



Name: _____ Date: _____

The Emancipation Proclamation (1863)

Proclamation

The Emancipation Proclamation is an executive order issued by United States President Abraham Lincoln on January 1, 1863, during the American Civil War using his war powers. It proclaimed the freedom of slaves in the ten states then in rebellion, thus applying to 3.1 million of the 4 million slaves in the U.S. at that time. The Proclamation immediately freed 50,000 slaves, with nearly all the rest (of the 3.1 million) freed as Union armies advanced. The Proclamation did not compensate the owners, did not itself outlaw slavery, and did not make the ex-slaves (called freedmen) citizens.

Authority

Lincoln issued the Proclamation under his authority as "Commander in Chief of the Army and Navy" under Article II, section 2 of the United States Constitution. As such, he had the martial power to suspend civil law in those states which were in rebellion. He did not have Commander-in-Chief authority over the four slave-holding states that had not seceded: Missouri, Kentucky, Maryland and Delaware. The Emancipation Proclamation was never challenged in court. To ensure the abolition of slavery everywhere in the U.S., Lincoln pushed for passage of the Thirteenth Amendment. Congress passed it by the necessary 2/3 vote in February 1865 and it was ratified by the states by December 1865.

Immediate impact

It is common to encounter a claim that the Emancipation Proclamation did not immediately free a single slave. As a result of the Proclamation, many slaves were freed during the course of the war, beginning with the day it took effect. Eyewitness accounts at places such as Hilton Head, South Carolina, and Port Royal, South Carolina, record celebrations on January 1 as thousands of blacks were informed of their new legal status of freedom.

Estimates of the number of slaves freed immediately by the Emancipation Proclamation are uncertain. One contemporary estimate put the 'contraband' population of Union-occupied North Carolina at 10,000, and the Sea Islands of South Carolina also had a substantial population. Those 20,000 slaves were freed immediately by the Emancipation Proclamation." This Union-occupied zone where freedom began at once included parts of eastern North Carolina, the Mississippi Valley, northern Alabama, the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia, a large part of Arkansas, and the Sea Islands of Georgia and South Carolina. Although some counties of Union-occupied Virginia were exempted from the Proclamation, the lower Shenandoah Valley, and the area around Alexandria were covered.

The Emancipation took place without violence by masters or ex-slaves. The proclamation represented a shift in the war objectives of the North—reuniting the nation was no longer the only goal. It represented a major step toward the ultimate abolition of slavery in the United States and a "new birth of freedom".

1. What was the Emancipation Proclamation? When did it occur?

2. Were slaves freed everywhere? Why or why not?

3. Why would Lincoln chose to enact the Emancipation Proclamation in the way that he did? What were the obstacles he faced? (political, social, economic)

Political	Social	Economic

4. What was the short-term impact of the Emancipation Proclamation?

5. What was the long-term impact of the Emancipation Proclamation?

6. How were the slaves finally freed?