

Document Based Question
The Emancipation Proclamation: A Slave's Perspective
Melissa Robertson-Daniel Jenkins Middle Academy
Suggested grade level: 8th grade

Directions:

The following excerpts and pictures focus on the Emancipation Proclamation that was signed into law on January 1, 1863 by Abraham Lincoln. Read and analyze the following documents then answer the questions that follow each one. Using your prior knowledge of the topic and the answers to each of the following questions you will write a detailed essay of 5-7 paragraphs on the following essay prompt. Your essay needs to be well organized and contain details from the primary sources that follow.

Essay Prompt:

Using both the visual and literary resources you are to write an essay from the perspective of a southern slave that has just learned that the Emancipation Proclamation has been signed into law by Abraham Lincoln on January 1, 1863. When analyzing the primary sources and organizing your essay include your life as a slave, how the Emancipation Proclamation will affect you, how you will be a free member of society and your readiness, and how former slave owners will feel about you.

Historical Background

In September of 1862, President Lincoln issued a preliminary Emancipation Proclamation stating the final one would be signed on January 1, 1863. This proclamation stated that if the Confederacy did not cease its rebellion by the first of the year, then all the slaves in Confederate-held territory would be freed. Slaves living and working in the Union border-states and southern areas already under Union control were not included in the proclamation. President Lincoln did not intend to abolish slavery when the war began as he only wanted to restore the Union; however, as the war progressed it became inevitable that slavery would be an issue used as a military tactic. President Lincoln's proclamation was intended to force the Confederacy to surrender without giving up their slaves. Lincoln felt it was necessary to issue such a proclamation under his presidential authority during the national emergency of the Civil War.¹

Document A:

Frederick Douglass letter to his former owner, 1857: *In a display of affection to his former owner Douglass writes, "I love you, but hate slavery."*

Rochester Oct. 4th 1857

Hugh Auld Esq,

My dear sir:

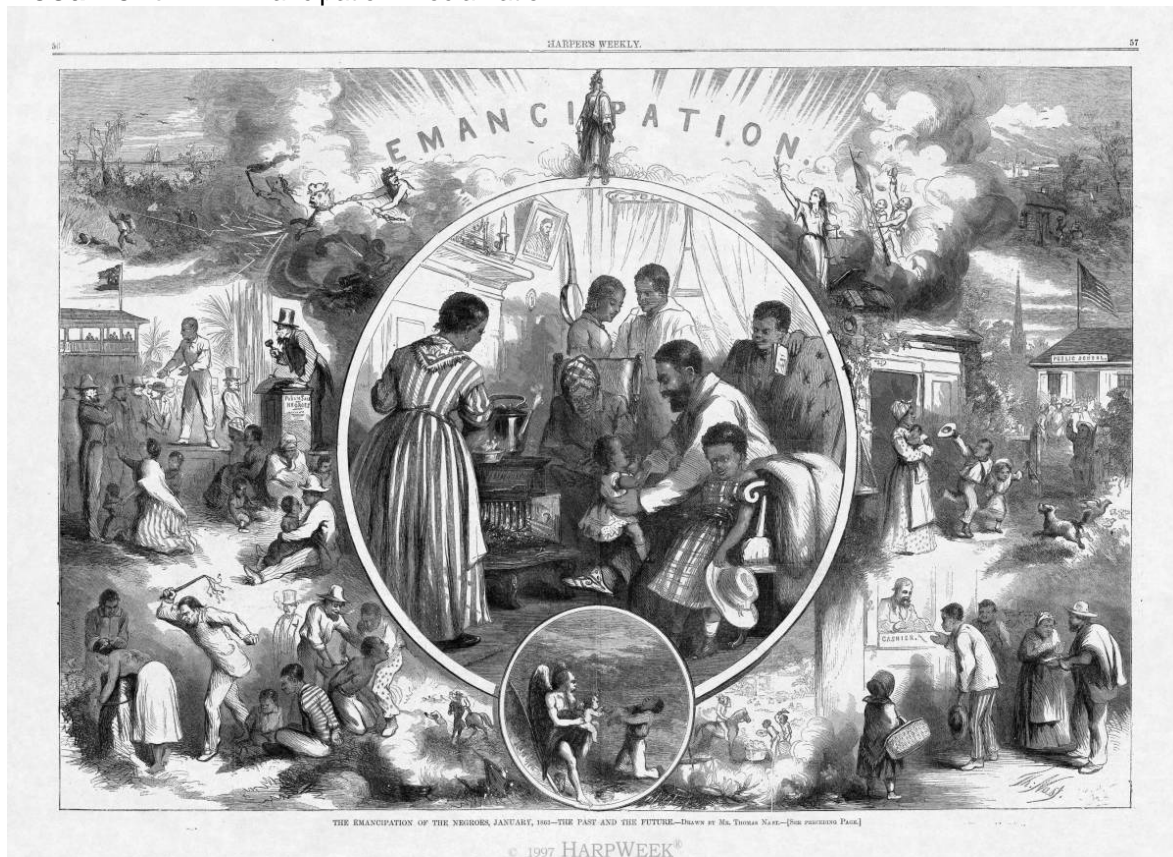
My heart tells me that you are too noble to treat with indifference the request I am about to make, It is twenty years since I ran away from you, or rather not from you but from Slavery, and since then I have often felt a strong desire to hold a little correspondence with you and to learn something of the position and prospects of your dear children – They were dear to me – and are still – indeed I feel nothing but kindness for you all – I love you, but hate slavery, Now my dear sir, will you favor me by dropping me a line, telling me in what year I came to live with you in Aliceanna st the year the Frigate was built by Mr. Beacham – The information is not for publication – and shall not be published We are all hastening where all distinctions are ended, kindness to the humblest will not be unrewarded Perhaps you have heard that I have seen Miss Amanda that was, Mrs Sears that is, and was treated kindly such is the fact, Gladly would I see you and Mrs. Auld – or Miss Sopha as I used to call her. I could have lived with you during life in freedom though I ran away from you so uncerimoniously, I did not know how soon I might be sold. But I hate to talk about that. A line from you will find me Addressed Fred^k Douglass Rochester N.York.

I am dear sir very truly yours. Fred: Douglass²

Document A Questions:

1. What do you think Douglass means when he writes, "I love you but hate slavery" in the letter to his former owner?
2. Based on the contents of the letter, what type of relationship do you think Douglass had with his former owner's family? Use details from the letter to justify your answer.

Document B: "Emancipation Proclamation"



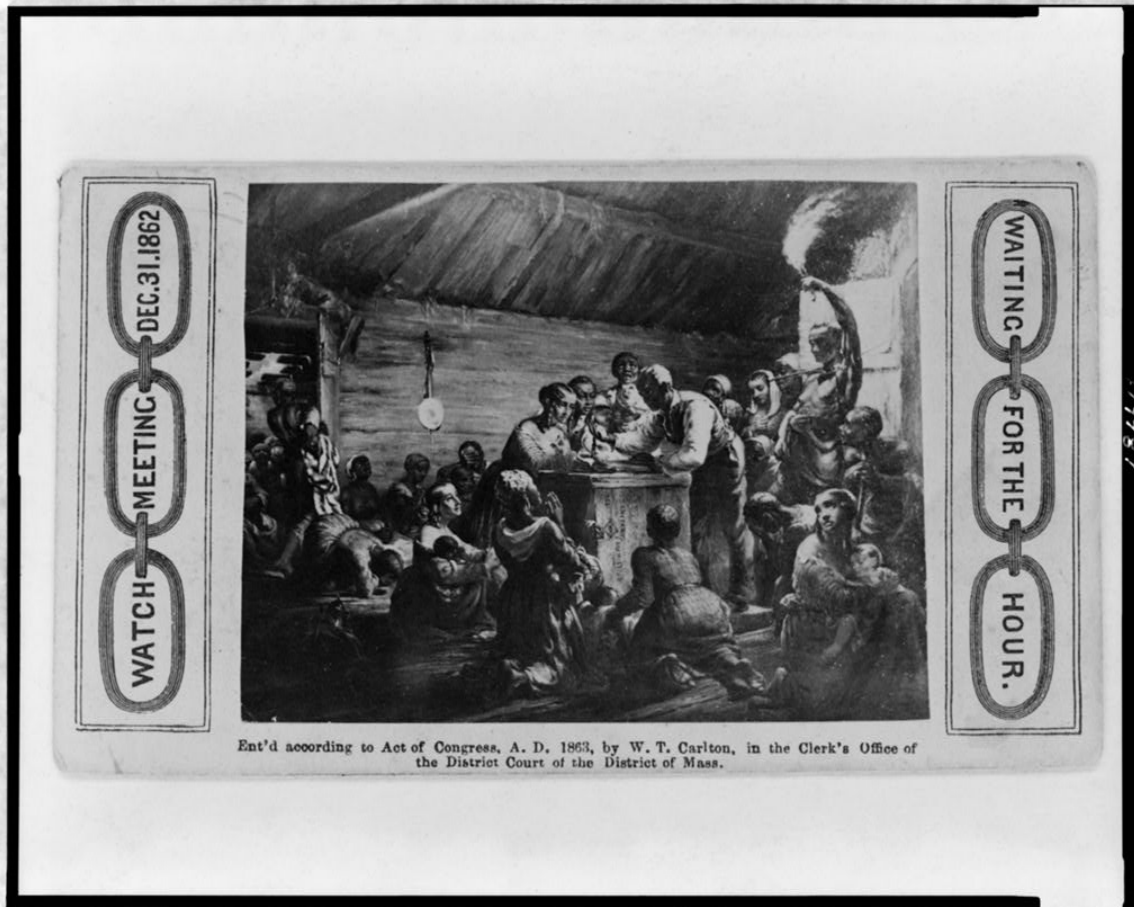
The above cartoon was drawn by artist Thomas Nast and published in *Harper's Weekly* on January 24, 1863. He illustrates a united family of former slaves in the center of this cartoon; while on the left he depicts the inhumane realities of a slave's life through plantation work, slave auctions that separated families and violent beatings as a form of punishment. These are then contrasted to the new ideals of emancipation on the right which show slaves receiving a public education, paid employment and social acceptance.³

Document B Questions:

3. Why does the artist use such harsh depictions of slaves on the left only to then depict a happier life for them on the right?

4. What is significant about the family in the middle of the picture and the proclaimed banner of "Emancipation" over them?
5. Based on the drawing, how is a slave's life illustrated before the Emancipation Proclamation was put into effect? Use examples from the document.
6. What changes are slave's expecting to gain once the Emancipation Proclamation is put into law? Base your answer on prior knowledge and the right side of the picture.

Document C: Watch meeting, Dec. 31, 1862--Waiting for the hour



African American men, women, and children gathered around a man with a watch, waiting for the Emancipation Proclamation.⁴

Document C Questions:

7. Why do you think the artist placed the title of the picture within chains?
8. Looking at the expressions of the slaves, what do you think they are feeling while they wait for the Emancipation Proclamation to be signed into law?
9. What is important about this group of slaves gathering together on December 31, 1862?

10. What does the angel represent in the above picture?
11. What does the picture in the left oval at the bottom depict about the life of a slave before the Emancipation Proclamation?
12. What expectations does the oval on the right depict for slaves once the Emancipation Proclamation is passed into law?

Document E: Excerpts from the Emancipation Proclamation signed into law on January 1, 1863.

“That on the first day of January, A.D. 1863, 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.”

“And I hereby enjoin upon the people so declared to be free to abstain from all violence, unless in necessary self-defense; and I recommend to them that, in all cases when allowed, they labor faithfully for reasonable wages.”⁶

Document E Questions:

13. Who is Lincoln freeing by signing the Emancipation Proclamation into law?
14. Does Lincoln give permission to slaves to use violence? If so, under what circumstances may violence be used?
15. Does Lincoln require slave owners to give their slaves wages for their labor? Justify your answer using the above document.

Document F: *Diary of a Refugee* by Frances Fearn

“Then the emancipation of the slaves. How is that going to be dealt with? We who know them, and have learned to love them and care for them since we were children, cannot foresee what their freedom will bring to them. While I rejoice that they have it, I pity them, for they are in no way prepared for it. I cannot help but fear terrible conditions for those who will have to depend upon negro labor for the cultivation of their fields. I have faith in the older ones taking it sensibly, and remaining in most cases faithful in their allegiance to their owners, from force of habit as well as sentiment, for they have a strong sense of attachment; it is the younger generation that will be demoralized and corrupted by it. If the suggestion made during the War by some of the largest slave-owners in the South had been accepted, and adopted, it would have been better. These wise men were in favor of arming the negroes, putting them in the Southern army, and at the same time giving them their freedom. If it could have been done it might have changed the conditions of the war, for I have not the slightest doubt but that they would have fought bravely under the command of their masters; not in a single instance have I heard of their failing to do so, when they have been in a battle with their young masters. Often have they been known to run great risks, and shown great bravery in their efforts to save their masters when they have been wounded on the battlefield. I wish that they could have been in some way educated or prepared for freedom, before it was so suddenly thrust upon them. The North has assumed a tremendous responsibility; I hope that they will

prove themselves equal to it, and treat this race of people with a firm, just, and discriminating policy; otherwise they will become an evil and menace to the welfare of the country.

I cannot help but wonder what our slaves will do when told that they are free. I am sure that they will all want to go back to the plantation, for they hate Texas and long to return to the sugar-cane and warmth of Louisiana. James has written to the overseer to give them the necessary money to take them back if they wish to go."⁷

The above document is an excerpt from *Diary of a Refugee*, edited by Frances Fearn. It is the diary of Fearn's mother, a white southern slaveholding woman, recounting her experiences during and after the Civil War. In this segment, she considers emancipation and the effect it will have on her former slaves.

Document F Questions:

16. How does this woman feel about slaves' as free individuals?
17. Does she seem genuine in the way she talks about slaves'?
18. What does she believe slaves' need in order to be better prepared for emancipation?

Part B: You are now ready to write your essay. Use your prior knowledge as well as the documents and answers to the questions.

Essay Prompt:

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Cited Sources

¹ Kennedy, Robert. "HarpWeek Cartoons "Emancipation Proclamation"." Harpers Weekly. 1863. 20 Oct 2007 <<http://www.harpweek.com/09Cartoon/BrowseByDateCartoon.asp?Month=January&Date=24#top#top>>.

² Basker, James G.. Why Documents Matter: American Originals and the Historical Imagination. 2005. New York City: The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, 2005.

³ Kennedy, Robert. "HarpWeek Cartoons "Emancipation Proclamation"." Harpers Weekly. 1863. 20 Oct 2007 <<http://www.harpweek.com/09Cartoon/BrowseByDateCartoon.asp?Month=January&Date=24#top#top>>.

⁴ Heard & Moseley, "Watch meeting, Dec. 31, 1862--Waiting for the hour." Library of Congress. 1863. 20 Oct 2007 <[http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?pp/PPALL:@field\(DOCID+@lit\(98501210\)\)>](http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?pp/PPALL:@field(DOCID+@lit(98501210))>).

⁵ "Emancipation Proclamation." Library of Congress. 12 Oct 1896. 18 Oct 2007 <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/D?ils:1:/temp/~pp_OvM0::@@@mdb=fsaall,app,brum,detr,swann,look,gottscho,pan,horyd,genthe,var,cai,cd,hh,yan,bbcards,lomax,ils,prok,brhc,nclc,matpc,iucpub,tgmi,lamb,>.

⁶ Stuckey, Sterling, and Linda Salvucci. Call to Freedom. Austin: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 2005.

⁷ Fearn, Frances. Diary of a Refugee. New York: Moffat, Yard and Company, 1910.