

## **Emancipation Background Information and Timeline**

- May 1861: General Benjamin Butler declares formerly enslaved escapees “contraband” who can be employed by the Union army.
- August 1861: Congress passes the First Confiscation Act which approves the confiscation of any property used to support the Rebel cause, including enslaved people.
- September 1861: General John C. Frémont declares martial law in Missouri liberating individuals enslaved by those who support the Confederacy. Lincoln revokes Frémont’s declaration in favor of the less radical Confiscation Act.
- November 1861: Thousands of formerly enslaved individuals on Sea Islands in Port Royal Sound in South Carolina are emancipated and given an education in an experiment in the transition to freedom.
- December 1861: President Lincoln’s annual message favors compensated emancipation and colonization (formerly enslaved individuals voluntarily relocating outside of the U.S.)
- April 16, 1862: Congress passes the D.C. Emancipation Act which abolished slavery in Washington D.C., compensating those who claimed to own slaves for the monetary value of those they enslaved and providing means for the formerly enslaved people to voluntarily move to Haiti, Liberia or another location outside of the United States, (known as colonization.)
- May 1862: General Davis Hunter frees individuals enslaved within the Department of the South under his direction including Florida, Georgia, and South Carolina. Lincoln immediately revokes Hunter’s decree.
- June 1862: Congress outlaws slavery in the territories, offering no compensation for enslavers.
- July 12, 1862: Lincoln meets with delegates from border states encouraging them to adopt gradual, compensated emancipation but they reject such a plan.
- July 17, 1862: Congress passes the Second Confiscation Act which frees those individuals enslaved by people disloyal to the U.S. and allows the President to employ African Americans to put down the rebellion.
- July 17, 1862: Congress passes the Militia Act that allows the employment of African Americans by the military, emancipating volunteers who had been enslaved (and their families) if enslaved by individuals disloyal to the U.S.
- July 22, 1862: Lincoln shares his preliminary Emancipation Proclamation with his cabinet members who express mixed reactions but general support. Seward suggests waiting for a victory to avoid the appearance of desperation.
- August 25, 1862: African Americans on the South Carolina Sea Islands are recruited for military service.
- September 17, 1862: The Battle of Antietam is considered a Union victory as Lee’s troops are pushed out of Maryland.
- September 22, 1862: Lincoln issues a revised and final Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation, declaring that it will go into effect on January 1, 1863.
- January 1, 1863: The Emancipation Proclamation is issued with mixed reactions across the country.
- July 13-18, 1863: A draft riot and race riot break out in New York City in response to new draft regulations, with emancipation stoking fears among poor Whites, particularly Irish immigrants, that African Americans, who were exempt from the draft, might take their jobs.

## Important Vocabulary related to the Emancipation Proclamation Documents

- Union: another name for the USA, the North, the Yankees
- Confederacy: another name for the CSA, the South, the Rebels
- Border States: states where slavery was allowed that remained in the Union (Kentucky, Missouri, Maryland, Delaware, West Virginia) with some slave holders fighting in the Union army.
- Fugitive slave law: a law passed in 1850 requiring individuals to assist in returning runaway slaves to the individual who claimed ownership of them
- abolish: to get rid of something, often related to getting rid of slavery
- abolitionist: someone who wanted to abolish or get rid of slavery
- emancipation: freeing or liberating enslaved individuals
- gradual emancipation: a system through which a population of enslaved individuals become free over an extended period of months or years, usually starting babies that are born after a certain date being free and expanding to individuals who perform certain acts, like serving in the military. Intended to avoid the economic shock of universal emancipation and the resulting unemployment.
- compensated emancipation: paying enslavers the monetary value of those they enslaved at the time that the enslaved are freed from slavery
- colonization: a program of assisting those formerly enslaved individuals to move out of the country after being liberated, based on the idea that Whites and Blacks could not live peacefully in the same society
- contraband: property seized from rebels useful to them in carrying out the war, often referring to enslaved individuals taken from rebels
- involuntary servitude: forced labor, another term for slavery
- servile insurrection: a violent uprising of enslaved individuals
- draft: randomly chosen men are forced to serve in the military, also known as conscription
- draft exemption: a controversial policy that allowed Northerners who were drafted in 1863 to pay \$300 to have someone else take their place in the military.
- Works Progress Administration: A New Deal program created in the 1930s during the Great Depression that, among many other actions, interviewed individuals who had been enslaved decades earlier to obtain their oral histories.
- desertion: the act of a soldier abandoning their military assignment, often to go home, punishable by execution.
- Negro: a racist term for African Americans considered appropriate during the 1860s and used frequently in these documents. More offensive racist terms have been replaced by “[racial slur]”