

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.

“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.”

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, Terre Bonne, 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 Berkeley, 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.

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.

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.

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.

In witness whereof I have hereunto set my hand and caused the seal of the United States to be affixed.

[L. S.] 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.

By the President:

*Abraham Lincoln*

*William H. Seward* Secretary of State.

A true copy, with the autograph signatures of the President and the Secretary of State.

*John A. Nicolay*  
Priv. Sec. to the President.

Emancipation Proclamation signed by Abraham Lincoln,  
Charles Godfrey Leland and George Henry Boker Authorized Edition, 1864  
At the National Constitution Center, on loan from Katie, Harry, Lucy and Steve Galbraith.

## Emancipation Proclamation Discussion Questions

### Background

The Emancipation Proclamation was issued by Abraham Lincoln on January 1, 1863, in the second year of the Civil War. In a preliminary proclamation issued four months earlier, Lincoln stated that on the first of the year “all persons held as slaves” in “States and parts of States, if any, in which the people thereof, respectively, shall then be in rebellion against the United States” would be free. The Emancipation Proclamation put this declaration into effect. It named the states or parts of states currently in the Confederacy and promised that the executive branch and the military would maintain the slaves’ freedom.

Lincoln was at first unsure about the extent of his executive power and whether he had the authority under the Constitution to free the slaves. Eventually he saw this action as a military necessity that fell under his constitutional powers as commander-in-chief. Lincoln also weighed the effect that the proclamation would have on the Union war effort, in a contest that was still more than two years from being concluded. His concerns included the loyalty of border states such as Maryland and Kentucky, which, even though they held slaves, had not joined the Confederacy. Would the Emancipation Proclamation force those states into the arms of the Confederacy, increasing its manpower and supplies? Lincoln also considered Northern public opinion that supported a war to save the Union but not necessarily to free the slaves. After issuing the Emancipation Proclamation, however, the freedom of slaves became a central war aim and Lincoln stood by this position, even risking losing the Election of 1864. Upon signing the Emancipation Proclamation, President Lincoln said, “I never, in my life, felt more certain that I was doing right, than I do in signing this paper.”

### About This Document

This copy of the Emancipation Proclamation signed by Abraham Lincoln is now on long-term loan to the National Constitution Center. It is one of the Leland-Boker Authorized Editions, created by two Philadelphians. This printing of the document was made for the Philadelphia Great Central Sanitary Fair in June 1864 to raise money to improve the conditions for sick and wounded soldiers. Lincoln signed 48 of these “official copies,” which were sold at the time for \$10 a piece. Of those original copies, only about half have survived to today. They are now in the collections of various museums, universities and libraries, as well as a few private collections.

### Discussion Questions

- 1) What part of the Constitution does President Lincoln say gives him the power to free the slaves?
- 2) What does the Emancipation Proclamation promise the freed slaves?
- 3) Why does Lincoln list only certain states or parts of states where the slaves will be freed?
- 4) How did the Emancipation Proclamation support the Union’s military cause?
- 5) Where and when did Lincoln sign the Proclamation?
- 6) There were 48 copies of this document printed in 1864. Why were the copies made and why did President Lincoln sign them?