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# *Introduction to the Emancipation Proclamation*

The debate in the United States about slavery had been taking place since the very beginning of the formation of the country. In fact, the first debates about slavery took place as the Constitution was being written. The debate continued as states were admitted to the Union. Slave and free states were admitted in equal numbers to ensure that neither faction, slave nor free had a majority in the United States Senate. The first crisis took place in 1820 concerning the admittance of Missouri. To maintain the balance in the Senate, Missouri was admitted as a slave state and Maine was admitted as a free state. Much of the debate centered around a state's right to decide what laws were to be passed inside a state's borders. The next big crisis erupted in 1850 with the admittance of California as a free state. As a compromise, territorial governments were set up in the territories ceded by the Mexican government after the Mexican-American War and were given the authority to decide the slavery question for themselves.

By the time of the 1860 election, the free and the slave states had clear positions in the ensuing debate. The free states consisted of Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire, Rhode

Island, New York, Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan, Wisconsin, Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, Oregon, Kansas and California. The slave states consisted of Maryland, Delaware, Virginia, Kentucky, Missouri, Tennessee, North Carolina, South Carolina, Arkansas, Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia and Florida.

The election of 1860 was a hotly debated and contested election. The Republicans nominated Abraham Lincoln as their presidential candidate. Lincoln had become famous during his bid for the Illinois senate race against Stephen A. Douglas, a leading Democrat. Lincoln spoke out against the immorality of slavery, while Douglas defended his philosophy of popular sovereignty, that is that the people of a state should decide the issue of slavery for themselves. The Democrats split, however. The Southern Democrats would not support Senator Stephen A. Douglas from Illinois, who won the nomination. The Southern Democrats left the convention and nominated John C. Breckinridge in a separate convention. Another party, the Constitutional Union Party, nominated John Bell of Tennessee.



## **1860**

### **November**

Abraham Lincoln was elected President of the United States. Lincoln received 1,866,452 votes; Douglas received 1,376,957 votes; Breckinridge received 849,781 votes and Bell received 588,879 votes.

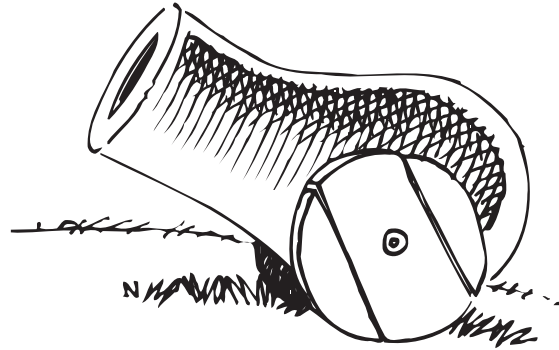
### **December 20**

South Carolina seceded from the Union, becoming the first state to do so. In their convention, the vote was unanimous, 169 to 0. Succession Conventions took place all through the South.

# *Introduction to the Emancipation Proclamation*

## **1861**

- January 9** Mississippi seceded from the Union in an 84 to 15 vote.
- January 10** Florida seceded, 62 to 7.
- January 11** Alabama seceded, 61 to 39.
- January 19** Georgia seceded, 209 to 89.
- January 26** Louisiana seceded, 113 to 17.
- February 1** Texas seceded, 166 to 7.
- February 8** The Confederate States of America adopted a Constitution.
- February 9** Jefferson Davis became president of the Confederate States of America.
- February 18** Jefferson Davis was inaugurated President of the Confederate States of America.
- March 6** Abraham Lincoln was inaugurated President of the United States in Washington, D.C.
- April 12** Confederate soldiers under the command of General Pierre Beauregard attacked Fort Sumter in Charleston, South Carolina, with a barrage of cannon fire marking the beginning of the Civil War.
- April 17** In a second succession convention, Virginia seceded by a vote of 88 to 55, delegates from the western part of the state walked out saying they would form a pro-Union state government.
- April 19** President Lincoln declared a naval blockade against southern ports to block imports that would aid the South in its efforts to persecute the war.
- May 6** Tennessee, 66 to 25, and Arkansas, 69 to 1, seceded.
- May 20** North Carolina seceded in an unanimous vote from the Union, becoming the last state to join the Confederacy. Four slave states—Delaware, Maryland, Missouri and Kentucky—did not join the Confederate states.
- July 21** The Union Army lost the first battle of the war at Bull Run, only 25 miles from Washington, D.C.



# ***Introduction to the Emancipation Proclamation***

***October 24*** Representatives from nearly 40 counties in western Virginia approved the formation of a pro-Union state.

## ***1862***

***March 31*** Lincoln signed into law a bill that prohibited Union army or navy personnel from returning any runaway slaves to their owners. In June the United States entered into a treaty with Great Britain allowing each country to search the others' vessels in the waters off the coast of Africa for Africans bound for the slave market. This was a big blow to the slave traders because it interrupted the flow of slaves into the southern states.

***April 6-7*** General Grant and his troops were surprised by Confederate forces at Shiloh. Thirteen thousand Union troops were killed and wounded with 10,000 Confederate troops dead and wounded.

***April 16*** Lincoln signed a bill outlawing slavery in the District of Columbia. The bill also provided \$300 compensation per slave to any slaveholder affected by the act. According to Massachusetts Senator Charles Sumner, Lincoln had been the largest slaveholder in the country, "for he holds 300,000 slaves of the District of Columbia."

***July 22*** Lincoln called a cabinet meeting where he proposed issuing a proclamation to emancipate the slaves in all states where they were in open insurrection against the United States government. The cabinet discussed the proclamation. William Seward, who was Secretary of State, believed the proclamation was the correct thing to do but argued that it should be issued after a major victory by Union forces. In that way, President Lincoln would be making the proclamation from a position of power and strength.

***September 17*** Union forces stopped General Lee and his troops at one of the bloodiest battles of the war at Antietam Creek, Maryland. Over 26,000 men were killed, wounded or missing. General Lee and his men retreated across the Potomac River into Virginia to escape.

***September 22*** President Abraham Lincoln issued the Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation.

***December 13*** The Union forces lost at the battle of Fredericksburg, Virginia.

## ***1863***

***January 1*** President Lincoln issued the final Emancipation Proclamation.