

The Emancipation Proclamation, January 1, 1863

Introduction

The Emancipation Proclamation was shaped by both pragmatic considerations and Lincoln's deeply held, lifelong hatred of slavery. It was timed, after the Union victory at Antietam, to strike a military blow against the South's economic and social infrastructure, and was taken in the full understanding (given the experience of "contrabands") that the advance of the Union armies would free more and more fugitive slaves. The Proclamation transformed the war to preserve the Union into a war to save the Union *and* end slavery.

This elaborately decorated copy of the Emancipation Proclamation was designed by a fourteen-year-old boy and signed by Lincoln himself. In the proclamation, which went into effect on January 1, 1863, Lincoln used no uncertain terms in declaring that "all persons held as slaves within any State or designated part of a State . . . in rebellion against the United States, shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free."

Excerpt

[O]n 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.

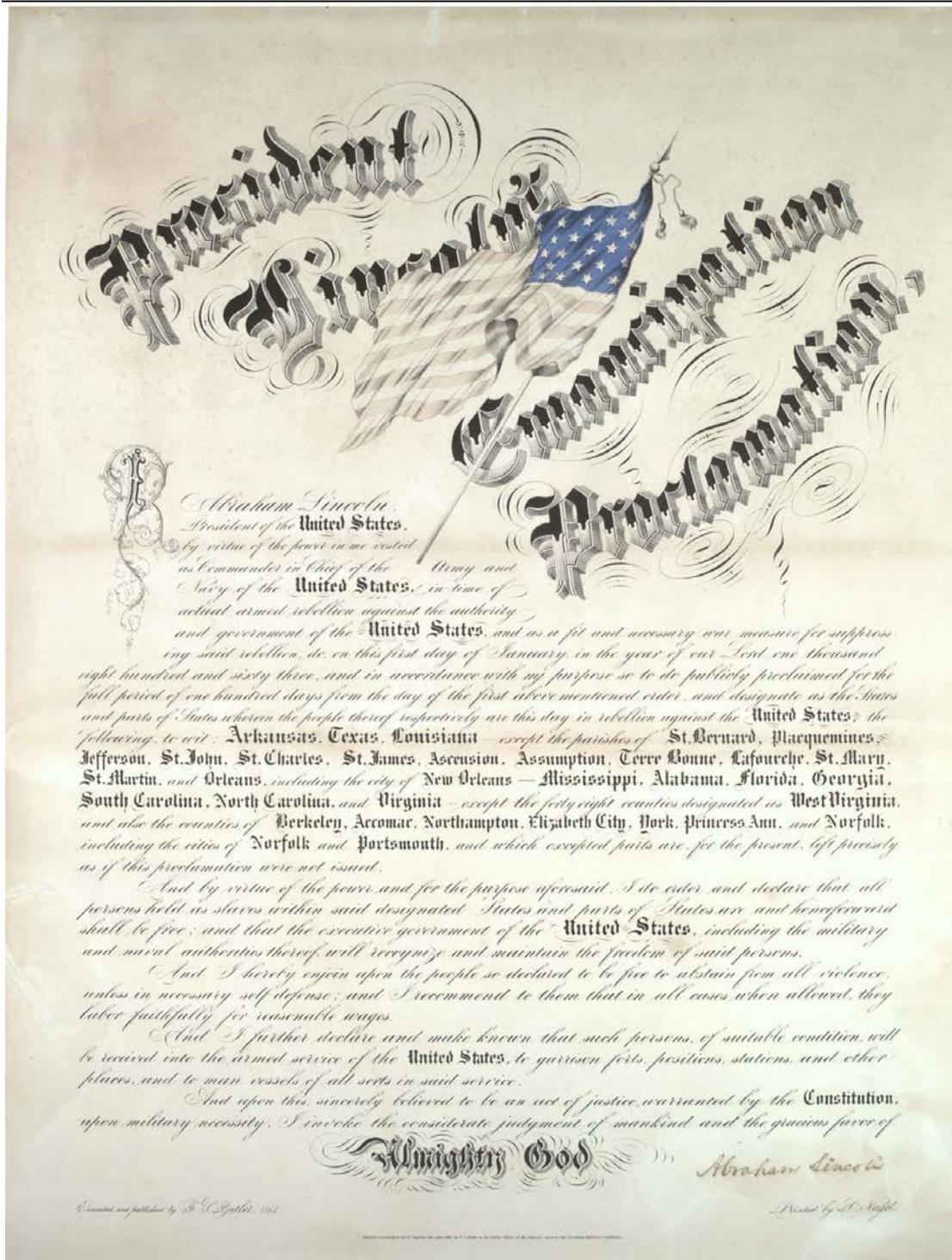
Questions for Discussion

Read the document introduction and the transcript, and apply your knowledge of American history in order to answer the questions that follow.

1. How does President Lincoln very specifically justify and explain his proclamation?
2. Lincoln exempts a city and parishes in Louisiana as well as certain counties from the proclamation. How can you explain why they are "left precisely as if this proclamation were not issued"?
3. Review the final four paragraphs. List and explain the significance of the changes in the lives of former slaves that Lincoln hopes will take place as a result of the Emancipation Proclamation.
4. Why do you think Lincoln chose to sign the Butler copy?

The Emancipation Proclamation, January 1, 1863

Image



Abraham Lincoln, Emancipation Proclamation [California printing, Cheesman copy], January 1, 1863
[1864] (The Gilder Lehrman Collection, GLC00742)

The Emancipation Proclamation, January 1, 1863

Transcript

Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, January 1, 1863 (The Gilder Lehrman Collection, GLC00742)

President

Lincoln's

Emancipation

Proclamation,

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 of the 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, Lafouche, 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, Northhampton, 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 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

The Emancipation Proclamation, January 1, 1863

received into the armed service of the United States, to garrison foils, positions, stations, and other places, and to man vessels of all sorts in said service.

And upon this, 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

Abraham Lincoln

Executed and published by F.S. Butler, 1864.

Printed by L. Nagel.

Entered according to Act of Congress, the year 1864, by F.S. Butler, in the Clerks Office of the District Court of the Northern District of California.