

The Emancipation Proclamation

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

SET (Personal Connection)

To engage students and connect to prior knowledge about freedom and equality, use the Emancipation Proclamation Lesson PowerPoint to ask the following questions: What does freedom mean to you? Where does freedom come from? What guarantees our freedom? Ask for volunteers to share their responses. Close the discussion by indicating to the students that freedom has not always been enjoyed by all in our nation and introduce President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation as a step in the right direction.

ORAL HISTORIES

Now that students have a framework for understanding that freedom has been limited to certain groups historically and that President Lincoln, in issuing the Emancipation Proclamation, took a major step in applying the concept to all, select and play one or more of the oral history interviews from the Lincoln Legacy Project:

Dr. Harold L. Martin, Sr.

The Chancellor at North Carolina A&T State University describes the importance of the Emancipation Proclamation and recounts a story of racial inequality from his childhood that made a huge impression. He also reflects on the freedoms we have fought for today and advises how to keep taking steps toward equality.



Bishop George W. Brooks

The Pastor Emeritus at Mount Zion Baptist Church in Greensboro, North Carolina discusses the meaning of the Emancipation Proclamation and the opportunities of freedom available today. He also explains why seeing Abraham Lincoln's face on the penny reminds him of a foundation of freedom.



Ed Rendell

The former governor of Pennsylvania reflects on the Emancipation Proclamation and his 24 years as an elected official who tried to create programs to open up freedom and more opportunity to others.



Use the questions on the Emancipation Proclamation Lesson PowerPoint to debrief and discuss their stories. What does the Emancipation Proclamation mean to each?

CLOSE READING

Students will examine the Emancipation Proclamation with the intent of breaking it down and answering the following questions: When does Lincoln issue the proclamation? In which states does Lincoln free individuals held as slaves? In which ones does slavery remain? What is Lincoln's reasoning behind issuing the proclamation? What does Lincoln recommend the freed peoples do going forward? What does Lincoln say about prospective military service for freed individuals? To what extent did the Emancipation Proclamation free individuals held as slaves in the United States? Please use the Emancipation Proclamation Lesson PowerPoint to guide the students.

Reading the Emancipation Proclamation (primary source) can be challenging. In presenting strategies for close/complex reading, you may want to encourage the students to read and re-read, work slowly and intently, be active with their reading by underlining certain key words or phrases, identify main themes and ideas, and take notes in the margins.

SIMULATION: Public Hearing on the Emancipation Proclamation

Now that your students have read and analyzed the Emancipation Proclamation, it is time to consider the perspectives of various Americans during the Civil War on this executive order. In this activity, students will work in pairs to construct the position of a character that lived during the Civil War. They will be asked to empathize with their assigned person in order to understand the controversy and context of the times.

Possible Roles/Characters (15):

- Abolitionist (Frederick Douglas, William Lloyd Garrison, Lydia Maria Child, Sojourner Truth, Ghost of John Brown, Harriet Tubman, Harriet Beecher Stowe)
- Union Soldier/Leadership (new mission, new recruits) (Wounded Veteran from Antietam, recruit for the 54th Massachusetts Regiment, General George G. Meade, General Ulysses S. Grant)
- Free African American in the North
- Northern Resident (White)

The Emancipation Proclamation

- Poor Southerner (White)
- Southern Plantation Owner
- Slave in Confederate Territory
- Border State Slave Owner
- Border State Resident
- Former Slave in Liberated Area
- Constitutional Law Expert
- Recent Immigrant from Ireland (NYC – Race Riots)
- Republicans in Congress (Thaddeus Stevens, Charles Sumner)
- Democrats in Congress (Samuel S. Cox – OH)
- Confederate Leadership (Jefferson Davis, Robert E. Lee)

– **Pairs:** Students should work in pairs. Each pair will have one of the characters listed above.

– **Research:** Allow the pair time to discuss their character and how he/she might have felt about the Emancipation Proclamation. If you have access to the Internet, encourage the students to do additional research on their characters. Use the following questions to guide students through this thought process:

- How would your character feel about the Emancipation Proclamation?
- Why would he or she feel this way?
- Would he or she support or oppose it? Why?
- Is it too much? Or, is it too little? Explain.
- What action(s) would your character take in response to it?
 - **Build Your Character's Position:** Students should construct a position statement for their character on the Emancipation Proclamation. The statement should be at least one solid paragraph. Students should use the answers to the questions above as a foundation for the position of their character.
 - **Role Play at Public Hearing:** For the purpose of this simulation, the teacher will moderate the public hearing. The teacher could role play Abraham Lincoln. Set ground rules for the hearing (i.e. respect, taking turns). Students can be asked to share their positions up in front of the classroom at a podium or they can simply stand up at their desk. Encourage other students to respond to fuel critical debate. To gain maximum participation, require that every student makes at least one point during the hearing.

– **Debrief/Discuss:** Ask the students to write a reflective paragraph on this experience. What did they learn about the Emancipation Proclamation after hearing all of the various perspectives on it? What does this say about Lincoln as a leader? Hold a quick discussion that covers these questions

CLOSURE

As a closing assessment, have students answer the following prompt: What does the Emancipation Proclamation “say” about President Abraham Lincoln’s presidential leadership and legacy?

