



150 years ago (22 Sep 1862)

U.S. President Abraham Lincoln issued the first Emancipation Proclamation, ordering the freeing of slaves in the Confederate-held territories from 1st January 1863.

[Use this and the material that follows as directed by your teacher.](#)

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 was not a law passed by Congress. 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.

On September 22, 1862, Lincoln issued a preliminary proclamation that he would order the emancipation of all slaves in any state of the Confederate States of America that did not return to Union control by January 1, 1863. None returned, and the order, signed and issued January 1, 1863, took effect except in locations where the Union had already mostly regained control. The Proclamation made abolition a central goal of the war (in addition to reunion), outraged white Southerners who envisioned a race war, angered some Northern Democrats, energized anti-slavery forces, and weakened forces in Europe that wanted to intervene to help the Confederacy.

Slavery was made illegal everywhere in the U.S. by the Thirteenth Amendment, which took effect in December 1865. [For more, see Wikipedia: Emancipation Proclamation](#)

Almost from the beginning of his administration, Lincoln was pressured by abolitionists and radical Republicans to issue an Emancipation Proclamation. In principle, Lincoln approved, but he postponed action against slavery until he believed he had wider support from the American Public. The passage of the Second Confiscation Act by Congress on July 17, 1862, which freed the slaves of everyone in rebellion against the government, provided the desired signal. Not only had Congress relieved the Administration of considerable strain with its limited initiative on emancipation, it demonstrated an increasing public abhorrence toward slavery.

Lincoln had already drafted what he termed his "Preliminary Proclamation." He read his initial draft of the Emancipation Proclamation to Secretaries William H. Seward and Gideon Welles on July 13, 1862. For a moment, both Secretaries were speechless. Quickly collecting his thoughts, Seward said something about anarchy in the South and possible foreign intervention, but with Welles apparently too confused to respond, Lincoln let the matter drop.



**Brett (A.) & Co.
Abraham Lincoln.**

N.Y. Jones & Clark [186?].
(Library of Congress, Stern
Collection, Rare Book and
Special Collections Division.)

Nine days later, on July 22, Lincoln raised the issue in a regularly scheduled Cabinet meeting. The reaction was mixed. Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton, correctly interpreting the Proclamation as a military measure designed both to deprive the Confederacy of slave labor and bring additional men into the Union Army, advocated its immediate release. Treasury Secretary Salmon P. Chase was equally supportive, but Montgomery Blair, the Postmaster General, foresaw defeat in the fall elections. Attorney General Edward Bates, a conservative, opposed civil and political equality for Blacks but gave his qualified support. Fortunately, President Lincoln only wanted the advice of his Cabinet on the style of the Proclamation, not its substance. The course was set.

The Cabinet meeting of September 22, 1862, resulted in the political and literary refinement of the July draft, and on January 1, 1863, Lincoln composed the final Emancipation Proclamation. It was the crowning achievement of his administration.

The original autograph was lost in the Chicago fire of 1871. Surviving photographs of the document show it primarily in Lincoln's own hand. The superscription and ending are in the hand of a clerk, and the printed insertions are from the September draft.

Gallery showing the original Emancipation Proclamation

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/alhtml/alms/dep001.html>

TOP TEN FACTS ABOUT THE EMANCIPATION PROCLAMATION

1. Freedom of all slaves. The Emancipation Proclamation consists of two executive orders issued by President Abraham Lincoln during the American Civil War. The first one was issued September 22, 1862, and it declared the freedom of all slaves in any state of the then Confederate States of America.

2. *The naming of specific states*

Not all slaves were freed until the second of the two executive orders was issued on January 1, 1863. This order named the specific states where the Emancipation Proclamation applied. There were many attacks made at this time as the Emancipation Proclamation freed only the slaves over which the Union had no power.

3. Use of the U.S. Constitution

The status of America as an independent union was still very young at this time. Lincoln had to exercise the rights that he had as “Commander in Chief of the Army and Navy” to carry out an executive order under Article II, section 2 of the United States Constitution.

4. No freedom for many a wave of escapee slaves

The states originally included in the Emancipation Proclamation were mainly northern states. Border states and southern states were still allowed to have slaves. After hearing about the freedoms available in the northern states, slaves quickly escaped to Union lines.

5. Debate as to whether or not the Proclamation was just a war effort

After the war there was much concern over the fact that many believed that the freeing of the slaves was just a strategy of war and that slavery would again resume when the fighting was over. To ensure their freedom, several former slave states passed legislation prohibiting slavery.

6. Thirteenth Amendment

It would take some time to end slavery in the United States all together. Slavery continued to exist legally in some areas until a sufficient number of states ratified the Thirteenth Amendment which once and for all gave the official legal end to slavery on December 18, 1865.

7. The Battle of Antietam

The Battle of Antietam is an important part of the Emancipation Proclamation as it gave Abraham Lincoln the opportunity, as this was a decisive battle, to issue a preliminary proclamation on September 22, 1862. The final proclamation was issued in January 1863.

8. Military power

The Emancipation Proclamation also allowed for the enrollment of freed slaves into the United States military. During the war nearly 200,000 blacks joined the Union Army. The great majority of those black men were former slaves. Naturally their involvement was a significant contributor to winning the war.

9. Surprising acceptance

Slaves were overjoyed at hearing that they would be freed and surprisingly owners of these slaves in general were not violent about the order to free the slaves.

10. *Political impact.* Lincoln was not liked by very many Democrats in America at the time that the Proclamation was issued. Those opposed to the Emancipation saw Lincoln's executive order as a cowardly and hypocritical war move, of which the northern states would be able to receive great benefit. The southern states would not have the benefit of the additional manpower of the former slaves in their states until the Confederate war had mostly been lost. Internationally, the move to end slavery was received very well, especially by those countries who had already proclaimed themselves to be slave free.

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