**Name:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**"Thenceforward and forever free"**

**The Emancipation Proclamation and Its Effect on the War**

*Hallowed Ground Magazine, Fall 2012*

What would the emancipation of slaves mean? Which slaves would actually be freed? How would emancipation change the course of the war? President Abraham Lincoln had a lot to consider as he pondered the Emancipation Proclamation in September 1862. Lincoln began his presidency promising not to interfere with slavery where it already existed, but 17 months of war changed that.

While Lincoln personally felt that freeing the slaves would be “an act of justice,” he had to consider the many consequences of those actions. He also realized that he could not free all of the slaves, including those in the vital Border States that remained loyal to the Union. Doing so could lose their support. Lincoln determined that emancipating slaves in the areas of rebellion that were not under Federal control was “warranted by the Constitution” as “a fit and necessary war measure for suppressing said rebellion.” Slave labor was used to support the Confederate Army, he reasoned, and therefore gave the Confederacy an advantage. Lincoln felt that freeing these slaves would weaken the power of the Confederate army, thus justifying the Emancipation Proclamation.

1. How did Lincoln feel about slavery when the war started?
2. What strategic reason did Lincoln decide to free the slaves?

Lincoln had to consider the timing of his announcement. The Union had not yet won a major battle in the East and not everyone in the North supported the idea of fighting a war for the freedom of slaves. Depending on the timing of the announcement, some might have even considered it a last-ditch effort to support an army that could not otherwise win over the South and make him look weak. Lincoln and his advisors agreed that a victory was needed before any announcement of emancipation could be made. This victory would raise morale and support for the war from the public while showing that the Union army was strong enough to fight the rebellion on its own.

The Battle of Antietam, September 17, 1862, proved to be exactly what Lincoln needed. Although the results of the bloody battle led to an unclear victory, Gen. Robert E. Lee and his army retreated back to Virginia, allowing Lincoln to claim a strategic victory. On September 22, 1862, he released the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation, which served as a warning to the states in rebellion: if they did not rejoin the Union by January 1, 1863, their slaves would be freed.

1. Why did Lincoln choose the Battle of Antietam to announce the Emancipation Proclamation?

The fighting continued, however, and with the New Year, the Emancipation Proclamation took effect in the ten rebellious states — Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Texas and Virginia. In the Proclamation Lincoln declared, “All persons held as slaves within said designated States, and parts of States, are, and henceforward shall be free.” He also pledged that, “the Executive Government of the United States, including the military and naval authority thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of such persons.” However, because Lincoln did not want to incite a slave rebellion, he cautioned the freed slaves to abstain from all violence, unless in necessary self-defense.” He also recommended that “in all cases when allowed, they labor faithfully for reasonable wages."

The Emancipation Proclamation changed the meaning and purpose of the Civil War. The war was no longer just about preserving the Union— it was also about freeing the slaves. Foreign powers such as Britain and France lost their enthusiasm for supporting the Confederacy. Furthermore, the Emancipation Proclamation also stated that, “Such persons of suitable condition, will be received into the armed service of the United States ….” African-Americans could now join the army, and eagerly did so, aiding the Union war effort. Over the course of the war, roughly 200,000 African-Americans served in the Union forces.

Although many more amendments and laws would need to be passed before African-Americans enjoyed the full rights of citizenship, the Emancipation Proclamation was the first bold step in that process.

1. Explain how the Emancipation Proclamation changed the purpose of the war.

Many people’s opinions on emancipation shifted throughout the war. Even Lincoln did not start off by stating he wanted to end slavery. Examine the documents below to explore how opinions on slavery changed throughout the war.

**Doc A: Lincoln’s Inaugural Speech when he took office in 1861**

I declare that- I have no purpose, directly or indirectly, to interfere with the institution of slavery in the States where it exists. I believe I have no lawful right to do so, and I have no inclination to do so.

1. What promise does Lincoln make to the Southern states in his opening remarks?\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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**Doc B: Excerpts from Lincoln’s speeches following the Emancipation Proclamation**

"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." –Lincoln, 1863

"Those who deny freedom to others, deserve it not for themselves; and, under a just God, can not long retain it."- Lincoln, 1864

"Without slavery the rebellion could never have existed; without slavery it could not continue." Lincoln, 1863

1. How do these quotes show Lincoln’s views on slavery have changed from Doc A?

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**Doc C: Excerpt from Sacrament0 Daily Union, October 5, 1861 (Sacramento was a major city in California which was a free state at the time)**

We assume that the total abolition of African slavery in the United States is socially and physically an impossibility. Its attempt would result in the extinction of the Black Race. The two races cannot live together and as a natural consequence the superior would subjugate the inferior. Therefore, those who anticipate the abolition of slavery as one of the consequences of this war are doomed to disappointment.

1. Why does the magazine think that slavery could not be abolished?\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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**Doc C: Excerpt from the Sacramento daily, January 5, 1863**

On Saturday when crowds of residents and strangers were read Lincoln’s Proclamation (the Emancipation Proclamation) there were cheers for joy. They were taken with shouts of joy which welled up from the public and it was clear all had been touched. We heard a young man, say “What a change! If four years ago, any man had dared suggest this in this room of people he would have been kicked from his house. Now, I see everyone cheering. And war has made all this change.”

1. Describe the response to the news of the Emancipation Proclamation.\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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1. Explain how the young man’s quote clearly shows that people’s opinions have changed throughout the war.

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Using evidence provided in the Documents explain how the nation’s view on slavery changed throughout the war. How did these changes views lead to the emancipation of people who were enslaved?

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