

Slavery, the Civil War & Reconstruction

The Emancipation Proclamation

On September 22, 1862, President Lincoln declared that all slaves in the rebellious states were free. The rebellious states of the South were fighting against the northern states because they wanted to secede, or separate from the Union. His announcement was called the Emancipation Proclamation. Emancipation means the same thing as “freedom.” Part of Lincoln’s **declaration**¹ is below:

“I do order and declare that all persons held as slaves...shall be free. The Executive Government of the United States, including the military and naval authorities thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of said persons.”

In the last part of this sentence, Lincoln says that the Union Army will free and protect slaves. Northerners everywhere now knew why they were fighting the Civil War to free the slaves. The war was no longer just a battle to make the southern states come back to the Union. Now it was a war over slavery. Even if the southern states came back to the Union, there would be no more slavery.

The entire way of life in the South would have to change. Southerners could no longer sell people as if they were property. They could no longer run large plantations with slaves as workers. They could no longer force black men and women to work all day in their cotton fields. When the North won the Civil War, life in the South did change.

Many black slaves heard about the Emancipation Proclamation before the northern army arrived to free them. They were very excited. Some ran away to meet the northern army as they fought. Many wanted to join the fight and help the Union beat the Confederacy. As northern armies marched south, all of the slaves were freed.

In the North, many **abolitionists**² were happy. Abolitionists wanted slaves to be free. They spent their time convincing people that black men and women

¹ **declaration** – the act of making something officially known

² **abolitionists** – a person who is in favor of getting rid of something

were no different than white men and women. They gave speeches about the horrible **institution**¹ of slavery. Slavery, they said, did more than just chain black men and women. It also was against the basic ideas of liberty and equality that were part of the founding of our country. Slavery brought out the worst part of human nature. Slave owners might have been kind men, but slavery made them become **cruel**.² The Emancipation Proclamation was the first big step to ending slavery.

¹ **institution** – an established custom or practice

² **cruel** – unkind, causing pain in others

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. What was so significant about the Emancipation Proclamation?
 - a. It stated that all slaves in the rebellious states were free.
 - b. It reminded Northerners of why they were fighting the Civil War.
 - c. Slave owners were allowed to continue owning slaves.
 - d. It gave Southerners the right to keep slaves.

2. Why did life in the South change after the Emancipation Proclamation and Civil War?
 - a. So many southern towns were destroyed.
 - b. Many soldiers had died defending the South.
 - c. Plantations were difficult to run without slaves to work there.
 - d. The South stayed as part of the United States.

3. How did the slaves feel when they heard about the Emancipation Proclamation?
 - a. Angry
 - b. Excited
 - c. Bored
 - d. Cruel

4. In the last paragraph, in the sentence, "They gave speeches about the horrible institution of slavery," the pronoun "they" refers to
 - a. the slaves
 - b. the politicians
 - c. the citizens
 - d. the abolitionists

5. The passage "The Emancipation Proclamation" is mostly about
 - a. an announcement that ended slavery in a large part of the United States.
 - b. a famous speech that Abraham Lincoln made on a battlefield.
 - c. how slavery in the South was different from slavery in the North.
 - d. Abraham Lincoln's most famous speeches

6. Why do you think the abolitionists were happy about the Emancipation Proclamation?

7. What did some slaves do after they heard about the Emancipation Proclamation?

8. The question below is an incomplete sentence. Choose the word or phrase that best completes the sentence.

All slaves in the rebellious states of America were freed _____ the Emancipation Proclamation.

- a. before
- b. in spite of
- c. suddenly
- d. as a result of

9. Answer the following questions based on the sentence below.

The Emancipation Proclamation freed slaves in the rebellious states of America.

What? the Emancipation Proclamation

(did) What? _____

Where? _____

10. **Vocabulary Word:** institution: an established custom or practice.

Use the vocabulary word in a sentence: _____

Teacher Guide and Answers

Passage Reading Level: Lexile 820

Featured Text Structure: Descriptive – the writer explains, defines or illustrates a concept or topic

Passage Summary: In the 1862 Emancipation Proclamation, President Lincoln declared that all southern slaves were now free. This made the Civil War officially about slavery, and, after the war, changed the entire way of life in the South.

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6. Why do you think the abolitionists were happy about the Emancipation Proclamation?

Suggested answer: The abolitionists were happy because they were against slavery, and the Emancipation Proclamation ended slavery in the rebellious states of America.

7. What did some slaves do after they heard about the Emancipation Proclamation?

Suggested answer: Some slaves ran away to meet the northern army and join them in fighting against the southern army.

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(did) What? **freed slaves**

Where? **in the rebellious states of America**

10. **Vocabulary Word:** institution: an established custom or practice.

Use the vocabulary word in a sentence: answers may vary.