

# The Emancipation Proclamation

Español

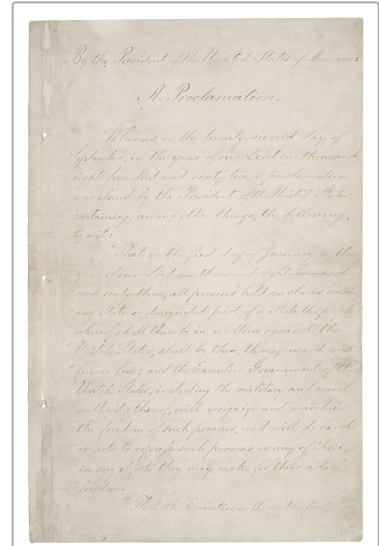
President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863, as the nation approached its third year of bloody civil war. The proclamation declared "that all persons held as slaves" within the rebellious states "are, and henceforward shall be free."

Despite this expansive wording, the Emancipation Proclamation was limited in many ways. It applied only to states that had seceded from the United States, leaving slavery untouched in the loyal border states. It also expressly exempted parts of the Confederacy (the Southern secessionist states) that had already come under Northern control. Most important, the freedom it promised depended upon Union (United States) military victory.

Although the Emancipation Proclamation did not end slavery in the nation, it captured the hearts and imagination of millions of Americans and fundamentally transformed the character of the war. After January 1, 1863, every advance of federal troops expanded the domain of freedom. Moreover, the Proclamation announced the acceptance of black men into the Union Army and Navy, enabling the liberated to become liberators. By the end of the war, almost 200,000 black soldiers and sailors had fought for the Union and freedom.

From the first days of the Civil War, slaves had acted to secure their own liberty. The Emancipation Proclamation confirmed their insistence that the war for the Union must become a war for freedom. It added moral force to the Union cause and strengthened the Union both militarily and politically. As a milestone along the road to slavery's final destruction, the Emancipation Proclamation has assumed a place among the great documents of human freedom.

The original of the Emancipation Proclamation of January 1, 1863, is in the National Archives in Washington, DC. With the text covering five pages the document was originally tied with narrow red and blue ribbons, which were attached to the signature page by a wafered impression of the seal of the United States. Most of the ribbon remains; parts of the seal are still decipherable, but other parts have worn off.



The Emancipation Proclamation (page 1)  
Record Group 11 General Records of the United States  
[View in National Archives Catalog](#)

The document was bound with other proclamations in a large volume preserved for many years by the Department of State. When it was prepared for binding, it was reinforced with strips along the center folds and then mounted on a still larger sheet of heavy paper. Written in red ink on the upper right-hand corner of this large sheet is the number of the Proclamation, 95, given to it by the Department of State long after it was signed. With other records, the volume containing the Emancipation Proclamation was transferred in 1936 from the Department of State to the National Archives of the United States.

## **The Emancipation Proclamation**

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 con-  
"clusive 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 sup-  
pressing 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



2

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, Terrebonne, 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, Prince 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.

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.

Abraham Lincoln

By the President:

William H. Seward  
Secretary of State.

## Select Resources

- Transcript of the Proclamation
- The Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation, 1862
- "The Emancipation Proclamation: An Act of Justice" by John Hope Franklin.
- The Charters of Freedom

*The National Archives' annual display of the Emancipation Proclamation is made possible in part by the National Archives Foundation through the generous support of The Boeing Company.*

**The U.S. National Archives and Records Administration**

1-86-NARA-NARA or 1-866-272-6272