did Lincoln feel the need to issue a Preliminary Proclamation that gave warning of a final Proclamation that was to come?

By the President: ABRAHAM LINCOLN
WILLIAM H. SEWARD, Secretary of State.

.....Taking it Further.....

After leading students through a close reading of Lincoln’s January 1, 1863 Emancipation Proclamation, consider leading students through President Barack Obama’s proclamation declaring January 2012 National Slavery and Human Trafficking Prevention Month from December 31, 2011. Lead students in a similar close reading exercise to discover information about modern slavery, a growing humanitarian crisis in the United States, and the impact the Emancipation Proclamation has on legislation today. Copies of this Proclamation are found at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/12/30/presidential-proclamation-national-slavery-and-human-trafficking-prevent>.