



The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens

# A HOUSE DIVIDED: SLAVERY AND THE CIVIL WAR



Grade 8  
United States History and Geography

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## I. Introduction

Slavery lay at the root of the crisis that produced the Civil War. During the first half of the nineteenth century, the Union divided into two distinctive regions, one dependent on slave labor, the other evolving into an urban, industrializing society.

Between 1819 and 1860, the critical issue that increasingly divided the North and South was the extension of slavery in the western territories. The Compromise of 1820 had settled this issue for nearly 30 years by drawing a dividing line across the Louisiana Purchase that prohibited slavery north of the line, but permitted slavery south of it. The seizure of new territories from Mexico reignited the issue. The Compromise of 1850 attempted to settle the problem by admitting California as a free state but allowing slavery in the rest of the Mexican cession. Enactment of the Fugitive Slave Law as part of the Compromise exacerbated sectional tensions.

The question of slavery in the territories exploded once again when Senator Stephen A. Douglas proposed that Kansas and Nebraska territories be opened to white settlement and that the status of slavery be decided according to the principle of popular sovereignty. The Kansas-Nebraska Act convinced many Northerners that the South wanted to open all federal territories to slavery and brought into existence the Republican party, committed to excluding slavery from the territories. In 1860, Abraham Lincoln, the Republican candidate, was elected President of the United States.

As eleven Southern states seceded in 1860-61, the North first cast the Civil War as necessary to resolve a constitutional crisis and preserve the Union. In time, the conflict also became a struggle to destroy slavery and free African Americans in bondage.

## II. Objectives

- ◆ To study the role of slavery in the coming of the Civil War.
- ◆ To chronicle Abraham Lincoln's efforts to preserve the Union.
- ◆ To analyze the importance of the Emancipation Proclamation as a shift in Northern war aims.

## III. History-Social Science Standards Addressed

- 8.1 (2) Analyze the philosophy of government expressed in the Declaration of Independence, with an emphasis on government as a means of securing individual rights (e.g., key phrases such as "all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights").
- 8.7 (2) Trace the origins and development of slavery; its effects on black Americans and on the region's political, social, religious, economic, and cultural development; and identify the strategies that were tried to both overturn and preserve it (e.g., through the writings and historical documents on Nat Turner, Denmark Vesey).
- 8.9 Students analyze the early and steady attempts to abolish slavery and to realize the ideals of the Declaration of Independence.
- (4) Discuss the importance of the slavery issue as raised by the annexation of Texas and California's admission to the union as a free state under the Compromise of 1850.
- (5) Analyze the significance of the States' Rights Doctrine, the Missouri Compromise (1820), the Wilmot Proviso (1846), the Compromise of 1850, Henry Clay's role in the Missouri Compromise and the Compromise of 1850, the Kansas-Nebraska Act (1854), the Dred Scott v. Sandford decision (1857), and the Lincoln-Douglas debates (1858).

## IV. Materials Needed

Class set copies of the following primary documents:

- Document A:** *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave Written by Himself* (Boston, 1845); and *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (Harriet Beecher Stowe, 1852)
- Document B:** "House Divided" Speech (Abraham Lincoln's, June 16, 1858)
- Document C:** Abraham Lincoln: Autograph Letter Signed to Lyman Trumbull (December 10, 1860)
- Document D:** Abraham Lincoln: Letter to Alexander H. Stephens (December 22, 1860)

**Document E:** The Emancipation Proclamation (September 22, 1862)

**Document F:** Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution (February 1, 1865)

### Document Analysis Worksheet

## V. Lesson Activities

1. Distribute copies of **Document A**, and have students consult their textbooks or other resources to review the background of these two accounts of slavery, one written by a former slave and the other by a white woman from the North. Ask students to prepare charts illustrating what the two accounts have in common, and where the portrayals of slavery differ.
  - Extension activity: Consult The Huntington Library lesson “Literature of Upheaval” for excerpts from the two books, and for teaching suggestions using the literature: < <http://www.huntington.org/Education/lessons/LH-TL-lit-of-upheaval.pdf> >
  - Use the Library of Congress Web site to access *The Papers of Frederick Douglass*, in order to delve more deeply into the lives of African Americans—both slave and free—in 19th Century America. < <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/ammem/aahtml/exhibit/aointro.html> >
2. Pass out copies of **Document B**. Remind students that Lincoln delivered this speech after his selection as Republican candidate for the U.S. Senate in 1858. Have students read and study the speech, highlighting Lincoln's references to:
  - government of the United States
  - slavery
  - Kansas-Nebraska act
  - Fugitive Slave Law
  - Dred Scott decision

Have students draw a political cartoon of the United States as a “house divided” in 1858, including elements such as Lincoln, slavery, and the political developments references in the speech. For additional background: < [www.gliah.uh.edu/historyonline/us18.cfm](http://www.gliah.uh.edu/historyonline/us18.cfm) > .

- Extension activity: A week after he delivered the “House Divided” speech, Lincoln wrote an expressive letter to John L. Scripps, in which he underscored his views of the government's constitutional rights regarding the spread of slavery. See pp. 434–5 in Volume I, *Library of America: Lincoln's Writings*, and have students write a short essay detailing Lincoln's views of the matter in 1858.

3. For advanced classes, teachers may wish to engage students in an in-depth study of the Lincoln-Douglas debates of 1858. For useful lessons and extensive excerpts of the debates, teachers may wish to obtain the UCLA National Center for History in the Schools reproducible unit “Lincoln and Slavery” <<http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/nchs>>. Or, students may research the debates online at <[www.founding.com/library/index.cfm?parent=64](http://www.founding.com/library/index.cfm?parent=64)>.
4. Review Stephen Douglas’ support for the notion of popular sovereignty to determine the future of slavery; and, Lincoln’s support for the idea of permitting slavery only in states where it already exists. Have students pair up and distribute one set of **Documents C** and **D** to each pair. Ask students to work together to read and transcribe each of the letters. Once this task is completed, they should place their versions of the letters before them and compose a (shared) one-page summary of the documents, quoting Lincoln when appropriate, and responding to each of the following prompts:
  - On what date, and to whom was the first letter written? On what date, and to whom was the second letter written?
  - What is Lincoln’s message to Trumbull?
  - What is Lincoln’s message to Stephens? Why do you think he mentions Washington’s name?
  - With which of the two men does Lincoln agree, and why?

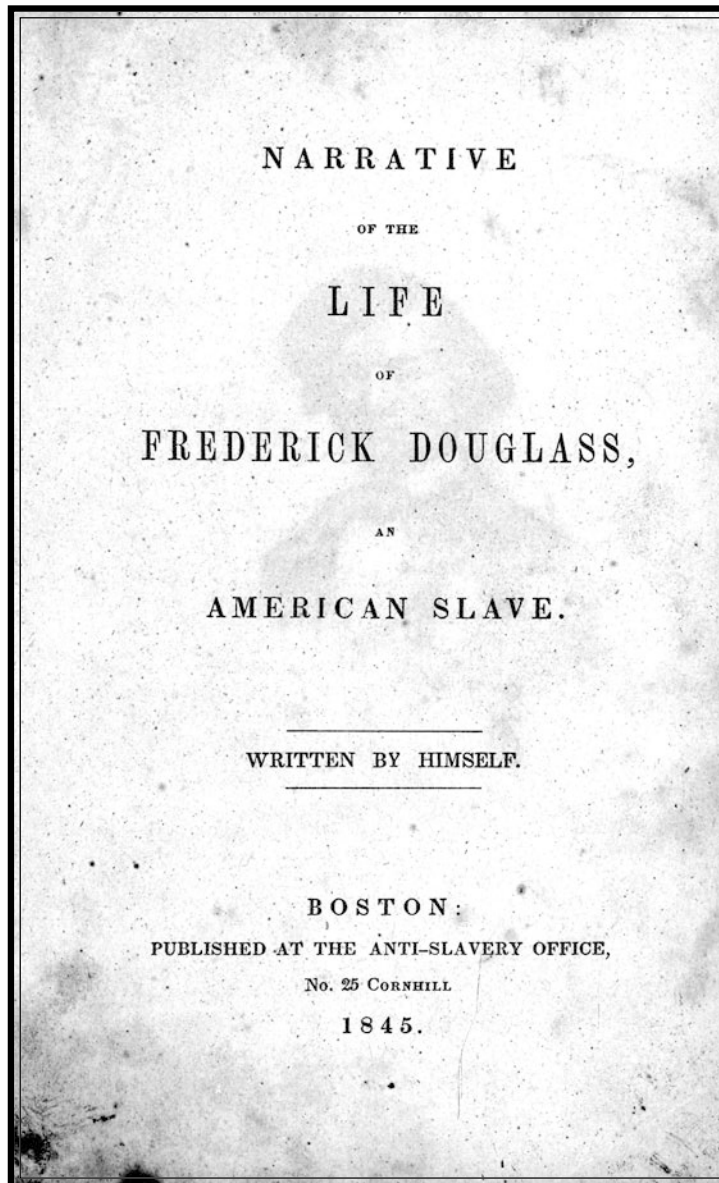
Alternative activity: Use the **Document Analysis Worksheet** to study the Trumbull and Stephens letters. (NOTE: Inform students that Alexander Stephens later became Vice President of the Confederate States of America).

5. A letter from President Lincoln that appeared on the front page of the August 25, 1862, *New York Times* was written in response to Horace Greeley’s *New York Tribune* (August 20, 1862) editorial titled “The Prayer of Twenty Millions,” in which he beseeched the President to free the slaves at once. Access the Library of Congress Web site and project the image, or download copies of the newspaper’s printed version of the letter from Lincoln to Greeley. <<http://lcweb.loc.gov/exhibits/treasures/images/235-clip.jpg>>. Pass out copies of (Document Analysis Worksheet) and have students analyze the document, then lead a class discussion about Lincoln’s overriding goal in August, 1862. Next, distribute the image of the Emancipation Proclamation (**Document E**), which was proclaimed one month after Lincoln’s letter to Greeley. Have students study the full text of the Emancipation Proclamation (in their textbooks), and answer the following questions:
  - In which parts of the country were the slaves freed?
  - What section of the Proclamation illustrates the North’s need for, and intent to use, African American troops?

- How have Lincoln's goals for the Civil War changed in the space of one month?
  - Extension Activity: The significant shift in war aims—from preserving the Union to abolishing slavery—is deserving of more attention if time permits. Consult the UCLA National Center for History in the Schools reproducible unit, *Lincoln and Slavery* <<http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/nchs>> and review excerpts of letters from Lincoln to James Conkling (August 26, 1863) and Charles D. Robinson (August 17, 1864) for particularly powerful language from Lincoln on this topic. Or, use the Library of Congress link to learn more about the drafting of the Emancipation Proclamation: <<http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/treasures/trt025.html>>. (NOTE: Students may be interested to learn that the desk upon which Lincoln drafted the Emancipation Proclamation is on display at the Chicago Historical Society, as part of an exhibit that also includes the desk from the McLean House in Appomattox Courthouse, VA, where U.S. Grant and Robert E. Lee signed the papers that ended the Civil War).
6. Make an overhead transparency or distribute copies of the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution (**Document F**), to close the lesson about slavery and the Civil War.

**Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave**  
**Written by Himself**  
Boston, 1845

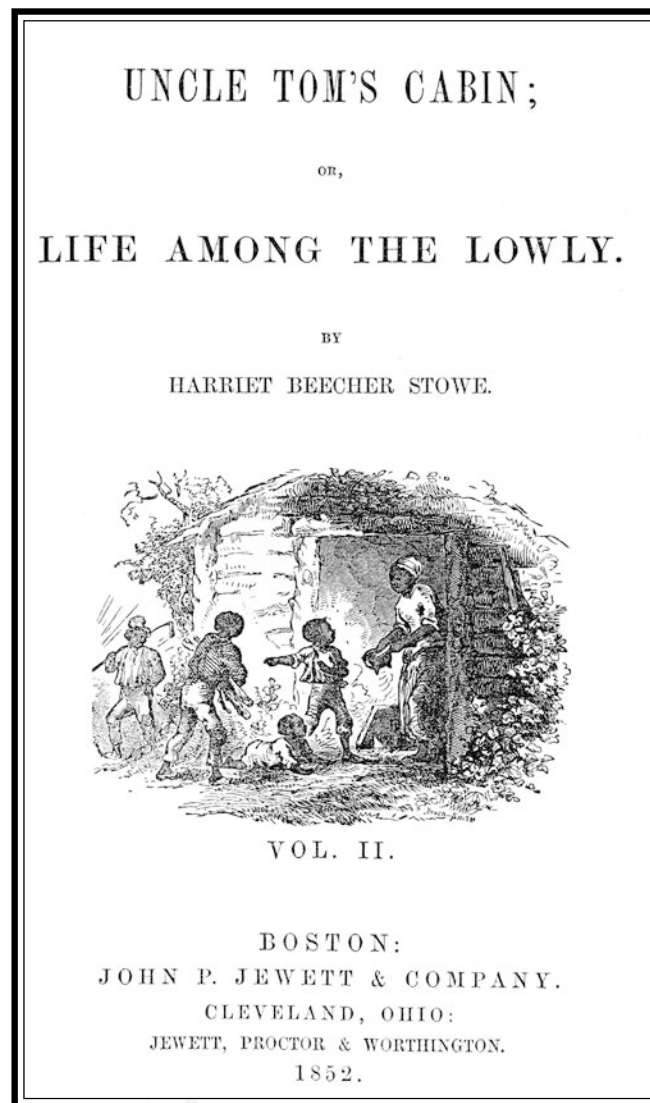
Frederick Douglass was born a slave in Maryland in 1818 or 1819. He “stole” himself from his owner by escaping in 1838. Douglass believed that African Americans should take the lead in fighting for their people's freedom. And, unlike many white abolitionists, Douglass understood that emancipation meant not just the end of slavery but also equality for black Americans. The first page of his autobiography, published in 1845, reveals that he was not certain of his own age, for he never saw any record of his birthday. In fact, Douglass wrote that he never met a slave that knew his or her own birthday.



*Uncle Tom's Cabin*

Harriet Beecher Stowe, 1852

Harriet Beecher Stowe was born in 1811 in Cincinnati, Ohio to a prominent religious family. Her book, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, first appeared in 1851 as a serial in *National Era*, an abolitionist journal. It sold 300,000 copies when it was published the following year in book form. The work was so popular it was made into a traveling melodrama and played to audiences throughout the North. Southern journals denounced the novel, declaring that its portrayal of slavery was pure fabrication, and invention of the author's imagination. The controversy around the book was so pronounced that, upon meeting Beecher Stowe, President Lincoln allegedly remarked, "So you're the little woman that started this big war."



**“House Divided” Speech**  
Abraham Lincoln, June 16, 1858

“A house divided against itself cannot stand.” I believe this government cannot endure permanently half slave and half free. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved—I do not expect the house to fall—but I do expect it will cease to be divided. . . . Either the opponents of slavery will arrest the further spread of it. . . or its advocates will push it forward till it shall become alike lawful in all the States, old as well as new, North as well as South.

The new year of 1854 found slavery excluded from more than half the States by State constitutions, and from most of the national territory by congressional prohibition. Four days later commenced the struggle which ended in repealing that congressional prohibition. This opened all the national territory to slavery. . . . While the Nebraska bill was passing through Congress, a law case involving the question of a Negro’s freedom . . . was passing through the United States Circuit Court. . . . The Negro’s name was Dred Scott. . . . The several points of the Dred Scott decision . . . constitute the piece of machinery in its present state of advancement. . . . The working points of that machinery are:

- (1) That no Negro slave, imported as such from Africa, and no descendant of such slave, can ever be a citizen of any State, in the sense of that term as used in the Constitution of the United States. . . .
- (2) That, “subject to the Constitution of the United States,” neither Congress nor a territorial legislature can exclude slavery from any United States Territory. . . .



Abraham Lincoln: Autograph Letter Signed to Lyman Trumbull  
December 10, 1860

Private, & confidential

Springfield, Ill. Dec. 10. 1860  
Hon. L. Trumbull.

My dear Sir,

Let there be no com-  
promise on the question of extending  
slavery. If there be, see  
our labor is lost, and, ere long,  
more to come again. The danger  
grows greater - that into which some  
of our friends have a hankering to  
run - is Pop. Sov. Have none of  
it - Stand firm. The tug has to  
come, & better now, than any time  
hereafter. Yours as ever  
A. Lincoln.

Abraham Lincoln: Letter to Alexander H. Stephens  
December 22, 1860

For your own eye only  
Springfield, Ill. Dec. 22, 1860  
Hon. A. H. Stephens—  
My dear Sir  
Your obliging answer to my short note is just received, and for which please accept my thanks— I fully appreciate the present peril the country is in, and the weight of responsibility upon me—  
Do the people of the South really entertain fears that a Republican administration would, directly, or indirectly, interfere with the slaves, or with them, about their slaves? If they do, I wish to assure you, as once a friend, and still, I hope, not ~~any~~ an enemy, that there is no cause for such fears—  
The South would be in no more danger in this respect, than it was in the days of Washington

## Abraham Lincoln: Letter to Alexander H. Stephens

December 22, 1860

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I suppose, however, this does not meet the case— You think slavery is right and ought to be extended, while we think it is wrong and ought to be restricted— That I suppose is the rub— It certainly is the only substantial difference between us—

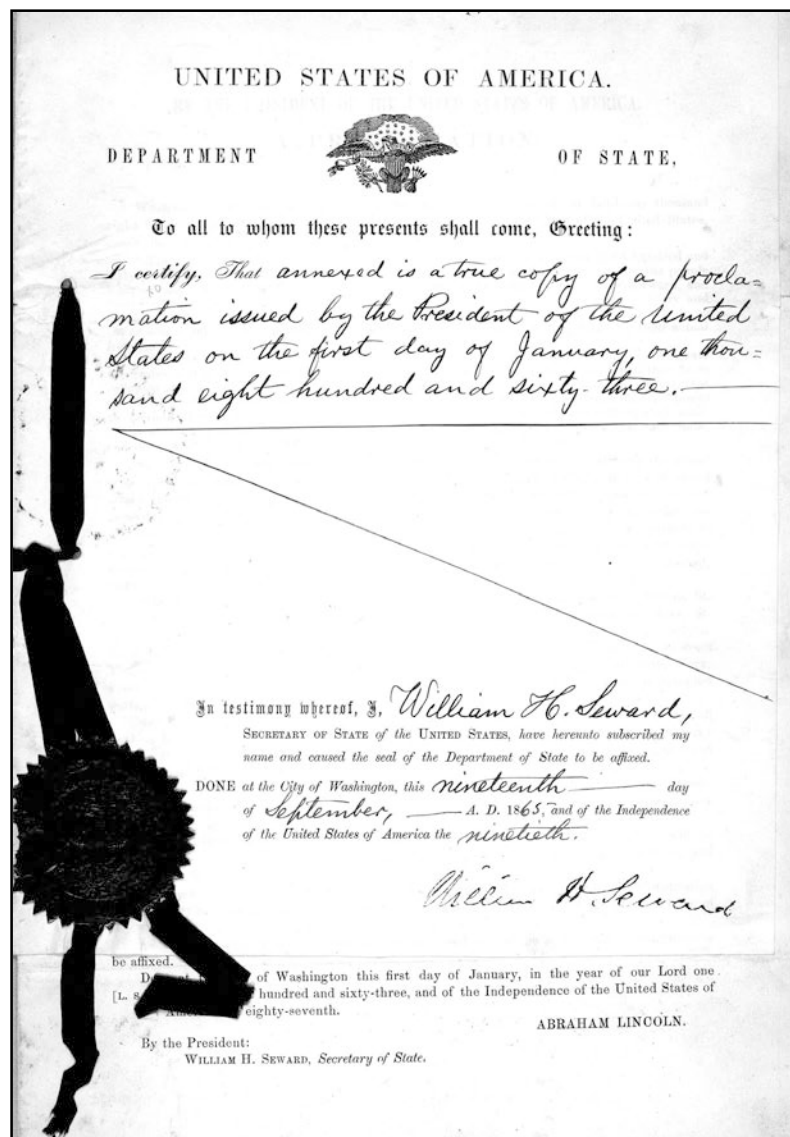
Yours very truly  
A. Lincoln

## The Emancipation Proclamation

### September 22, 1862

. . . I do order and declare that all persons held as slaves within the designated States, and parts of States, are, and henceforward shall be free; and that the Executive government of the United States, including the military and naval authorities thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of said persons . . .

. . . And I further declare and make known, that such persons of suitable condition, will be received into the armed services of the United States to garrison forts, positions, stations and other places, and to man vessels of all sorts in said service.



## The Emancipation Proclamation

BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

### A PROCLAMATION.

WHEREAS, on the twenty-second day of September, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-two, a proclamation was issued by the President of the United States, containing, among other things, the following, to wit:

"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 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.

"That the Executive will, on the first day of January aforesaid, by proclamation, designate the States and parts of States, if any, in which the people thereof, respectively, shall then be in rebellion against the United States; and the fact that any State, or the people thereof, shall on that day be in good faith represented in the Congress of the United States, by members chosen thereto at elections wherein a majority of the qualified voters of such States shall have participated, shall, in the absence of strong countervailing testimony, be deemed conclusive evidence that such State, and the people thereof, are not then in rebellion against the United States."

Now, therefore, I, ABRAHAM LINCOLN, President of the United States, by virtue of the power in me vested as commander-in-chief of the army and navy of the United States, in time of actual armed rebellion against the authority and government of the United States, and as a fit and necessary war measure for suppressing said rebellion, do, on this first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, and in accordance with my purpose so to do, publicly proclaimed for the full period of one hundred days from the day first above mentioned, order and designate as the States and parts of States wherein the people thereof, respectively, are this day in rebellion against the United States, the following, to wit:

Arkansas, Texas, Louisiana, (except the parishes of St. Bernard, Plaquemines, Jefferson, St. John, St. Charles, St. James, Ascension, Assumption, Terre Bonne, Lafourche, St. Mary, St. Martin, and Orleans, including the city of New Orleans,) Mississippi, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, and Virginia, (except the forty-eight counties designated as West Virginia, and also the counties of Berkeley, Accomac, Northampton, Elizabeth City, York, Princess Ann, and Norfolk, including the cities of Norfolk and Portsmouth,) and which excepted parts are for the present left precisely as if this proclamation were not issued.

And by virtue of the power and for the purpose aforesaid, I do order and declare that all persons held as slaves within said designated States and parts of States are and henceforward shall be free; and that the Executive government of the United States, including the military and naval authorities thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of said persons.

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

And I further declare and make known that such persons, of suitable condition, will be received into the armed service of the United States to garrison forts, positions, stations, and other places, and to man vessels of all sorts in said service.

And upon this act, sincerely believed to be an act of justice warranted by the Constitution upon military necessity, I invoke the considerate judgment of mankind and the gracious favor of Almighty God.

In witness whereof I have hereunto set my hand and caused the seal of the United States to be affixed.

Done at the city of Washington this first day of January, in the year of our Lord one [L. S.] thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, and of the Independence of the United States of America the eighty-seventh.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

By the President:

WILLIAM H. SEWARD, *Secretary of State.*

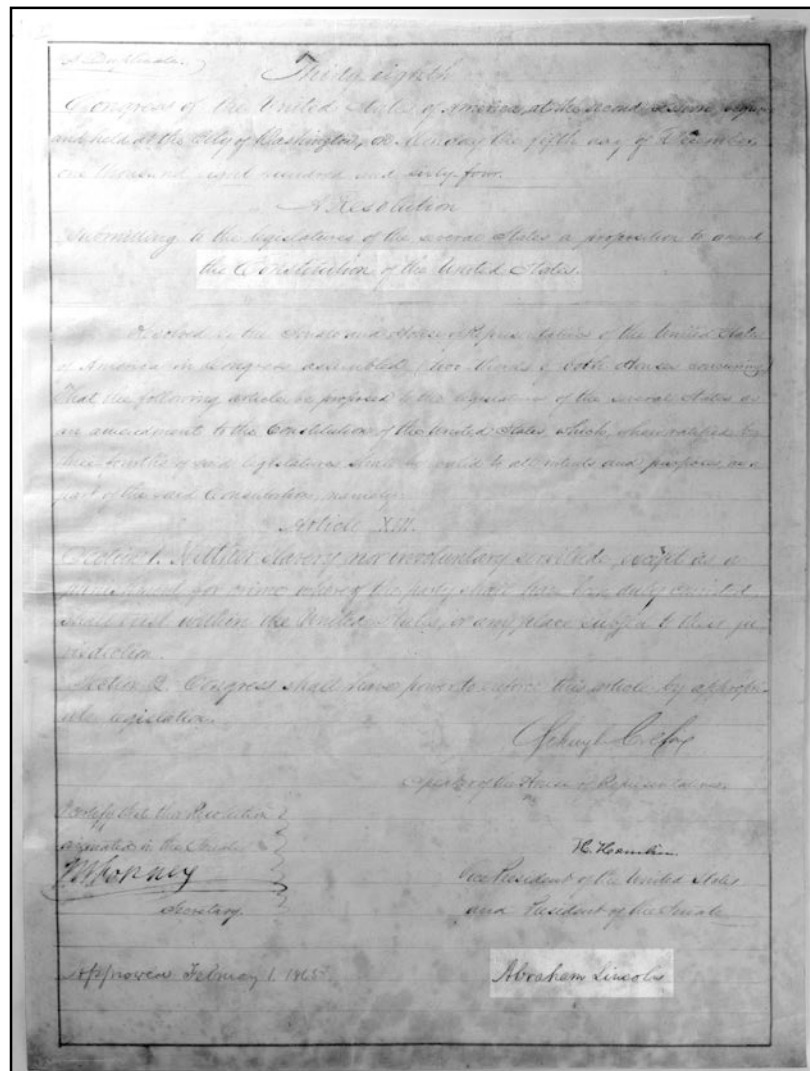
## Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution

February 1, 1865

Article V of the U.S. Constitution requires a two-thirds vote of both houses and three-fourths vote of the states in order to amend the Constitution. Even though the chief executive is not required to sign constitutional amendments, Lincoln signed this souvenir copy of the Congressional resolution abolishing slavery.

Amendment XIII.

Section 1. Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.  
Section 2. Congress shall have the power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.



**Document Analysis Worksheet**

## 1. Type of Document: (check one)

- |   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Map           | <input type="checkbox"/> Advertisement        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Letter                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Telegram      | <input type="checkbox"/> Congressional Record |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Patent                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Press Release | <input type="checkbox"/> Census Report        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Memorandum                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Report        |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify type) _____ |  |   |

## 2. Unique Physical Qualities of the Document (check one or more)

- |                                      |   |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Handwritten | <input type="checkbox"/> Interesting Letterhead |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Typed       | <input type="checkbox"/> "Received" Stamp       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Seals       | <input type="checkbox"/> Other                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Notations   |   |

## 3. Date(s) of the Document: \_\_\_\_\_

## 4. Author (or creator) of the document:

\_\_\_\_\_

Position (Title)

\_\_\_\_\_

## 5. For what audience was the document written?

\_\_\_\_\_

## 6. Document information:

A. List three things the author said that you think are important:

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B. Why do you think this document was written?

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C. What evidence in the document helps you know why it was written? Quote from the document.

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D. List two things the document tells you about life in the United States at the time it was written:

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Designed and developed by the Education Staff,  
National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC 20408.



## Bibliography

### Books

Fehrenbacher, Don, E. *Library of America: Lincoln's Writings*, vol.1. New York: Literary Classics of the United States, 1989.

### Web Sites

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Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, < <http://www.gliah.uh.edu/historyonline/us18.cfm> > .

Huntington Library, < <http://www.huntington.org/Education/lessons/LH-TL-lit-of-upheaval.pdf> > .

*John Brown's Holy War*, < <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/brown> > .

Library of Congress, < <http://lcweb.loc.gov/exhibits/treasures/images/235-clip.jpg> > .

UCLA National Center for History in the Schools, < <http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/nchs> > .

*Uncle Tom's Cabin and The Ideology of Slavery*, < <http://ohioteach.history.ohio-state.edu/Lessons/uncletomslesson.htm> > .