

The Emancipation Proclamation

One of Abraham Lincoln's many legacies was the Emancipation Proclamation, freeing slaves from the Southern states in rebellion. This document was issued on January 1, 1863, months after the Confederate invasion of Maryland was repulsed at the Battle of Antietam. Abraham Lincoln had long believed slavery to be an outdated evil standing against the freedoms America proclaimed in both the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. The Emancipation Proclamation was the beginning of the end of slavery, even though it did not free slaves in border states or Union-occupied territory.

Emancipation Proclamation

“...And by virtue of the power, and for the purpose aforesaid, do I order and declare that all persons held as slaves within the 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.

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...”

(excerpted from Don E. Fehrenbacher, Abraham Lincoln; A Documentary Portrait Through His Speeches and Writings (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1964).

Questions

1. Who does the Emancipation Proclamation exclude from freedom and why?
2. What two things does Lincoln ask former slaves to do?
3. What things can slaves do to help the American military?
4. Lincoln believes what things give him the right to free slaves?
5. How do you think this Proclamation was received by a Southerner during the Civil War? A Northerner? A slave from a Confederate state? A slave from a border state?