HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

By 1860, slavery had existed on American soil for more than 240 years. Along with slavery, however, there existed a parallel history of emancipation, or freedom from slavery. In the years after the Revolutionary War, many of the northern states enacted gradual emancipation, some southern slaveholders manumitted their slaves, and anti-slavery reform efforts gained strength. Even after the reaction to Nat Turner’s 1830 rebellion closed many avenues to emancipation, enslaved people continued to run away, often making use of the Underground Railroad. Still, on the eve of the Civil War, emancipation remained a goal for about four million slaves across the South, including approximately 276,000 in Tennessee.

From the beginning of the war, enslaved African Americans began to break down the bonds of slavery. The arrival of the Union army in Confederate territory provided the catalyst. Although the goal of the United States was to preserve the Union, not to end slavery, enslaved people escaped to Union military lines as soon as they had the opportunity.

Former slaves’ assistance to the Union army impressed President Abraham Lincoln, who issued the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863, declaring slaves in the Confederacy free. Although the proclamation did not apply to Union-occupied areas, including Tennessee, many bondspeople living in these areas claimed their freedom, and African American men began to join the Union army.

With the war’s end in April 1865, all slaves gained their freedom. The Thirteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution abolished slavery for good. The challenging transition from slavery to freedom, however, continued for decades. Nonetheless, African Americans celebrated emancipation annually.

FROM THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS:

- From Slavery to Civil Rights (timeline)
- African American Odyssey
- The African-American Mosaic
- The Frederick Douglass Papers at the Library of Congress (Collection Connections)
- America’s Story (Frederick Douglass, Abolition in D.C., and Juneteenth)
- Today in History (Abolition in the District of Columbia, Emancipation Proclamation, The Fisk School, and Howard University)

ALSO SEE:

- Emancipation (TPS-MTSU Content Resource)
- Underground Railroad (TPS-MTSU Primary Source Set)
- Views on the Emancipation Proclamation (TPS-MTSU Lesson Plan and Primary Source Set)
- The Emancipation Proclamation and Its Connection to the Thirteenth Amendment (TPS-MTSU Lesson Plan)
- Chronology of Emancipation (Freedmen and Southern Society Project Timeline)
- The End of Slavery: The Creation of the 13th Amendment (HarpWeek Web Site)
SUGGESTIONS FOR TEACHERS
This primary source set begins with sources that illustrate the history of emancipation in the United States before the Civil War. This will help students recognize that emancipation, though rare throughout most of the history of slavery in the United States, was not a foreign concept in 1861. Most of these sources date to the antebellum period, and “Go down, Moses” (published in 1917) is a spiritual that expresses the yearning for freedom under slavery. For each of the first four sources in this section, ask students what more they would like to know about this emancipation experience?

The second section focuses on wartime emancipation. Several sources illustrate the significant role of President Abraham Lincoln, the Union army, and the Emancipation Proclamation. Lincoln was a hero to many former slaves, and the Library has numerous sources about him as the “Great Emancipator.” Sources related to Lincoln tend to portray emancipation as a “top-down” event. Yet, many African Americans helped to bring about their own freedom and the freedom of their families. *Ask students to point out some sources that demonstrate this “grassroots” nature of emancipation, and also ask them why they think that more sources exist that illustrate the “top-down” aspect rather than the “grassroots” quality of emancipation.

The section on postwar emancipation looks at the transition from slavery to freedom, particularly during the immediate aftermath of the war. Family reunification, postwar violence, the establishment of schools and churches, and westward migration are all depicted. *Ask students which sources they find most surprising.

The final section focuses on the memory and celebration of emancipation. This section includes a “family record” marketed to African Americans by W.H. Cowell of Martin, Tennessee, and a portrait of Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, a novelist and poet who wrote extensively about emancipation. *Ask students to compare and contrast the 1866 and 1905 images of emancipation celebrations.
$200 reward. Ranaway from the subscriber on the night of Thursday, the 30th of September. Five negro slaves... Wm. Russell, St. Louis, Oct. 1, 1847.

The resurrection of Henry Box Brown at Philadelphia, who escaped from Richmond Va. In a bx 3 feet long 2 ½ ft. deep and 2 ft wide [c1850; detail]

Certificate of Freedom of Harriet Bolling, Petersburg, Virginia, 1851.

The fugitive’s song [1845]

Anti-Slavery Fair Advertisement [undated]

Go down, Moses; Let my people go!. Negro spirituals. 1917
Watch meeting, Dec. 31, 1862--Waiting for the hour / Heed & Moseley, Cartes de Visite, 10 Tremont Row, Boston. [c1863]

President Lincoln, writing the Proclamation of Freedom, January 1st, 1863 / painted by [David Gil- mour] Blythe; lithogr. and printed in colors by Ehr- cott, Forbriger & Co. Cincinnati, O. [1863]

[Harriet Tubman, full-length portrait, standing with hands on back of a chair] [between ca. 1860 and 1875]

Jesse L. Berch, quartermaster sergeant, 25 Wisconsin Regiment of Racine, Wis. [and] Frank M. Rockwell, postmaster 22 Wisconsin of Geneva, Wis. / J.P. Ball’s Photographic Gallery, No. 30 West 4th St., betw. Main and Walnut Sts. Cincinnati, O. [1862] (For more information about this image, see the photo essay on the Oxford African American Studies Center Web site.)
The first edition of Abraham Lincoln's final emancipation proclamation. [January 1, 1863]

[Envelope], For President, Abraham Lincoln. [c1864; detail]

Emancipation. And by virtue of the power and for the purpose aforesaid, I do order and declare that all persons held as slaves... shall be free! [1865]

TEXTS:

- Address by Hon. Frederick Douglass, delivered in the Congregational Church, Washington, D.C., April 16, 1883: on the twenty-first anniversary of emancipation in the District of Columbia [1883]
- Emancipation address: our duties and how to discharge them, delivered in the town hall of Salem, Va., January 2, 1893,[...]by Prof. Daniel B. Williams...; with an introduction by Prof. R.G. Chissell... [1893]
- Thirty years a slave. From bondage to freedom. The institution of slavery as seen on the plantation and in the home of the planter. Autobiography of Louis Hughes [1897]
- [Mrs. Ella Boney] [Oral History Interview] [1938]
All slaves were made freemen by Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States. [January 1, 1863]

**The Black Regiment,**

*May 27th, 1863.***

By George H. Boker.

[Text of poem]

The effects of the proclamation - freed Negroes coming into our lines at Newbern, North Carolina [1863; detail]

Murfreesboro, Tenn., vicinity. Men repairing single-track railroad after Battle of Stones River [1863]

[Unidentified African American soldier in Union uniform with wife and two daughters] [between 1863 and 1865]
EMANCIPATION AFTER THE CIVIL WAR

The gallant charge of the fifty fourth Massachusetts (colored) regiment; on the rebel works at Fort Wagner, Morris Island, near Charleston, July 18th, 1863, and death of Colonel Robt. G. Shaw. [Detail]

[Johnsonville, Tenn. Camp of Tennessee Colored Battery] [1864]

Emancipation / Th. Nast; King & Bird, printers, 607 Sansom Street, Philadelphia [c1865]

The gospel train / by . [1881]
Glimpses at the Freedmen – Ther Freedmen’s Union Industrial School, Richmond, Va. / from a sketch by Jas E. Taylor. [1866]

[Resolution #11, 13th Amendment]

Statutes at Large, 38th Congress, 2nd Session (p. 567). [1866]

[Freedmen’s school?, possibly in South Carolina] / Sam A. Cooley, photographer, Tenth Army Corps, Beaufort, S.C. [between 1865 and 1870]

Ho for Kansas! Nashville, Tennessee, March 18, 1878.

[African American soldiers mustered out at Little Rock, Arkansas] [1866]
All God’s Chillun’s Got Wings! [ca. 1933]
Courtesy of the Sumter Gallery of Art, Sumter, S.C.

EMANCIPATION REMEMBERED AND CELEBRATED

Celebration of the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia by the colored people, in Washington, April 19, 1866 / sketched by F. Dielman.

Proclamation of emancipation. The second Declaration of Independence! [L. Smith], [after April 15, 1865]
The shackle broken - by the genius of freedom / lith. & print by E. Sachse & Co. [c1874]

Emancipation Day, Richmond, Va. [c1905]

Negro G.A.R. veterans parading, New York City, May 30, 1912 [Detail]

Family record, Before the war and since the war / Krebs Lithographing Company, Cincinnati, [c. 1880; detail]

Iola Leroy; or, Shadows uplifted, by Frances E.W. Harper. [1893; detail]

Will you ever give the colored race a show: an appeal to Congress words and music by Robt. P. Jackson. [c1898]
CITATIONS: Emancipation During and After the Civil War

Teachers: Providing these primary source replicas without source clues may enhance the inquiry experience for students. This list of citations is supplied for reference purposes to you and your students. We have followed the Chicago Manual of Style format, one of the formats recommended by the Library of Congress, for each entry below, minus the access date. The access date for each of these entries is 5/8/13.


“Emancipation. And by virtue of the power and for the purpose aforesaid, I do order and declare that all persons held as slaves … shall be free!” Print. Philadelphia: J.L. Magee, 1865. From Library of Congress, Rare Book and Special Collections Division, The Alfred Whitall Stern Collection of Lincolniana. http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/scsmbib:@field(DOCID+@lit(scsm00336))


Williams, Daniel B. Emancipation address: our duties and how to discharge them, delivered in the town hall of Salem, Va., January 2, 1893, under the auspices of the Emancipation Club of Salem, with which was joined the Emancipation Club of Roanoke, Va. / by Prof. Daniel B. Williams…; with an introduction by Prof. R.G. Chissell…. Pamphlet. [Salem, Va.?: s.n.], c1893. From Library of Congress, African American Pamphlets from the Daniel A.P. Murray Collection, 1818-1907. http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/murraybib:@field(NUMBER+@band(lcrbmrp+t0p06))


Brownell, H.H., composer. “All slaves were made freemen by Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States.” Broadside. January 1, 1863. From Library of Congress, Rare Book and Special Collections Division, The Alfred Whital Stern Collection of Lincolniana. http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/scsmbib:@field(DOCID+@lit(scsm000846))


Boker, George H. “The Black Regiment. … Published by the Supervisory Committee for Recruiting Colored Regiments. [1863?]” Song Sheet. [1863?] From Library of Congress, Rare Books and Special Collections Division, America Singing: Nineteenth-Century Song Sheets. http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/amss:@field(DOCID+@lit(cw100610))


