

The Emancipation Proclamation: A Turning Point

Name: _____ Date: _____

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Students will closely read the Emancipation Proclamation, evaluate its actual scope and limitations, and create a persuasive poster about its significance.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- poster board or large paper
- markers or colored pencils
- ruler
- index cards

HANDS-ON ACTIVITY

1. Read the excerpt below, adapted from the Emancipation Proclamation (January 1, 1863):
"That on the first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, all persons held as slaves within any State... in rebellion against the United States, shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free."
2. Underline the specific phrase that limits which enslaved people were legally freed by this document (hint: it only applied to a certain group of states).
3. Research briefly: did the Emancipation Proclamation immediately free enslaved people in border states that stayed loyal to the Union (like Kentucky or Maryland)? Write your finding in one sentence.
4. Design a persuasive poster (as if for 1863) explaining why the Emancipation Proclamation mattered, including at least one fact about its limitations and one fact about its larger significance (e.g., allowing Black men to enlist in the Union Army, reframing the war's purpose).
5. Write one sentence on an index card summarizing why many historians call this document a turning point of the Civil War despite its limitations.

QUESTIONS

1. According to the excerpt, which enslaved people did the Emancipation Proclamation legally free?
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2. Why couldn't Lincoln enforce the Emancipation Proclamation in Confederate territory right away?

3. Despite its legal limitations, why is the Emancipation Proclamation still considered a major turning point in the Civil War?

4. What fact about the Proclamation's limitations and what fact about its significance did you include on your poster?
