

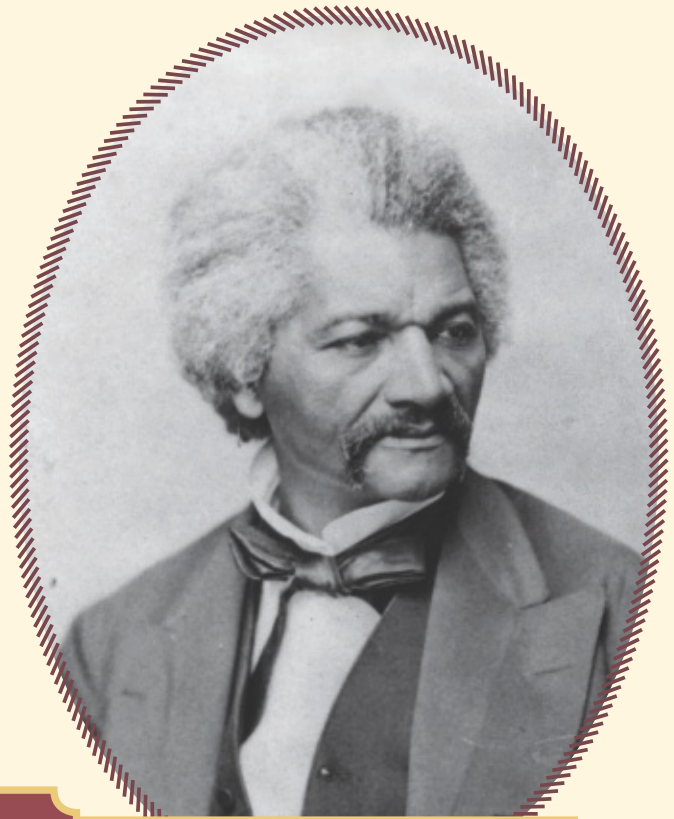
**Genre** Informational Text

**Essential Questions**

Why is equality important to our society? Why can it be difficult to do the right thing?



**Abraham Lincoln**



**Frederick Douglass**

## **The Story Behind an American Friendship**

*by Russell Freedman*

*Twenty-two years after being born into slavery in Baltimore, Maryland, Frederick Douglass escaped and traveled by train and ferry to the free state of New York. Soon, he discovered his talent for writing and lecturing about the abolition of slavery. Douglass made it his mission to tear down the institution into which he had been born. At the start of the Civil War, Douglass was already the most famous abolitionist in America. At the same time, a newly-inaugurated President Lincoln struggled to come to a decision on how to preserve peace in a divided nation.*

# EMANCIPATION

The American Civil War began on the morning of April 12, 1861. At four thirty a.m., rebel cannons ringing the harbor at Charleston, South Carolina, opened fire on the American flag snapping in the sea breeze above the high brick walls of Fort Sumter. The Confederate states had declared themselves an independent nation. They demanded that the United States surrender all military fortifications within the boundaries of the South.

President Lincoln had pledged to “hold, occupy, and possess” all U.S. government forts and arsenals in the rebellious South. The garrison at Fort Sumter held out for thirty-three hours before being forced to surrender. On April 14, the American flag was hauled down and the Confederate stars and bars rose over the shattered and smoldering fort.

Lincoln, in office for little more than six weeks, issued a proclamation calling for 75,000 troops to put down the Southern rebellion. All over the North, patriotic crowds turned out to attend war rallies and cheer the flag. “I never knew what a popular excitement can be,” reported a Harvard professor who had been born during the presidency of George Washington. “The whole population, men, women, and children seem to be in the streets with Union [souvenirs] and flags.”

Senator Stephen Douglas, once Lincoln’s archrival, now offered his support and called for national unity. “There are only two sides to the question,” he told a mass meeting in Chicago. “Every man must be for the United States or against it. There can be no neutrals in this war, *only patriots—or traitors.*”



Bombarding  
Fort Sumter:  
The shots that  
started the Civil  
War. From an  
1861 print.

“God be praised!” Frederick Douglass exclaimed. The war “has come at last,” and with it, the chance to destroy slavery. “Let the long crushed bondsman arise! and in this auspicious moment snatch back [his] liberty.”

Douglass had great expectations, but he would be disappointed. He soon learned that he and President Lincoln had very different ideas about why the war was being fought and how it could be won.

Douglass saw the war as a chance to destroy slavery forever. He wanted Lincoln to free the slaves and recruit black soldiers into the Union army. Enslaved blacks were eager to cast off their chains and fight for their own freedom. Thousands of blacks were already escaping from behind Southern lines, ready to join the Union forces. “Every slave who escapes from the Rebel States is a loss to the Rebellion and a gain to the Loyal Cause,” Douglass wrote. By arming only white men, he argued, the North was fighting the rebels with only one hand—“their soft white hand, while [keeping] their black iron hand chained and helpless behind them.”

In Lincoln's view, this was a war to save the Union, not to destroy slavery. "We didn't go into the war to put down slavery," he said, "but to put the flag back." He was willing to leave slavery alone so long as it did not spread beyond the Southern states. Once the rebellion was crushed, slavery would be confined to the South, where, Lincoln still hoped and believed, it would gradually die out.

Lincoln worried that if he freed the slaves and enlisted black soldiers, he would alienate the large number of white Northerners who supported the Union but opposed emancipation. And he feared that he would lose the support of the slaveholding border states—Delaware, Maryland, Kentucky, and Missouri—which had remained loyal to the Union. Without those loyal border states, Lincoln was convinced, the North could never win the war.

A party of escaped slaves  
coming into Union lines.  
Drawing by Edwin Forbes, 1863





Before and after (opposite) photographs of a young escaped slave who became a Union drummer boy.

**A**t first everyone in Washington, D.C., expected that the war would end quickly. The North claimed the loyalty of twenty-three states with a population of twenty-two million. It had factories to manufacture guns and ammunition, a network of railroads to transport troops, and a powerful navy to blockade Southern ports. The eleven Confederate states of the agricultural South had about nine million people. Nearly four million of them were slaves—a source of power, Frederick Douglass insisted, that could aid the Union cause.

Meanwhile the fighting dragged on without a decisive victory, and as the casualties mounted, so did criticism of President Lincoln. He had trouble finding field commanders he could count on and a reliable general in chief to direct the war effort. Most Republicans had come to agree with Frederick Douglass that saving the Union

required freeing the slaves. They were demanding that the president come up with an emancipation policy.

“Free every slave—slay every traitor—burn every rebel mansion, if these things be necessary to preserve this temple of freedom,” cried the Pennsylvania Republican congressman Thaddeus Stevens. “[We must] treat [this war] as a radical revolution and remodel our institutions.”

Lincoln wasn’t prepared to go quite that far—not yet. Instead, he supported a voluntary plan that would free the slaves gradually and compensate their owners, beginning with the loyal border states and extending into the South as each rebel state was conquered. But that plan went nowhere. Border-state congressmen were not willing to accept even gradual, compensated emancipation.

And even if the slaves were liberated, would they be accepted as free and equal citizens of the United States? At first Lincoln doubted that freed slaves could overcome the nation's widespread racial prejudice. Perhaps they could be resettled in some distant colony, where they would not be subjected to humiliating discrimination and racial prejudice.

Lincoln actually suggested such a plan in August 1862, when he met at the White House with a delegation of five African Americans, most of them local clergymen, and urged them to consider emigrating to Central America. "We have between us a broader difference than exists between almost any other two races," he told them. "Your race are suffering, in my judgment, the greatest wrong inflicted on any people. But even when you cease to be slaves, you are yet far removed from being placed on an equality with the white race. You are cut off from many of the advantages which the other race enjoy." Perhaps, he concluded, "it is better for both of us to be separated."

Most American blacks scoffed at the idea of colonization. And Frederick Douglass was outraged when he read reports of the meeting. Lincoln's remarks, he charged, exposed his "pride of race and blood, his contempt for Negroes, and his canting hypocrisy." He pointed out that in Central and South America, "distinct races live peacefully together in the enjoyment of equal rights," without civil wars. And he called Lincoln "a genuine representative of American prejudice," who was more concerned about the border states than any principle of "justice and humanity."

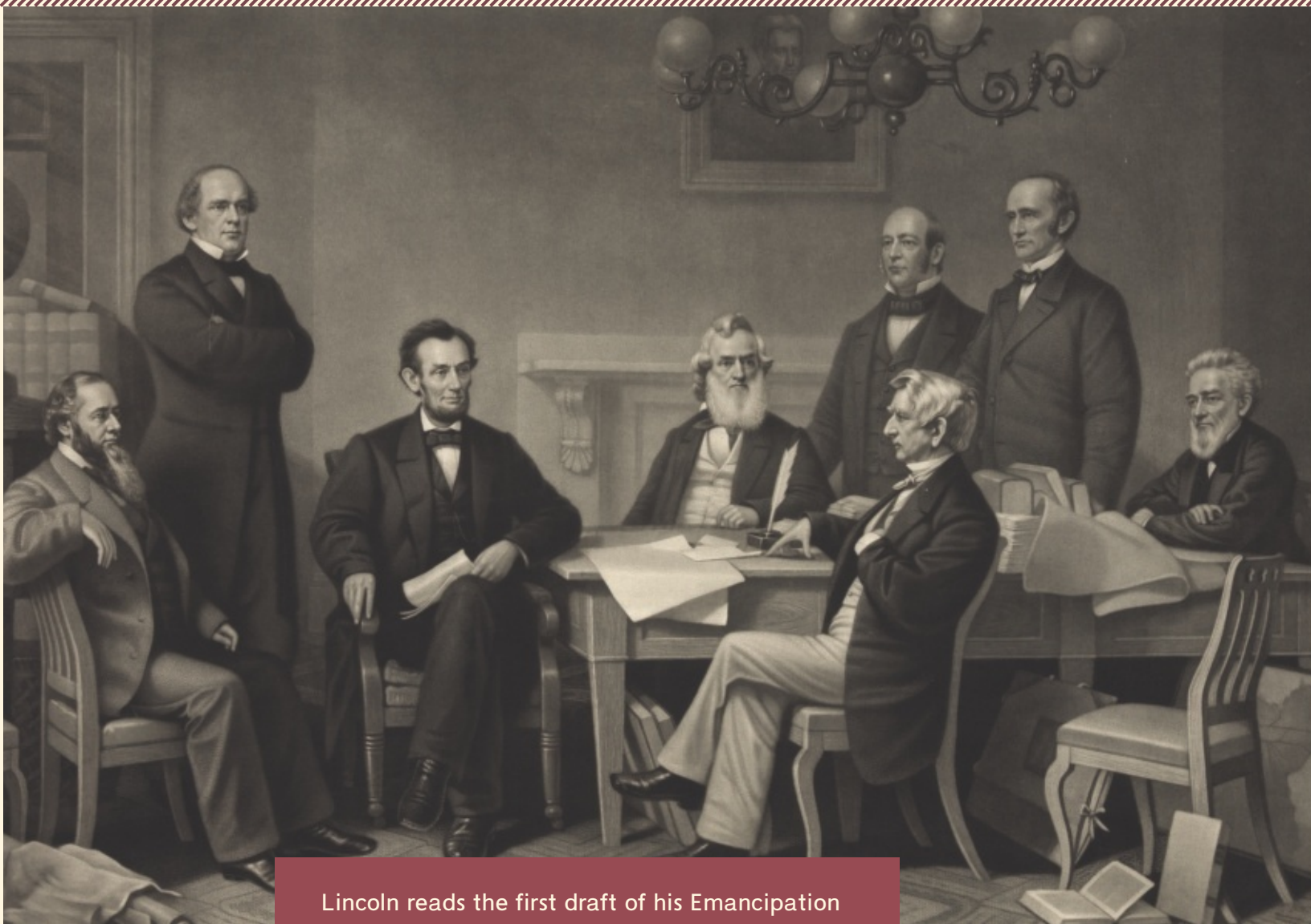


**D**ouglass understood the tough decisions the president faced and the resistance to emancipation by white Northerners who feared an invasion of liberated and jobless blacks. But he had expected more of Lincoln. He wasn't aware that the president had been listening to all the criticism, brooding over slavery, and wrestling with the idea of emancipation. Douglass didn't know it, but Lincoln had, in fact, been working on a preliminary draft of the Emancipation Proclamation that he had not made public.

Lincoln wanted to free the slaves, but he felt that the nation was not yet ready to support an antislavery war. He had maintained popular support for the war with its mounting death toll by insisting that his only goal was to restore the Union. His widely publicized White House meeting with a few black leaders was an effort to test public opinion and to make the idea of emancipation seem less threatening to Northern whites. "I can only go just as fast as I can see how to go," Lincoln said.

Powerful Republican senators had been pressing the president to act. Destroying slavery, they told him, was the quickest way to end the war. Slave labor was crucial to the South's war effort. Slaves grew the food that fed the Confederate army. They built the rebel army's fortifications. By freeing the slaves, Lincoln could cripple the Confederacy. By enlisting liberated slaves into the Union army, he could hasten the end of the war. "You need more men," Senator Charles Sumner told Lincoln, "not only at the North, but at the South, in the rear of the Rebels; you need the slaves."

Still, Lincoln hesitated. Did he, as president, have the authority to abolish slavery in those states where it was protected by law? His Republican advisers argued that under the war powers clause of the Constitution, the president, as commander in chief of the armed forces during an armed rebellion, had the right to emancipate the slaves. The Constitution gave the president powers in wartime that he did not have in peacetime. Emancipation during an armed rebellion was justified as a "fit and necessary war measure." Congress had already invoked the war powers clause to pass two laws confiscating the slaves of rebel owners.



Lincoln reads the first draft of his Emancipation Proclamation to members of his cabinet, July 22, 1862. From an 1866 painting by F.B. Carpenter.

Lincoln was ready to take the next step, but he wasn't convinced that public opinion was ready to follow. The war was not going well. Union troops had won no clear military victories in the critical eastern theater. Lincoln's secretary of state, William H. Seward, urged the president to wait—he must keep his Emancipation Proclamation under wraps until the Union had won a decisive victory in the east. Seward advised Lincoln to withhold publication of the proclamation until a military victory made emancipation look like a demonstration of Northern strength rather than an act of desperation. To announce the proclamation now, Seward argued, would seem like a last-ditch attempt to cover up the Union's military blunders.



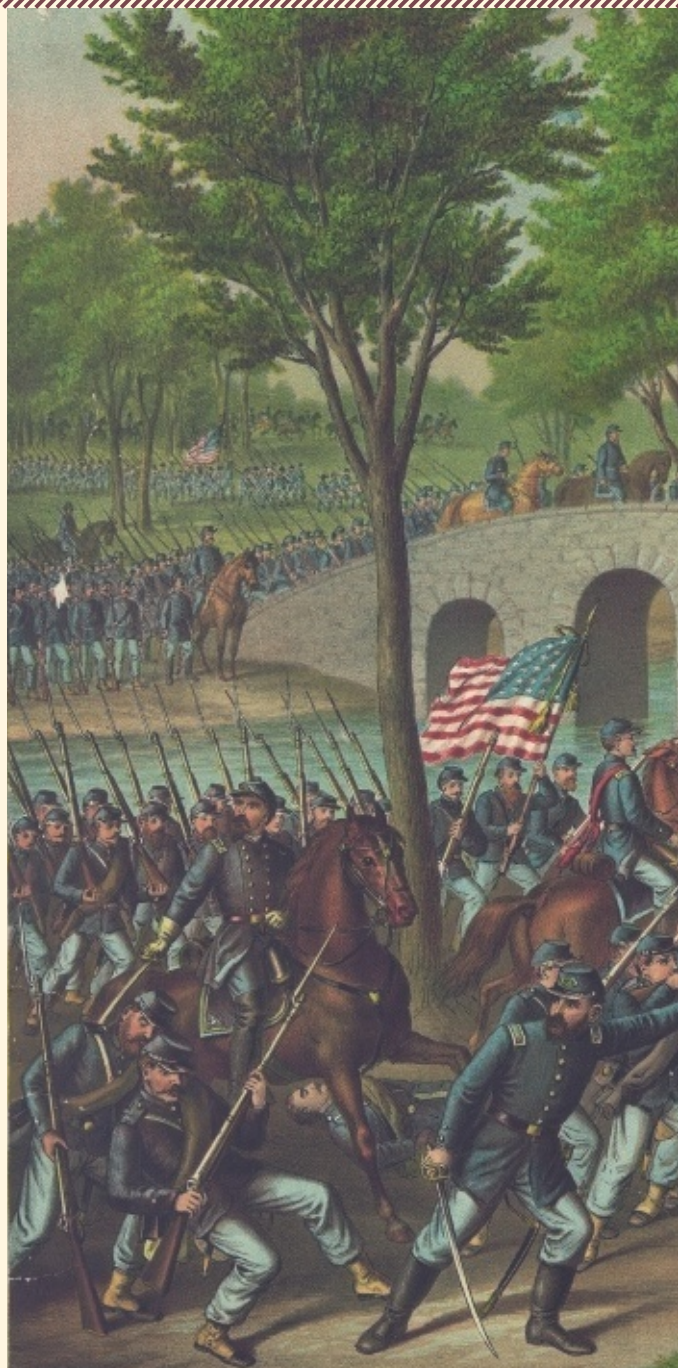
Lincoln agreed. His proclamation would be postponed until he could issue it from a position of strength. He was willing to wait until public opinion caught up with him. “It would do no good to go ahead any faster than the country would follow,” he said.

On September 17, 1862, in the bloodiest single engagement of the war, Union troops under General George McClellan defeated Robert E. Lee’s Confederate army at Antietam Creek in Maryland. It wasn’t the decisive victory Lincoln hoped for—McClellan failed to pursue Lee as the rebels retreated back to Virginia—but it was good enough. The South’s attempt to invade the North had been turned back.

On September 22, Lincoln read the final wording of his Emancipation Proclamation to his cabinet. The next day the document was released to the press. Issued as an “act of justice, warranted by the Constitution, upon military necessity,” the proclamation declared that all slaves in rebel states that had not returned to the Union by January 1, 1863, “are and henceforward shall be free.” In the loyal border states, Lincoln would continue to push for gradual, compensated emancipation.

“We shout for joy that we live to record this righteous decree,” Frederick Douglass exclaimed. His hopes for the nation were suddenly revived. He regarded the proclamation as a revolutionary document that would lead to the end of slavery everywhere in America. “Slavery once abolished in the rebel states will give the death wound to slavery in the border states,” he wrote. “Abraham Lincoln, in his own peculiar, cautious, forbearing and hesitating way, slow, but we hope sure, has . . . proclaimed and declared” that as of January 1, the slaves in the rebellious South “Shall be Forever Free.”

Douglass had criticized Lincoln harshly in the past, and he knew he would disagree with the president on many issues in the future. But with the Emancipation Proclamation, Frederick Douglass’s attitude changed. He became an admirer of Abraham Lincoln.



**BATTLE OF ANTIETAM,** September 17, 1862. Five days later, Lincoln read the final wording of his Emancipation Proclamation to his cabinet. The Proclamation was made public the next day.



Douglass recognized that no one individual, simply with a stroke of his pen, could emancipate four million enslaved human beings. Every day during the war, slaves had thrown off their shackles, fled from their masters, and escaped from behind Southern lines to fight for their own freedom. Black and white abolitionists had worked together for years in their struggle to extinguish slavery. It was this long, continuing struggle, this background of resistance and courage and determination, that had led to the Emancipation Proclamation. "I claim not to have controlled events," Lincoln said, "but confess plainly that events have controlled me."

On New Year's Day, 1863, Lincoln slipped away from the holiday reception at the White House and retired to his office with his cabinet members and other officials to sign the proclamation that would make emancipation a reality. "I never in my life felt more certain that I was doing right, than I do in signing this paper," he said.

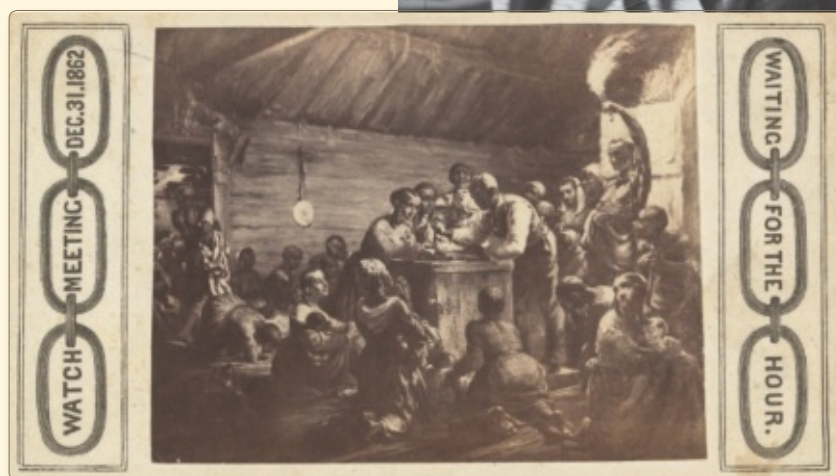
That evening in Boston, Frederick Douglass attended a celebration of black and white abolitionists at Tremont Temple. There were speeches, music, and presentations as everyone waited for official word from the nation's capital that Lincoln had signed the Emancipation Proclamation.

By eleven p.m. word had not yet arrived. "We won't go home until morning," Douglass declared. Just then, a messenger burst into the hall, shouting, "It's coming! It is on the [telegraph] wires!"

The crowd erupted into cheers. People hugged one another and wept. "I never saw such enthusiasm before," Douglass said. "I never saw joy before. We give three cheers for Abraham Lincoln and three cheers for almost everybody else."

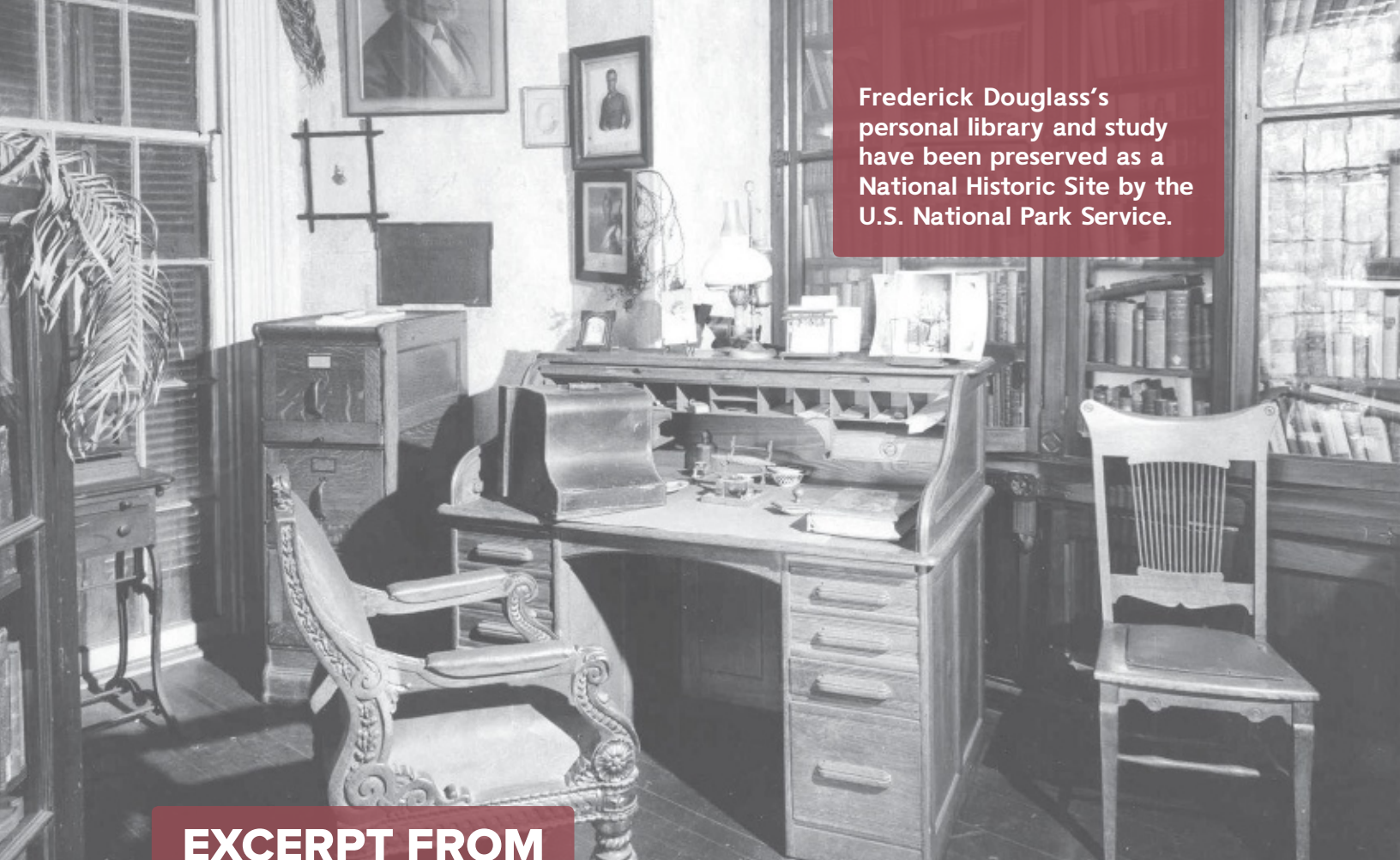


Watch meeting, December 31, 1862. African American men, women, and children gather around a man with a watch, waiting for the Emancipation Proclamation to take effect on January 1, 1863. This is from a carte de visite—a photographic print mounted on a small card. These cards, extremely popular in the early days of photography, were collected and traded throughout the world.





Decades later, the public celebrates Emancipation Day in Richmond, Virginia.



Frederick Douglass's personal library and study have been preserved as a National Historic Site by the U.S. National Park Service.

**EXCERPT FROM**

**NARRATIVE of the Life of**

# **FREDERICK DOUGLASS**

## **AN AMERICAN SLAVE**

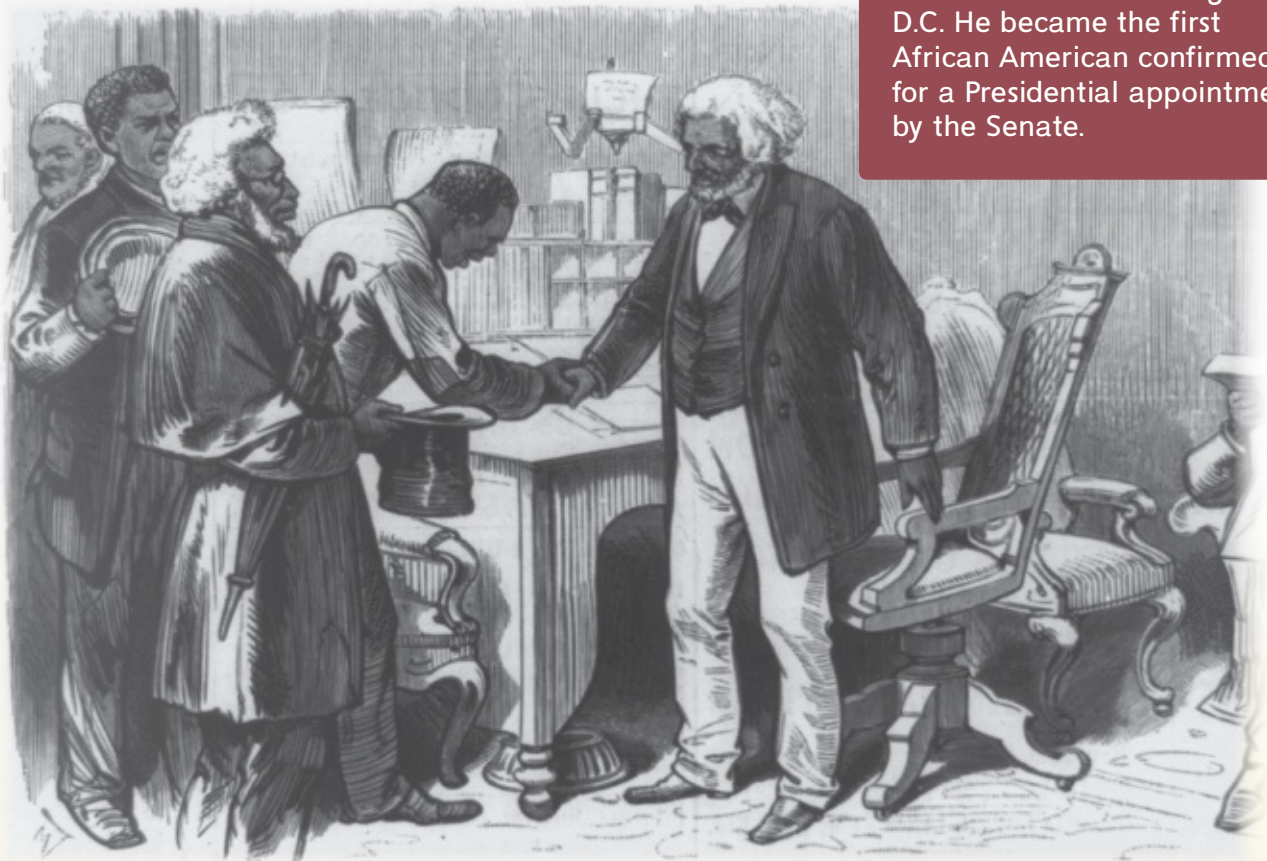
*by Frederick Douglass*

*By the time Frederick Douglass met Anna Murray, a free black woman working as a maid in Baltimore, he had already attempted to escape slavery. His determination was renewed when Anna encouraged him to escape to freedom using the Underground Railroad—a series of freed African Americans and abolitionist whites willing to hide slaves in their homes or barns as they fled north. At the age of twenty, after careful planning, Douglass traveled by train and ferry to New York City, where he could live as a free man. Anna would meet him there shortly after.*

*When Frederick Douglass was young, he learned that it was unlawful for masters to teach their slaves to read or write. Despite this, Douglass had taught himself in secret. After gaining his freedom, Douglass became known for his passionate abolitionist writing. His most famous work is his autobiography, where he wrote about his experiences as an enslaved person and a free man. In the following excerpt, he describes the complex emotions he experienced shortly after escaping slavery.*

I have been frequently asked how I felt when I found myself in a free State. I have never been able to answer the question with any satisfaction to myself. It was a moment of the highest excitement I ever experienced. I suppose I felt as one may imagine the unarmed mariner to feel when he is rescued by a friendly man-of-war from the pursuit of a pirate. In writing to a dear friend, immediately after my arrival at New York, I said I felt like one who had escaped a den of hungry lions. This state of mind, however, very soon subsided; and I was again seized with a feeling of great insecurity and loneliness. I was yet liable to be taken back, and subjected to all the tortures of slavery. This in itself was enough to damp the ardor of my enthusiasm. But the loneliness overcame me. There I was in the midst of thousands, and yet a perfect stranger; without home and without friends, in the midst of thousands of my own brethren—children of a common Father, and yet I dared not to unfold to any one of them my sad condition. I was afraid to speak to any one for fear of speaking to the wrong one, and thereby falling into the hands of money-loving kidnappers, whose business it was to lie in wait for the panting fugitive, as the ferocious beasts of the forest lie in wait for their prey.

In 1877, President Rutherford Hayes appointed Douglass the U.S. Marshal of Washington, D.C. He became the first African American confirmed for a Presidential appointment by the Senate.



## Essential Question

How can we honor those people who strove to make our country great?

# SPEECH at Gettysburg

by Abraham Lincoln

Fourscore and seven years ago  
Our fathers brought forth on this continent  
A new nation,  
Conceived in liberty,  
And dedicated to the proposition  
That all men are created equal.

Now we are engaged in a great civil war,  
Testing whether that nation,  
Or any nation so conceived and so dedicated,  
Can long endure.  
We are met on a great battle-field of that war.  
We have come to dedicate a portion of that field  
As a final resting-place  
For those who here gave their lives  
That that nation might live.  
It is altogether fitting and proper  
That we should do this.  
But, in a larger sense,  
We cannot dedicate—  
We cannot consecrate—  
We cannot hallow—  
This ground.

The brave men, living and dead,  
Who struggled here,  
Have consecrated it far above our poor power  
To add or detract.  
The world will little note nor long remember  
What we say here,  
But it can never forget  
What they did here.  
It is for us, the living, rather,  
To be dedicated here to the unfinished work  
Which they who fought here have thus far so  
nobly advanced.  
It is rather for us to be here dedicated  
To the great task remaining before us—  
That from these honored dead  
We take increased devotion to that cause  
For which they here gave the last full measure of  
devotion;  
That we here highly resolve  
That these dead shall not have died in vain;  
That this nation, under God,  
Shall have a new birth of freedom,  
And that government of the people,  
By the people, for the people  
Shall not perish from the earth.





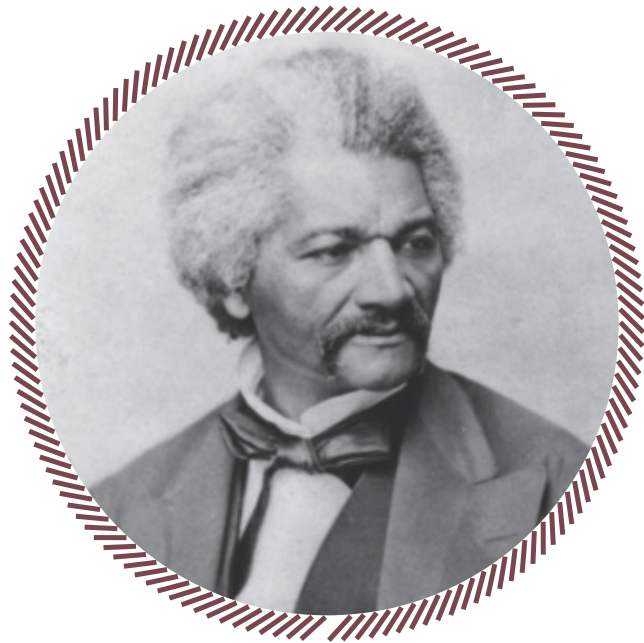
You will answer the comprehension questions on these pages as a class.

### Text Connections

1. Why was Frederick Douglass optimistic about the Civil War?
2. Why was Douglass disappointed in Lincoln?
3. You have read about *patriots* and *traitors* in other selections in this unit, too. What do you think it means to be a patriot? What does it mean to be a traitor?
4. In Douglass's own words, how did he feel when he first arrived in a free state?
5. Imagine your first day of freedom in a new place. How do you think you would feel? What positive and negative feelings might you have?

### Did You Know?

Frederick Douglass delivered an impromptu speech at President Lincoln's memorial service. In the speech he mentioned Lincoln's shortcomings in the fight against slavery, but he also gave Lincoln credit for the liberation of the slaves. The speech was followed by a standing ovation.



## Write

With the Emancipation Proclamation, Abraham Lincoln changed our country for the better. Write about ways that you can make your community better, safer, and more welcoming for all people.

## Look Closer

### Keys to Comprehension

1. Why did Abraham Lincoln worry about emancipating the slaves and enlisting black soldiers? Who did he think would disagree?

### Writer's Craft

2. Senator Stephen Douglas said, "Every man must be for the United States or against it. There can be no neutrals in this war, *only patriots—or traitors.*" Based on the context, what does the word *neutrals* mean?
3. The excerpt from *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* gives Douglass's experience in his own words. What are the benefits of first-person narratives?

### Concept Development

4. How does the excerpt from *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* help you understand Douglass's frustration with Lincoln?





Read this Social Studies Connection. You will answer the questions as a class.

### Text Feature

**Captions** provide information about a photograph or illustration.

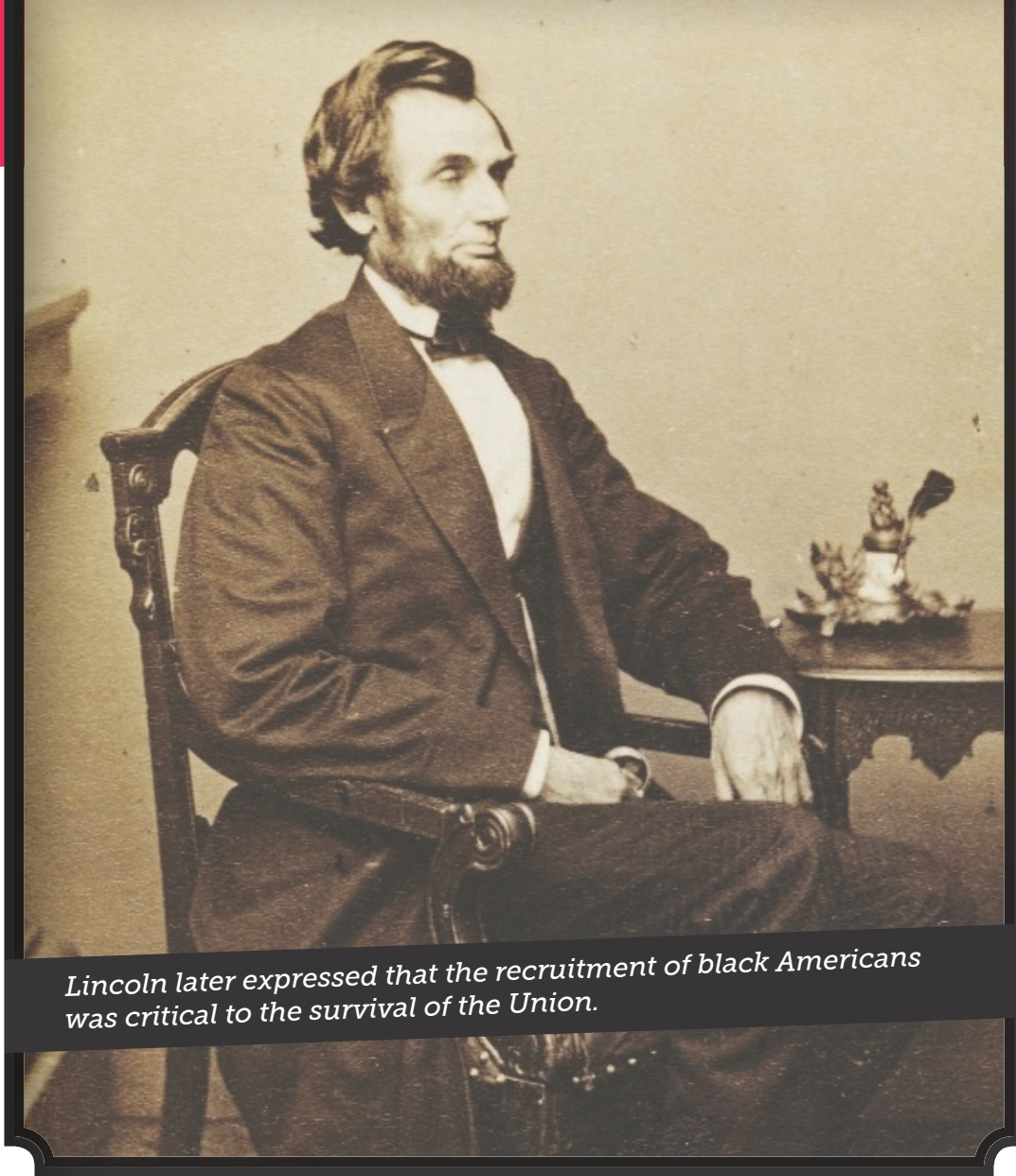
## Military Enlistment

Although black men had served in the American Revolution and the War of 1812, a federal law from 1792 technically barred them from joining the U.S. army. Even when Frederick Douglass encouraged the recruitment of black men, Lincoln hesitated. He suspected that such a move might alienate border states. If the border states were upset, they might join the Confederacy in the Civil War.

After the Emancipation Proclamation, the Union army began a serious effort to recruit black soldiers. At first, enlistment was slow. However, as black leaders like Frederick Douglass encouraged enlistment with great ardor, recruitment numbers grew. At the end of the Civil War, nearly 180,000 black men had served in the U.S. Army and nearly 20,000 had served in the U.S. Navy.

Even though they were eventually permitted to serve in the U.S. military, black soldiers still faced challenges because of their race. The Confederate army threatened to enslave them if they were caught on the battlefield. Officers and other enlisted men in the Union army often treated them poorly. They even received less pay than white soldiers. It would take an act of Congress to grant equal pay to black soldiers in the Civil War—and this act happened only after a black soldier refused to accept inferior pay.

Despite these challenges, black soldiers still fought valiantly. By the end of the Civil War, eighteen black soldiers had been awarded the Medal of Honor, the highest award given to members of the U.S. military. Despite his initial reluctance, Lincoln would eventually come to recognize the invaluable contribution black soldiers gave to the war effort.



*Lincoln later expressed that the recruitment of black Americans was critical to the survival of the Union.*

1. What are some of the challenges that black soldiers confronted during the Civil War?
2. What reasons did Lincoln have for changing his mind about black soldiers?
3. How do different perspectives on historical events affect how we learn history? For example, why is it important to learn about the perspective of black soldiers in the Civil War?



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