

The Emancipation Proclamation

Political Ploy or Courageous Gamble?

by Jonathan Burack

Each unit in *The Historian's Apprentice* series deals with an important historical topic. It introduces students to a five-step set of practices designed to simulate the experience of being a historian and make explicit all key phases of the historian's craft.

The Historian's Apprentice: A Five-Step Process

1. Reflect on Your Prior Knowledge of the Topic

Students discuss what they already know and how their prior knowledge may shape or distort the way they view the topic.

2. Apply Habits of Historical Thinking to the Topic

Students build background knowledge on the basis of five habits of thinking that historians use in constructing accounts of the past.

3. Interpret the Relevant Primary Sources

Students apply a set of rules for interpreting sources and assessing their relevance and usefulness.

4. Assess the Interpretations of Other Historians

Students learn to read secondary sources actively, with the goal of deciding among competing interpretations based on evidence in the sources.

5. Interpret, Debate, and Write About the Topic Yourself

Students apply what they have learned by constructing evidence-based interpretations of their own in a variety of ways.



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Teacher Introduction

★ *Teaching the Historian's Craft*

The goal of *The Historian's Apprentice* units is to expose students in a manageable way to the complex processes by which historians practice their craft. By modeling what historians do, students will practice the full range of skills that make history the unique and uniquely valuable challenge that it is.

Modeling the historian's craft is not the same as being a historian—something few students will become. Therefore, a scaffolding is provided here to help students master historical content in a way that will be manageable and useful to them.

Historical thinking is not a simple matter of reciting one fact after another, or even of mastering a single, authoritative account. It is disciplined by evidence, and it is a quest for truth; yet, historians usually try to

clarify complex realities and make tentative judgments, not to draw final conclusions. In doing so, they wrestle with imperfect sets of evidence (the primary sources), detect multiple meanings embedded in those sources, and take into account varying interpretations by other historians. They also recognize how wide a divide separates the present from earlier times. Hence, they work hard to avoid present-mindedness and to achieve empathy with people who were vastly different from us.

In their actual practice, historians are masters of the cautious, qualified conclusion. Yet they engage, use their imaginations, and debate with vigor. It is this spirit and these habits of craft that *The Historian's Apprentice* seeks to instill in students.

★ *The Historian's Apprentice: Five Steps in Four Parts*

The Historian's Apprentice is a five-step process. However, the materials presented here are organized into four parts. Part I deals with the first two of the five steps of the process. Each of the other three parts then deals with one step in the process. Here is a summary of the four parts into which the materials are organized:

Teacher Introduction. Includes suggested day-by-day sequences for using these materials, including options for using the PowerPoint presentations. One sequence is designed for younger students and supplies a page of vocabulary definitions.

Part 1. A student warm-up activity, an introductory essay, a handout detailing a set of habits of historical thinking, and two PowerPoint presentations (*Five Habits of Historical Thinking* and *The Emancipation Proclamation: Political Ploy or Courageous Gamble?*). Part 1 (including the PowerPoints) deals with *The Historian's Apprentice* Steps 1 and 2.

Part 2. A checklist for analyzing primary sources, several primary sources, and worksheets for analyzing them. Part 2 deals with *The Historian's Apprentice* Step 3.

Part 3. Two secondary source passages and two student activities analyzing those passages. Part 3 deals with *The Historian's Apprentice* Step 4.

Part 4. Two optional follow-up activities enabling students to write about and/or debate their own interpretations of the topic. Part 4 deals with *The Historian's Apprentice* Step 5.

★ Suggested Five-Day Sequence

Below is one possible way to use this *Historian's Apprentice* unit. Tasks are listed day by day in a sequence taking five class periods, with some homework and some optional follow-up activities.

PowerPoint Presentation: *Five Habits of Historical Thinking*. This presentation comes with each *Historian's Apprentice* unit. If you have used it before with other units, you need not do so again. If you decide to use it, incorporate it into the **Day 1** activities. In either case, give students the “Five Habits of Historical Thinking” handout for future reference. Those “five habits” are as follows:

- History Is Not the Past Itself
- The Detective Model: Problem, Evidence, Interpretation
- Time, Change, and Continuity
- Cause and Effect
- As They Saw It: Grasping Past Points of View

Warm-Up Activity. Homework assignment: Students do the *Warm-Up Activity*. This activity explores students’ memories and personal experiences shaping their understanding of the topic.

Day 1: Discuss the *Warm-Up Activity*, then either have students read or review the “Five Habits of Historical Thinking” handout, or use the *Five Habits PowerPoint* presentation.

Homework assignment: Students read the background essay “The Emancipation Proclamation Debate.”

Day 2: Use the second PowerPoint presentation, *The Emancipation Proclamation*, to provide an overview of the topic for this lesson. The presentation applies the Five Habits of Historical Thinking to this topic. Do the two activities embedded in the presentation.

Homework assignment: Students read the “Interpreting Primary Sources Checklist.” The checklist teaches a systematic way to handle sources:

- Sourcing
- Contextualizing
- Interpreting meanings
- Point of view
- Corroborating sources

Day 3: In class, students study some of the ten primary source documents and complete “Source Analysis” worksheets on them. They use their notes to discuss these sources. (Worksheet questions are all based on the concepts on the “Interpreting Primary Sources Checklist.”)

Day 4: In class, students complete the remaining “Source Analysis” worksheets and use their notes to discuss these sources. Take some time to briefly discuss the two secondary source passages students will analyze next.

Homework assignment: Student read these two secondary source passages.

Day 5: In class, students do the two “Secondary Sources” activities and discuss them. These activities ask them to analyze the two secondary source passages using four criteria:

- Clear focus on a problem or question
- Position or point of view
- Use of evidence or sources
- Awareness of alternative explanations

Follow-Up Activities (optional, at teacher's discretion).

Do as preferred: the DBQ Essay Assignment and/or the Structured Debate.

★ *Suggested Three-Day Sequence*

If you have less time to devote to this lesson, here is a suggested shorter sequence. The sequence does not include the PowerPoint presentation *Five Habits of Historical Thinking*. This presentation is included with each *Historian's Apprentice* unit. If you have never used it with your class, you may want to do so before following this three-day sequence.

The three-day sequence leaves out a few activities from the five-day sequence. It also suggests that you use only six key primary sources. However, it still walks students through the steps of the *Historian's Apprentice* approach: clarifying background knowledge, analyzing primary sources, comparing secondary sources, and debating or writing about the topic.

Warm-Up Activity. Homework assignment: Ask students to read or review the “Five Habits of Historical Thinking” handout and read the background essay “The Emancipation Proclamation Debate.”

Day 1: Use the PowerPoint presentation *The Emancipation Proclamation*. It provides an overview of the topic for this lesson by applying the Five Habits of Historical Thinking to it. Do the two activities embedded in the presentation.

Homework assignment: Students read or review the “Interpreting Primary Sources Checklist.” The checklist teaches a systematic way to handle sources.

Day 2: In class, students study some of the ten primary source documents and complete “Source Analysis” worksheets on them. They then use their notes to discuss these sources. Documents 1, 3, 4, 6, 7, and 8 are suggested.

You may wish to make your own choices of primary sources. Use your judgment in deciding how many of them your students can effectively analyze in a single class period.

Homework assignment: Student read the two secondary source passages.

Day 3: In class, students do the two “Secondary Sources” activities and discuss them. These activities ask them to analyze the two secondary source passages using four criteria.

Follow-Up Activities (optional, at teacher's discretion):

Do as preferred: the DBQ Essay Assignment and/or the Structured Debate.

★ *Suggestions for Use with Younger Students*

For younger students, parts of this lesson may prove challenging. If you feel your students need a somewhat more manageable path through the material, see the suggested sequence below.

If you want to use the *Five Habits of Historical Thinking* PowerPoint presentation, this sequence takes four class periods. If you do not use this PowerPoint, you can combine **Day 1** and **Day 2** and keep the sequence to just three days. We suggest using five primary sources only. The ones listed for **Day 3** are less demanding in terms of vocabulary and conceptual complexity. For **Day 4**, we provide some simpler DBQs for the follow-up activities.

Vocabulary: A list of vocabulary terms in the sources and the introductory essay is provided on page 7 of this booklet. You may wish to hand this sheet out as a reading reference, you could make flashcards out of some of the terms, or you might ask each of several small groups to use the vocabulary sheet to explain terms found in one source to the rest of the class.

SUGGESTED FOUR-DAY SEQUENCE

Warm-Up Activity. Homework assignment: Students do the Warm-Up Activity. This activity explores students' memories and personal experiences shaping their understanding of the topic.

Day 1: Discuss the Warm-Up Activity. Show the *Five Habits of Historical Thinking* PowerPoint presentation (unless you have used it before and/or you do not think it is needed now). If you do not use this PowerPoint presentation, give students the "Five Habits of Historical Thinking" handout and discuss it with them.

Homework assignment: Ask students to read the background essay, "The Emancipation Proclamation Debate."

Day 2: Use the PowerPoint presentation *The Emancipation Proclamation*. This introduces the topic for the lesson by applying the Five Habits of Historical Thinking to it. Do the two activities embedded in the presentation.

Homework assignment: Students read or review the "Interpreting Primary Sources Checklist." The checklist offers a systematic way to handle sources.

Day 3: Discuss the "Interpreting Primary Sources Checklist" and talk through one primary source document in order to illustrate the meaning of the concepts on the checklist. Next, have students complete "Source Analysis" worksheets after studying primary source documents 1, 4, 6, 8, and 10.

Homework assignment: Students read the two secondary source passages.

Day 4: Students do only "Secondary Sources: Activity 2" and discuss it. This activity asks them to choose the two primary sources that best back up each secondary source passage.

Follow-Up Activities (optional, at teacher's discretion):

Do as preferred: the DBQ Essay Assignment and/or the Structured Debate.

Here are some alternative DBQs tailored to the six primary sources recommended here:

What was Abraham Lincoln's main reason for issuing the Emancipation Proclamation when he did?

Explain why you do or do not agree with this statement: "Lincoln intended to end slavery no matter what, once the Civil War started."

Vocabulary: The Introductory Essay

- **Cabinet:** In this case, the U.S. president's group of top department heads and advisers
- **"compensated emancipation":** Freeing slaves by paying their owners for them
- **confiscated:** Seized or appropriated under authority for public use
- **contraband of war:** Property seized from an enemy during war
- **"cynical political ploy":** acting for political gain with contempt for moral principles
- **emancipation:** The act of setting free, in this case from slavery
- **preliminary:** Introductory, or leading up to a main event
- **secession:** The act of seceding or withdrawing from a larger group or union

Vocabulary: The Primary Sources

- **abrasion:** An area that has been scraped or rubbed
- **appropriations:** Money authorized or set aside for a particular use
- **censure:** Blame or criticism
- **clevis:** A metal fitting with holes through which a bolt is passed to attach it to a chain or rod
- **constituents:** The citizens an elected official represents
- **countervailing:** Going against
- **designated:** Indicated or named for some purpose
- **disaffected:** Losing affection and becoming dissatisfied
- **"federal authority":** The authority of the federal government, as opposed to that of the states
- **forfeit:** To lose the right to something
- **initiate:** Begin
- **in lieu of:** In place of, or instead of
- **insurrection:** Rebellion
- **pecuniary:** Having to do with money

Vocabulary: The Secondary Sources

- **bill of lading:** A document issued by a carrier listing goods to be shipped
- **Crittendon Resolution (1861):** It reassured border states the war was not waged to abolish slavery
- **conservatives:** Politically active people who seek to preserve or restore what is traditional
- **consistency:** Always acting so as to maintain a standard
- **enumeration:** A listing or numbering of items
- **forestall:** To prevent something
- **indictment:** A charge against, or statement of condemnation
- **integrity:** Acting regularly in accordance with high moral principles
- **propaganda:** Efforts to persuade, especially through distortions and emotional appeals
- **prudence:** Acting cautiously with discipline, reason, and good judgment
- **quashed:** Crushed or rejected
- **salient:** Prominent or noticeable

Part 1: The Emancipation Proclamation Providing the Context

Note to the teacher: The next pages provide materials meant to help students develop a clear picture of what the Emancipation Proclamation was and why historians still disagree about it. The materials also seek to teach students the Five Habits of Historical Thinking.

This section includes the following:

- **PowerPoint presentation: *The Five Habits of Historical Thinking***

This presentation illustrates five habits of thought or modes of analysis that guide historians as they construct their secondary accounts of a topic. These five habits are not about skills used in analyzing primary sources. (Those are dealt with more explicitly in another handout in the next section.) These five habits of historical thinking are meant to help students see history as a way of thinking, not as the memorizing of disparate facts and pre-digested conclusions. The PowerPoint uses several historical episodes as examples to illustrate the five habits. In two places, it pauses to ask students to do a simply activity applying one of the habits to some of their own life experiences.

If you have used this PowerPoint with other *Historian's Apprentice* units, you may not need to use it again here.

- **Handout: “The Five Habits of Historical Thinking”**

This handout supplements the PowerPoint presentation. It is meant as a reference for students to use as needed. If you have used other *Historian's Apprentice* units, your students may only need to review this handout quickly.

- **Warm-Up Activity**

A simple exercise designed to help you see what students know about the Emancipation Proclamation, what confuses them, or what ideas they may have absorbed about it from popular culture, friends and family, etc. The goal is to alert them to their need to gain a clearer idea of the past and be critical of what they think they already know.

- **Introductory essay: “The Emancipation Proclamation Debate”**

The essay provides enough basic background information on the topic to enable students to assess primary sources and conflicting secondary source interpretations. At the end of the essay, students get some points to keep in mind about the nature of the sources they will examine and the conflicting secondary source interpretations they will debate.

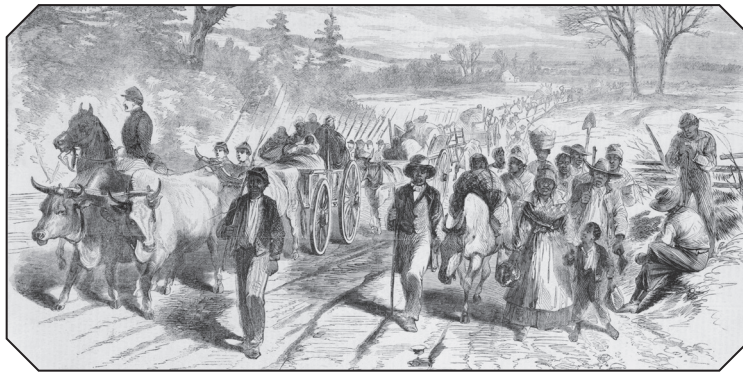
- **PowerPoint presentation: *The Emancipation Proclamation: Political Ploy or Courageous Gamble?***

This PowerPoint presentation reviews the topic for the lesson and shows how the Five Habits of Historical Thinking can be applied to a clearer understanding of it. At two points, the presentation calls for a pause and students are prompted to discuss some aspects of their prior knowledge of the topic. It is suggested that you use this PowerPoint presentation after assigning the introductory essay, but you may prefer to reverse this order.

Warm-Up Activity

What Do You Know About the Civil War?

This lesson deals with the Emancipation Proclamation, issued during the Civil War. Whenever you start to learn about a time in history, it helps to think first of what you already know about it, or think you know. You probably have impressions. Or you may have read or heard things about it already. Some of what you know may be accurate. You need to be ready to alter your fixed ideas about this time as you learn more about it. This is what any historian would do. For now, study this illustration and take a few notes on the questions below it.



This drawing shows African Americans flocking to join soldiers marching into the South in the early 1860s. What do you know about the events that caused this to take place?

Were any of your ancestors involved in the Civil War in any way? If so, what do you know about their experiences? How have these experiences influenced your own views about the Civil War?

Have you ever seen films on the Civil War, such as *Glory*, or *Gone with the Wind*? What impression do you get about the conflict from such films?

The Emancipation Proclamation Debate

“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 . . .”

“Forever free” — to some, this was a dream come true. For others, it was a nightmare long dreaded. Yet for many, these words were a confusing promise, a half-measure with a murky purpose and little likelihood of having much effect.

The words quoted above are the key provision of Abraham Lincoln’s preliminary Emancipation Proclamation, announced on September 22nd, 1862. It warned the Southern states that unless they stopped their rebellion, all the slaves in the lands they controlled would be granted freedom. On January 1st, 1863, the final Emancipation Proclamation did just that, detailing all the states and parts of states in which slaves would be considered free.

Even at the time, many saw these two proclamations as historic, even revolutionary. However, others at the time also ridiculed them as a meaningless or cynical political ploy. Historians have disagreed ever since. To understand what the disagreements are about, you need to keep in mind not only what the decrees did, but their context and timing. Timing is crucial to judging Lincoln’s intentions.

Lincoln’s election as president in 1860 triggered the South’s secession and the Civil War. Lincoln’s Republican Party had pledged to halt the spread of slavery into the western territories. It did not promise to end slavery where it already existed. Nevertheless, the South regarded the threat to stop the spread of slavery as only a first step for hemming it in and ending slavery everywhere. As a result, the slavery issue drove 11 Southern states to secede from the Union and form the Confederate States of America.

Even though slavery split the nation, Lincoln insisted he was not fighting the Civil War to end slavery. At first, he said preserving the Union itself was the only issue. He made it clear that he would be glad to do that without altering slavery where it already existed.

At several points in the early stages of the conflict, he even stopped efforts to free slaves in parts of the South. The most famous was his order to General John C. Fremont to stop freeing slaves of rebellious Confederates in Missouri. He and Congress did allow Union officers to seize slaves from their owners as “contraband,” or confiscated war property.

Because of that, slaves soon began flocking to Union lines; in a sense, they began freeing themselves. Congress passed two Confiscation Acts to regulate this. These acts did some of what the Emancipation Proclamation would later do much more completely.

Lincoln only decided to issue his preliminary Emancipation Proclamation in mid-1862. He presented his decision to his Cabinet in July. At that point, the war was going badly. Fears were mounting that Great Britain and other European nations might recognize the Confederacy and give it aid. Perhaps if the war became a fight over slavery itself, they would not do this (Great Britain had already abolished slavery). Lincoln’s Secretary of State William Seward convinced him to hold off until a major Union victory so as not to appear to be acting out of desperation. On September 17th, the battle of Antietam gave Lincoln enough of a victory to enable him to issue the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation. The proclamation did not vow to free all the slaves, only those in areas not under Union control. As Seward said, “We show our sympathy with slavery by emancipating slaves where we cannot reach them and holding them in bondage where we can set them free.”

Given all this, many conclude that Lincoln acted only out of political necessity and not because he cared about slavery.

However, other factors lead some historians to very different conclusions. One factor is Lincoln himself. What did he really think about slavery? Lincoln expressed strong feelings against it long before the Civil War. His views about African Americans are harder to be sure about. Lincoln often spoke in an indirect and cautious way. In part, that may be because he believed the Constitution allowed no clearly legal way to act against slavery.

From his start as president, he asked Southern states to adopt programs of gradual, compensated emancipation; that is, slave owners would be paid for their slaves, and the slaves would be freed gradually over time. Lincoln especially urged this approach for slaves in the so-called Border States—Maryland, Delaware, Kentucky, and Missouri. His great fear was that if he acted firmly to abolish slavery, these states might join the Confederacy, making it vastly harder to win the war. By July 1862, it was clear the Border States would not do as Lincoln wished, and so he decided to issue the proclamation instead.

As for emancipation benefiting him politically, many Northerners actually feared any effort to free slaves. Political opposition to Lincoln was growing already in many parts of the North. Regarding Europe, Seward was not at all sure that slave emancipation would keep countries there from siding with the Confederacy.

Lincoln issued the proclamation as an executive order, by his authority as “Commander in Chief of the Army and Navy,” under Article II, section 2 of the Constitution. That is, he used special wartime powers that gave him a legal standing to do what he did. He hoped this would protect his actions against a Supreme Court challenge, which he feared might overrule any congressional confiscation act. His fears about this may well have been the major factor leading him to act with caution in a determined effort to end slavery for good.

Whatever Lincoln’s motives, when the 13th Amendment ended slavery completely in 1865, the Emancipation Proclamation had already provided the basis for freeing as many as four million slaves.

Points to Keep in Mind

Historians’ Questions

For a time after the Civil War, Lincoln was idealized as the Great Emancipator, a noble martyr to the cause of freedom. However, some historians have questioned this view. They were struck by how often Lincoln said his only goal was to restore the Union, not to end slavery. These historians view the Emancipation Proclamation as a matter of political tactics, designed only to help Lincoln fight the war and save the Union. Lincoln himself at times seemed to doubt that African Americans could have an equal place in American life. This only adds to the doubts these historians have.

Other historians point out that many in the North had racist fears regarding free blacks. Hence, it is not clear the Emancipation Proclamation would have helped Lincoln tactically, either in fighting the war or in his own political ambition to win reelection in 1864. However, Lincoln did in fact actively push Southern states to adopt plans for gradual, compensated emancipation. He acted cautiously, these historians say, only to avoid any court challenges to emancipation. He used his powers as commander-in-chief to bring it about as soon as he saw no other way to put slavery on the road to extinction.

The Primary Source Evidence

For this lesson, you will study ten primary source documents on the Emancipation Proclamation. Most of these will be various statements by Lincoln that show what and why he was thinking regarding emancipation at various times. Together, these sources will give you evidence to make up your own mind about this issue. They will also enable you to make some informed judgments of your own about what two historians say about this same question.

Secondary Source Interpretations

After studying and discussing the primary sources, you will read two short passages from two historians on the Emancipation Proclamation. The two historians agree about many of the facts, but they make quite different overall judgments about Lincoln’s reasons for issuing the Emancipation Proclamation. You will use your own background knowledge and your ideas about the primary sources as you think about and answer some questions about the views of these two historians.

Five Habits of Historical Thinking

History is not just a chronicle of one fact after another. It is a meaningful story, or an account of what happened and why. It is written to address questions or problems historians pose. This checklist describes key habits of thinking that historians adopt as they interpret primary sources and create their own accounts of the past.

History Is Not the Past Itself

When we learn history, we learn a story about the past, not the past itself. No matter how certain an account of the past seems, it is only one account, not the entire story. The “entire story” is gone. That is, the past itself no longer exists. Only some records of events remain, and they are never complete. Hence, it is important to see all judgments and conclusions about the past as tentative or uncertain. Avoid looking for hard-and-fast “lessons” from the past. The value of history is in a way the opposite of such a search for quick answers. That is, its value is in teaching us to live with uncertainty and see even our present as complex, unfinished, open-ended.

The Detective Model: Problem, Evidence, Interpretation

Historians can’t observe the past directly. They must use evidence, just as a detective tries to reconstruct a crime based on clues left behind. In the historian’s case, primary sources are the evidence—letters, official documents, maps, photos, newspaper articles, artifacts, and all other traces from past times. Like a detective, a historian defines a very specific problem to solve, one for which evidence does exist. Asking clear, meaningful questions is a key to writing good history. Evidence is always incomplete. It’s not always easy to separate fact from opinion in it, or to tell what is important from what is not. Historians try to do this, but they must stay cautious about their conclusions and open to other interpretations of the same evidence.

Time, Change, and Continuity

History is about the flow of events over time, yet it is not just one fact after another. It seeks to understand this flow of events as a pattern. In that pattern, some things change while others hold steady over time. You need to see history as a dynamic interplay of both change and continuity together. Only by doing this can you see how the past has evolved into the present—and why the present carries with it many traces or links to the past.

Cause and Effect

Along with seeing patterns of change and continuity over time, historians seek to explain that change. In doing this, they know that no single factor causes change. Many factors interact. Unique, remarkable and creative individual actions and plans are one factor, but individual plans have unintended outcomes, and these shape events in unexpected ways. Moreover, individuals do not always act rationally or with full knowledge of what they are doing. Finally, geography, technology, economics, cultural traditions, and ideas all affect what groups and individuals do.

As They Saw It: Grasping Past Points of View

Above all, thinking like a historian means trying hard to see how people in the past thought and felt. This is not easy. As one historian put it, the past is “another country” in which people felt and thought differently, often very differently from the way we do now. Avoiding “present-mindedness” is therefore a key task for historians. Also, since the past includes various groups in conflict, historians must learn to empathize with many diverse cultures and subgroups to see how they differ and what they share in common.

Part 2: Analyzing the Primary Sources

Note to the teacher: The following pages provide the primary sources for this lesson. We suggest you give these to students after they read the background essay, after they review the “Five Habits of Historical Thinking” handout, and after they watch and discuss the PowerPoint presentation for the lesson.

This section includes the following:

- Handout: ***Interpreting Primary Sources Checklist***

Give copies of this handout to students and ask them to refer to it when analyzing any primary source.

- **Ten Primary Source Documents**

The documents are as follows:

- Document 1. Lincoln's September 27, 1841, letter to Mary Speed
- Document 2. Lincoln's September 2, 1861, message to John C. Fremont
- Document 3. Lincoln's March 6, 1862, call for compensated emancipation
- Document 4. Lincoln's July 12, 1862, statement to Border State lawmakers
- Document 5. Part of the July 14, 1862, reply by the Border State lawmakers
- Document 6. Lincoln's August 24, 1862, reply to Horace Greeley
- Document 7. Key parts of the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation
- Document 8. Cartoon of Lincoln with an “Emancipation Proclamation” axe
- Document 9. Lincoln's February 6, 1864, account to Francis B. Carpenter
- Document 10. Undated illustration: “Reading the Emancipation Proclamation”

- **Ten “Source Analysis” Worksheets for Analyzing the Primary Sources**

Each worksheet asks student to take notes on one source. The prompts along the side match the five categories in the “Interpreting Primary Sources Checklist.” Not every category is used in each worksheet, only those that seem most relevant to a full analysis of that source.

You may want students to analyze all of the sources. However, if time does not allow this, use those that seem most useful for your own instructional purposes.

Students can use the notes on the “Source Analysis” worksheets in discussions, as a help in analyzing the two secondary sources in the next part of this lesson, and in follow-up debates, DBQs, and other activities.

Interpreting Primary Sources Checklist

Primary sources are the evidence historians use to reach conclusions and write their accounts of the past. Sources rarely have one obvious, easily grasped meaning. To interpret them fully, historians use several strategies. This checklist describes some of the most important of those strategies. Read the checklist through and use it to guide you whenever you need to analyze and interpret a primary source.

Sourcing

Think about a primary source's author or creator, how and why the primary source document was created, and where it appeared. Also, think about the audience it was intended for and what its purpose was. You may not always find much information about these things, but whatever you can learn will help you better understand the source. In particular, it may suggest the source's point of view or bias, since the author's background and intended audience often shape his or her ideas and way of expressing them.

Contextualizing

"Context" refers to the time and place of which the primary source is a part. In history, facts do not exist separately from one another. They get their meaning from the way they fit into a broader pattern. The more you know about that broader pattern, or context, the more you will be able to understand about the source and its significance.

Interpreting Meanings

It is rare for a source's full meaning to be completely obvious. You must read a written source closely, paying attention to its language and tone as well as to what it implies or merely hints at. With a visual source, all kinds of meaning may be suggested by the way it is designed, and by such things as shading, camera angle, use of emotional symbols or scenes, etc. The more you pay attention to all the details, the more you can learn from a source.

Point of View

Every source is written or created by someone with a purpose, an intended audience, and a point of view or bias. Even a dry table of numbers was created for some reason, to stress some things and not others, to make a point of some sort. At times, you can tell a point of view simply by sourcing the document. Knowing an author was a Democrat or a Republican, for example, will alert you to a likely point of view. In the end, however, only a close reading of the text will make you aware of point of view. Keep in mind that even a heavily biased source can still give you useful evidence of what some people in a past time thought. However, you need to take the bias into account in judging how reliable the source's own claims really are.

Corroborating Sources

No one source tells the whole story. Moreover, no one source is completely reliable. To make reasonable judgments about an event in the past, you must compare sources to find points of agreement and disagreement. Even when there are big differences, both sources may be useful. However, the differences will also tell you something, and they may be important in helping you understand each source.

The Primary Sources for the Lesson

Document 1

Information on the source: In 1855, Lincoln reminded his friend Joshua Speed about a trip they took down the Ohio River in 1841. Lincoln wrote that during the trip the sight of a group of slaves onboard was a “continual torment to me.” He also said slavery “continually exercises the power of making me miserable.” He actually described the same trip in detail at the time, in a September 27, 1841, letter to Mary Speed, Joshua’s half-sister. Here is part of that letter:

By the way, a fine example was presented on board the boat for contemplating the effect of condition upon human happiness. A gentleman had purchased twelve negroes in different parts of Kentucky, and was taking them to a farm in the South. They were chained six and six together. A small iron clevis was around the left wrist of each, and this was fastened to the main chain by a shorter one, at a convenient distance from the others, so that the negroes were strung together precisely like so many fish upon a trotline. In this condition they were being separated forever from the scenes of their childhood, their friends, their fathers and mothers and brothers and sisters, and many of them from their wives and children, and going into perpetual slavery, where the lash

of the master is proverbially more ruthless and unrelenting than any other where; and yet amid all these distressing circumstances, as we would think them they were the most cheerful and apparently happy creatures on board. One whose offense for which he had been sold was an over-fondness for his wife, played the fiddle almost continually, and the others danced, sang, cracked jokes, and played various games with cards from day to day. How true it is that “God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb,” or in other words, that he renders the worst of human conditions tolerable while he permits the best to be nothing better than tolerable.

Document 2

Information on the Source: The Republican Party’s first presidential candidate, John C. Fremont, commanded Union forces in Missouri in the Civil War. On August 30, 1861, Fremont acted to free the slaves of disloyal Confederates in his region. His order was broader than the First Confiscation Act, which provided only that owners of slaves actually used against the Union war effort would “forfeit” ownership of those slaves. On September 2, 1861, Lincoln wrote to tell Fremont to modify his proclamation. In this passage from that letter, Lincoln’s mentions “our Southern friends”; this refers to the four Border States loyal to the Union—Delaware, Kentucky, Maryland, and Missouri.

I think there is great danger that the closing paragraph, in relation to confiscation of property, and the liberating slaves of traitorous owners, will alarm our Southern friends, and turn them against us—perhaps ruin or rather fair prospect for Kentucky. Allow me therefore to ask, that you will as of our own motion, modify that paragraph so as to conform to the first and fourth sections of the act of Congress, entitled “An act to confiscate property used for insurrectionary purposes,” approved August 6th, 1861, and a copy of which I herewith send you. This letter is written in a spirit of caution not of censure.

Document 3

Information on the source: On March 6, 1862, Lincoln sent “A Message to Congress Requesting a Joint Resolution on Compensated Emancipation.” On April 10, 1862, Congress passed just such a resolution. Here are key parts of Lincoln’s March 6th message:

I recommend the adoption of a joint resolution by your honorable bodies, which shall be substantially as follows:

“Resolved, that the United States ought to cooperate with any state which may adopt gradual abolishment of slavery, giving to such state pecuniary aid, to be used by such state, in its discretion, to compensate for the inconveniences, public and private, produced by such change of system.”

. . . The Federal government would find its highest interest in such a measure as one of the most efficient means of self-preservation. The leaders of the existing insurrection entertain the hope that this government will ultimately be forced to acknowledge the independence of some part of the disaffected region, and that all the

slave states north of such part will then say, “The Union for which we have struggled being already gone, we now choose to go with the Southern section.” To deprive them of this hope substantially ends the rebellion, and the initiation of emancipation completely deprives them of it as to all the states initiating it.

. . . Such a proposition on the part of the general government sets up no claim of a right by Federal authority to interfere with slavery within state limits, referring, as it does, the absolute control of the subject in each case to the state and its people immediately interested.

Document 4

Information on the source: On July 12, 1862, Lincoln met with Border State representatives and senators at the White House. He urged them to adopt plans for gradual and compensated emancipation. This passage is part of what he told them:

You prefer that the constitutional relation of the states to the nation shall be practically restored, without disturbance of the institution [of slavery]; and if this were done, my whole duty, in this respect, under the constitution, and my oath of office, would be performed. But it is not done, and we are trying to accomplish it by war . . . If the war continue long, as it must, if the object be not sooner attained, the institution in your states will be extinguished by mere friction and abrasion—by the mere incidents of the war. It will be gone, and you will have nothing valuable in lieu of it. Much of its value is gone already. How much better for you, and for your people, to take the step which, at once, shortens the war, and secures substantial compensation for that which is sure to be wholly lost in any other event.

Document 5

Information on the source: On July 14, 1862—two days after Lincoln appealed to the Border States—he received a long reply signed by 20 out of 28 of their representatives and senators. They rejected Lincoln’s appeal, and in this passage they explain their votes also against the April 10th resolution on gradual and compensated emancipation:

In the first place it proposed a radical change of our social system . . . It seemed like an interference by this government, with a question which peculiarly and exclusively belonged to our respective States, on which they had not sought advice or solicited aid. Many of us doubted the constitutional power of this government to make appropriations of money for the object designated; and all of us, thought our finances were in no condition to bear the immense outlay which its adoption and faithful execution, would impose upon the National Treasury. If we pause but for a moment to think of the debt its acceptance would have entailed, we are appalled by its magnitude.

Document 6

Information on the source: On August 19, 1862, Horace Greeley, famous editor of the *New-York Tribune*, published an open letter calling on Lincoln to free the slaves in order to weaken the Confederacy. In response, Lincoln replied with a letter of his own on August 24, 1862, in the *New York Times*. The most important part of that letter appears here. By the time of this letter, Lincoln had in fact already decided to issue the Emancipation Proclamation.

My paramount object in this struggle is to save the Union, and is not either to save or to destroy slavery. If I could save the Union without freeing any slave I would do it, and if I could save it by freeing all slaves I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing some and leaving others alone I would also do that. What I do about slavery, and the colored race, I do because I believe it helps to save the Union; and what I forbear,

I forbear because I don't believe it would help to save the Union. I shall do less whenever I shall believe what I am doing hurts the cause, and I shall do more whenever I shall believe doing more will help the cause. I shall try to correct errors when shown to be error; and I shall adopt new views so fast as they shall appear to be true views.

Document 7

Information on the source: The preliminary Emancipation Proclamation was issued on September 22, 1862, five days after the battle of Antietam. The key provisions are included here:

I, Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States of America, and Commander-in-chief of the Army and Navy thereof, do hereby proclaim and declare that hereafter, as heretofore, the war will be prosecuted for the object of practically restoring the constitutional relation between the United States, and each of the states, and the people thereof, in which states that relation is, or may be suspended, or disturbed.

That it is my purpose, upon the next meeting of Congress to again recommend the adoption of a practical measure tendering pecuniary aid to the free acceptance or rejection of all slave-states, so called, the people whereof may not then be in rebellion against the United States, and which states, may then have voluntarily adopted, or thereafter may voluntarily adopt, immediate, or gradual abolishment of slavery within their respective limits; and that the effort to colonize persons of African descent, with their consent, upon this continent, or elsewhere, with the previously obtained consent of the Governments existing there, will be continued.

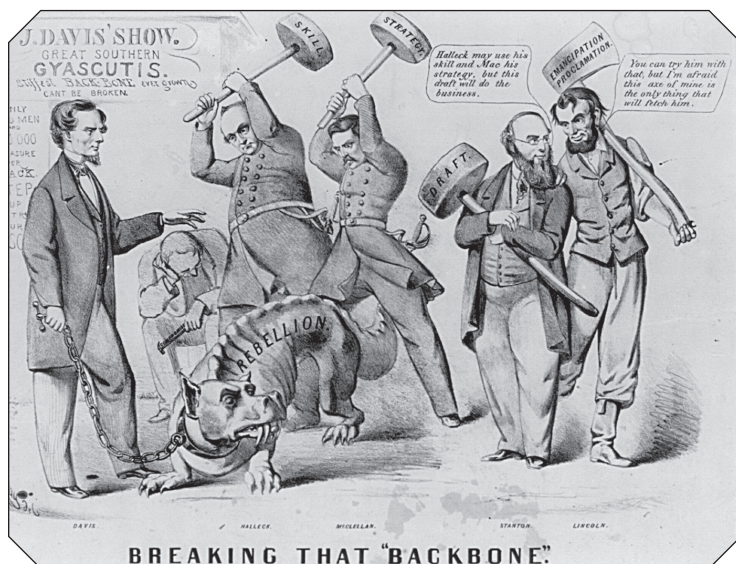
That on the first day of January in the year of our Lord, one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, all persons held as slaves within any state, or designated part of a state, the people whereof shall then be in

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 state 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.

Document 8

Information on the source: This cartoon was published in New York in late 1862. In it, Confederate President Jefferson Davis (far left) holds a dog-like monster labeled “Rebellion.” Several figures prepare to break its backbone. From left to right: Union generals Henry W. Halleck and George B. McClellan swing hammers marked “Skill” and “Strategy,” and Secretary of War Edwin Stanton waits with a hammer labeled “Draft.” On the far right, Lincoln holds an ax labeled “Emancipation Proclamation,” telling Stanton: “You can try him with that, but I’m afraid this axe of mine is the only thing that will fetch him.”



Document 9

Information on the source: This passage is from the record of an account Lincoln gave to the artist Francis B. Carpenter, dated February 6, 1864. Over several months in the spring and summer of 1864, Carpenter painted a famous picture of Lincoln’s first reading of the Emancipation Proclamation to his Cabinet.

It had got to be midsummer, 1862. Things had gone on from bad to worse, until I felt that we had reached the end of our rope on the plan of operations we had been pursuing; that we had about played our last card, and must change our tactics, or lose the game. I now determined upon the adoption of the emancipation policy; and without consultation with, or the knowledge of, the Cabinet, I prepared the original draft of the proclamation, and, after much anxious thought, called a Cabinet meeting upon the subject. This was the last of July or the first part of the month of August 1862 [actually, it was July 22nd].

Document 10

Information on the source: The title of this illustration is “Reading the Emancipation Proclamation.” It is clearly from around the time of the Civil War, but the Library of Congress has no date for it.



Source Analysis: Primary Source Document 1

Part of Lincoln's September 27, 1841, letter to Mary Speed regarding a trip down the Ohio

Sourcing

Lincoln's 1855 letter to Joshua Speed and his 1841 letter here to Mary Speed were private messages to friends. Why might that be important to know in interpreting them?

Contextualizing

In 1841, the movement to abolish slavery was still small. Does that context add to your view of the letter?

Interpreting Meanings

When Lincoln describes the slaves as "fish upon a trotline," is he downplaying the horrors of slavery or actually adding to his reader's awareness of those horrors?

Lincoln says the slaves "were the most cheerful and apparently happy creatures onboard." Does he want us to believe they really were happy? What else in the letter helps suggest an answer to this question?

Point of View

Was Lincoln's view of slavery less harsh in 1841 than in 1855, when he called it a "continual torment" to him? Or was he just as harsh about it in 1841?

Source Analysis: Primary Source Document 2

Lincoln's September 2, 1861, message to General John C. Fremont telling him to modify his proclamation freeing slaves in Missouri

Contextualizing

What do you know about attitudes in 1861 toward slavery and the Civil War in the Border States Lincoln calls "our Southern Friends"?

Interpreting Meanings

What was Lincoln's main reason for overruling Fremont's proclamation?

Point of View

Does Lincoln express any view at all here about the worth of freeing the slaves or ending slavery? Can you detect any attitude about that implied in the letter?

Corroborating Sources

What other sources for this lesson add to your understanding of Lincoln's motives in this decision?

Source Analysis: Primary Source Document 3

Parts of a proposed resolution Lincoln sent Congress on March 6, 1862: “A Message to Congress Requesting a Joint Resolution on Compensated Emancipation”

Sourcing

Compare this source’s audience to that of Document 1. How do the differences explain Lincoln’s different style and substance in discussing slavery?

Interpreting Meanings

What does Lincoln mean by calling his proposed resolution “the most efficient means of self-preservation”?

What Southern “hope” does Lincoln think his resolution for compensated emancipation will take away, and why does he think this?

Point of View

Lincoln says his resolution claims no federal right “to interfere with slavery within state limits.” Why do you think he added this point? Does this suggest anything about Lincoln’s own views about whether slavery should end or not?

Source Analysis: Primary Source Document 4

A passage from a statement by Lincoln on July 12, 1862, to Border State lawmakers asking them to adopt plans for gradual and compensated emancipation

Sourcing

How might his audience here have affected the way Lincoln discussed these issues in this statement?

Contextualizing

From what you know about the war by mid-1862, explain Lincoln's phrase, "if the war continue long, as it must." Why do you think he felt this way?

Interpreting Meanings

What does Lincoln mean by telling these Border State leaders, "the institution in your states will be extinguished by mere friction and abrasion"?

When he speaks of "that which is sure to be wholly lost in any other event," is he basically committing himself to slavery's end?

Source Analysis: Primary Source Document 5

Part of a long reply Lincoln received from 20 Border State lawmakers on July 14, 1862, in which they reject Lincoln's appeal of July 12th (Document 4)

Sourcing

How does knowing who the authors of this statement are help in understanding the views it expresses?

Contextualizing

Consider Documents 3 and 4 and their timing (March 6th and July 12th) as context. Also consider that on July 22nd, eight days after receiving this reply, Lincoln first read the Emancipation Proclamation to his cabinet and told them he had decided to issue it. How does this context help you understand both this document and its probable effect on Lincoln?

Interpreting Meanings

What financial issues appear to have concerned these men? Do you think their concerns were justified?

Point of View

What, if anything, does this passage show you about the views of these state leaders about slavery itself?

Source Analysis: Primary Source Document 6

Part of Lincoln's open letter of August 24, 1862, in *The New York Times*, in which he replied to Horace Greeley's open letter of August 19, 1862

Sourcing

This is a letter published openly in response to a letter Greeley had also published openly. How might that have affected what Lincoln said here, and why?

Contextualizing

By the time he wrote this letter, Lincoln had already decided to issue his preliminary Emancipation Proclamation. How does that fact influence the way you interpret this letter?

Point of View

Can you conclude anything about Lincoln's actual views about slavery or even his actual plans regarding slavery from this letter?

Corroborating Sources

What sources back up this letter as a statement of Lincoln's true feelings? What documents might not back it up?

Source Analysis: Primary Source Document 7

Key provisions of the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation, which was issued on September 22, 1862, shortly after the battle of Antietam

Contextualizing

What do you know about the battle of Antietam and its importance to Lincoln? Why do you think he saw it as giving him the right moment to issue the proclamation?

Interpeting Meanings

Why do you think Lincoln specifically identified himself as he does in the first paragraph?

Why do you think he included, in the second paragraph here, another appeal for states to adopt gradual emancipation?

Why do you think Lincoln felt a need to be so specific in the last paragraph shown here?

Source Analysis: Primary Source Document 8

A late-1862 cartoon in which Lincoln holds an axe labelled “Emancipation Proclamation” that he will use to break the backbone of the rebellion.

Contextualizing

How does the war situation in 1862 help explain why the artist drew the South as he did here?

Why might Lincoln have been unwilling by late 1862 just to wait for Halleck and McClellan to use their hammers before he uses his?

Interpreting Meanings

What point does the artist make by adding Stanton’s hammer labeled “draft” to the cartoon?

Point of View

What overall point does the cartoon make about Lincoln’s motives in announcing the Emancipation Proclamation?

Source Analysis: Primary Source Document 9

A passage from an account Lincoln gave in person to the artist Francis B. Carpenter, dated February 6, 1864, explaining conditions leading up to his issuing the Emancipation Proclamation.

Sourcing

Why do you think Lincoln wanted to explain to Carpenter what happened at the July 22, 1862, Cabinet meeting?

Contextualizing

At this point, Lincoln was starting to prepare for the 1864 presidential election campaign. He expected stiff opposition. How might that have influenced him in discussing the Emancipation Proclamation?

Interpreting Meanings

What do you think Lincoln means when he says he had decided we “must change our tactics, or lose the game”?

Point of View

Do Lincoln’s comments about “tactics” and the “game” mean he only saw emancipation as a means to help him win the war? Why or why not?

Source Analysis: Primary Source Document 10

An undated illustration titled, “Reading the Emancipation Proclamation”

Sourcing

Since this illustration is undated, is it still useful as a primary source document?

Interpreting Meanings

The scene shows a family of African American slaves and a Union soldier reading the text of the Emancipation Proclamation. What is their reaction to it, and how does the illustration dramatize that reaction?

Point of View

What overall view of the Emancipation Proclamation and its meaning is suggested by this image?

Corroborating Sources

How well do the sources for this lesson back up this illustration’s evaluation of the meaning and importance of the Emancipation Proclamation?

Part 3: Analyzing the Secondary Sources

Note to the teacher: This next section includes passages from two secondary source accounts of the Emancipation Proclamation, along with two activities on these sources. We suggest you first discuss the brief comment “Analyzing Secondary Sources” just above the first of the two secondary sources. Discuss the four criteria the first activity asks students to use in analyzing each secondary source. These criteria focus students on the nature of historical accounts as 1) problem-centered, 2) based on evidence, 3) influenced by point of view and not purely neutral, and 4) tentative or aware of alternative explanations.

Specifically, this section includes the following:

- **Two secondary source passages**

Give copies of these passages to students to read, either in class or as homework. The two passages are from *The American Political Tradition and the Men Who Made it*, Richard Hofstadter (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1973), and *Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation: The End of Slavery in America*, Allen C. Guelzo (New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 2004).

- **Two student activities**

Activity 1

Students analyze the two passages, taking notes on the following questions:

- How clearly does the account focus on a problem or question?
- Does it reveal a position or express a point of view?
- How well does it base its case on primary source evidence?
- How aware is it of alternative explanations or points of view?

Activity 2

In pairs, students select two of the primary sources for the lesson that best support each author’s claims in the secondary source passages. Students discuss their choices with the class.

The Secondary Sources for the Lesson

Analyzing Secondary Sources

Historians write secondary source accounts of the past after studying primary source documents like the ones you have studied on the Emancipation Proclamation. However, they normally select documents from among a great many others, and they stress some aspects of the story but not others. In doing this, historians are guided by the questions they ask about the topic. Their selection of sources and their focus are also influenced by their own aims, bias, or point of view. No account of the past is perfectly neutral. In reading a secondary source, you should pay to what it includes, what it leaves out, what conclusions it reaches, and how aware it is of alternative interpretations.

* * * *

Secondary Source 1

Information on the source: The passage in the box below is an excerpt from *The American Political Tradition and the Men Who Made it*, Richard Hofstadter (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1973), pp. 130–131. In the first paragraph of this passage, Hofstadter reviews some of Lincoln’s actions before the Emancipation Proclamation. (The Crittendon Resolution was passed by Congress on July 25, 1861. It reassured the South that the Civil War was being waged only to reunite the states, and not to abolish slavery. Hofstadter says it was “rejected,” meaning it was rejected by the South.) In the second paragraph, Hofstadter then goes on to criticize the Proclamation as ineffective and lacking in “moral grandeur.”

When Lincoln at last determined in July 1862, to move toward emancipation, it was only after all his other policies had failed. The Crittenden Resolution had been rejected, the border states had quashed his plan of compensated emancipation, his generals were still floundering, and he had already lost the support of great numbers of conservatives. The Proclamation became necessary to hold his remaining supporters and to forestall—so he believed—English recognition of the Confederacy. “I would save the Union,” he wrote in answer to Horace Greeley’s cry for emancipation. “If I could save the Union without freeing any slave, I would do it; and if I could do it by freeing any slave, I would do it; and if I could do it by freeing all the slaves, I would do it” . . .

The Emancipation Proclamation of January 1, 1863, had all the moral grandeur of a bill of lading. It contained no indictment of slavery, but simply based emancipation on “military necessity.” It expressly omitted the loyal slave states from its terms. Finally, it did not in fact free any slaves. For it excluded by detailed enumeration from the sphere covered in the Proclamation all the counties in Virginia and parishes in Louisiana that were occupied by Union troops and into which the government actually had the power to bring freedom. It simply declared free all slaves in “the states and parts of States” where the people were in rebellion—that is to say, precisely where its effect could not reach. Beyond its propaganda value the Proclamation added nothing to what Congress had already done in the Confiscation Act.

The Secondary Sources for the Lesson

Secondary Source 2

Information on the source: The passage in the box below is an excerpt from *Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation: The End of Slavery in America*, Allen C. Guelzo (New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 2004), pp. 4–5. In his book, Guelzo reviews many of the same events Hofstadter mentions in the months leading up to the Emancipation Proclamation. Here, however, he uses two key words, “prudence” and “consistency,” to guide him in reaching a much more positive judgment about Lincoln’s motives and the effect of the Proclamation itself.

It is this politics of prudence which opens up for us a way to understand Lincoln’s strategy in “the mighty experiment” of emancipation. The most salient feature to emerge from the sixteen months between his inauguration and the first presentation of the Proclamation to his cabinet on July 22, 1862, is the consistency with which Lincoln’s face was set toward the goal of emancipation from the day he first took the presidential oath. Lincoln was not exaggerating when he claimed in 1858 that he “hated slavery:

“I hate it because of the monstrous injustice of slavery itself. I hate it because it deprives our republican example of its just influence in the world—enables the enemies of free institutions with plausibility, to taunt us as hypocrites—causes the real friends of freedom to doubt our sincerity, and especially because it forces so many really good men amongst ourselves into an open war with the very fundamental principles of civil liberty—criticising the Declaration of Independence, and insisting that there is no right principle of action but self-interest.”

But in Lincoln’s case, prudence demanded that he balance the integrity of ends (the elimination of slavery) with the integrity of the means (his oath to uphold the Constitution and his near religious reverence for the rule of law.) Lincoln understood emancipation not as the satisfaction of a “spirit” overriding the law . . . but as a goal to be achieved through prudential means, so that worthwhile consequences might result.

The Secondary Sources: Activity 1

In this exercise, you read two short passages from much longer books about the Emancipation Proclamation. For each secondary source, take notes on the following four questions (you may want to underline phrases or sentences in the passages that you think back up your notes):

1. How clearly does this account focus on a problem or question? What do you think that problem or question is? Sum it up in your own words here.

American Political Tradition, by Hofstadter.

Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, by Guelzo

2. Does the secondary source take a position or express a point of view about the Emancipation Proclamation? If so, briefly state that point of view or quote an example of it.

American Political Tradition, by Hofstadter.

Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, by Guelzo

3. How well does the secondary source seem to base its case on primary source evidence? Take notes about any specific examples, if you can identify them.

American Political Tradition, by Hofstadter.

Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, by Guelzo

4. Does the secondary source seem aware of alternative explanations or points of view about this topic? Underline points in the passage where you see this.

American Political Tradition, by Hofstadter.

Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, by Guelzo

In pairs, discuss your notes for this activity.

The Secondary Sources: Activity 2

This activity is based on the passages from *The American Political Tradition*, by Richard Hofstadter, and *Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation*, by Allen C. Guelzo. From the primary sources for this lesson, choose two that you think best support each author's point of view about the Emancipation Proclamation. With the rest of the class, discuss the two secondary source passages and defend the choice of sources you have made.

1. From this lesson, choose two primary source documents that best back up Hofstadter's interpretation of the Emancipation Proclamation. List those sources here and briefly explain why you chose them.
2. From this lesson, choose two primary source documents that best back up Guelzo's interpretation of the Emancipation Proclamation. List those sources here and briefly explain why you chose them.
3. Does your textbook include a passage on the Emancipation Proclamation? If so, with which of the two secondary sources (Hofstadter or Guelzo) does it seem to agree most? What one or two primary sources from this lesson would you add to this textbook passage to improve it? Why?

Discuss your choices with the rest of the class.

Part 4: Follow-Up Options

Note to the teacher: At this point, students have completed the key tasks of *The Historian's Apprentice* program. They have examined their own prior understandings and acquired background knowledge on the topic. They have analyzed and debated a set of primary sources. They have considered secondary source accounts of the topic. This section includes two suggested follow-up activities. Neither of these is a required part of the lesson. They do not have to be undertaken right away. However, we do strongly recommend that you find some way to do what these options provide for. They give students a way to write or debate in order to express their ideas and arrive at their own interpretations of the topic.

Two suggested follow-up activities are included here:

- **Document-Based Questions**

Four Document-Based Questions are provided. Choose one and follow the guidelines provided for writing a typical DBQ essay.

- **A Structured Debate**

The aim of this debate format is not so much to teach students to win a debate, but to learn to listen and learn, as well as speak up and defend a position. The goal is a more interactive and more civil debating process.

Document-Based Questions

Document-Based Questions (DBQs) are essay questions you must answer by using your own background knowledge and a set of primary sources on that topic. Below are four DBQs on the Emancipation Proclamation. Use the sources for this lesson and everything you have learned from it to write a short essay answer to one of these questions.

Suggested DBQs

How important was the Emancipation Proclamation to efforts to end slavery? (That is, did it doom slavery or only put off dealing with it until later)?

“Whatever Lincoln’s private views about slavery and African Americans, he simply did not care about them enough to do much until he absolutely had to.” Assess the validity of this statement (that is, explain why you do or do not agree with it).

“Lincoln was bitterly opposed to slavery from the start, but he wisely saw that its end could only come about in a way that was clearly constitutional. This explains his decisions about it during the Civil War.” Assess the validity of this statement (that is, explain why you do or do not agree with it).

Using the primary sources for this lesson, explain why historians have not been able to agree fully about Lincoln’s motives in issuing the Emancipation Proclamation.

Suggested Guidelines for Writing a DBQ Essay

- **Planning and thinking through the essay**

Consider the question carefully. Think about how to answer it so as to address each part of it. Do not ignore any detail in the question. Pay attention to the question’s form (cause-and-effect, compare-and-contrast, assess the validity, etc.). This form will often give you clues as to how best to organize each part of your essay.

- **Thesis statement and introductory paragraph**

The thesis statement is a clear statement of what you hope to prove in your essay. It must address *all* parts of the DBQ, it must make a claim you can back up with the sources, and it should be specific enough to help you organize the rest of your essay.

- **Using evidence effectively**

Use the notes on your “Source Analysis” activity sheets to organize your thoughts about these primary sources. In citing a source, use it to support key points or illustrate major themes. Do not simply list a source in order to get it into the essay somehow. If any sources do *not* support your thesis, you should still try to use them. Your essay may be more convincing if you qualify your thesis so as to account for these other sources.

- **Linking ideas explicitly**

After your introduction, your internal paragraphs should make your argument in a logical or clear way. Each paragraph should be built around one key supporting idea and details that back up that idea. Use transition phrase such as “before,” “next,” “then,” or “on the one hand . . . but on the other hand,” to help readers follow the thread of your argument.

- **Wrapping it up**

Don’t add new details about sources in your final paragraph. State a conclusion that refers back to your thesis statement by showing how the evidence has backed it up. If possible, look for nice turns of phrase to end on a dramatic note.

A Structured Debate

Small-group activity: Using a version of the Structured Academic Controversy model, debate alternate interpretations of this lesson's topic. The goal of this method is not so much to win a debate as to learn to collaborate in clarifying your interpretations to one another. In doing this, your goal should be to see that it is possible for reasonable people to hold differing views, even when finding the "one right answer" is not possible.

Use all their notes from previous activities in this lesson. Here are the rules for this debate:

1. Organize a team of four or six students. Choose a debate topic based on the lesson *The Emancipation Proclamation: Political Ploy or Courageous Gamble?*

(You may wish to use one of the DBQs suggested for the Document-Based Questions activity for this lesson, or you may want to define the debate topic in a different way.)

2. Split your team into two sub-groups. Each sub-group should study the materials for this lesson and rehearse its case. One sub-group then present its case to the other. That other sub-group must repeat the case back to the first sub-group's satisfaction.
3. Next, the two sub-groups switch roles and repeat step 2
4. Your team either reaches a consensus which it explains to the entire class, or it explains where the key differences between the sub-groups lie

Answers to “Source Analysis” Activities

Source Analysis: Document 1

Sourcing: It could suggest that he is being more open than he would be otherwise.

Contextualizing: It could suggest that Lincoln was already aware of the issue and thinking about it anyway.

Interpreting meanings: Answers to both of these questions could vary dramatically and should be discussed. Is Lincoln using irony, or is he describing what he sees in a matter-of-fact way?

Point of view: Answers taking either side are possible and should be discussed.

Source Analysis: Document 2

Contextualization: These states remained in the Union, but they expected Lincoln to do nothing to threaten slavery. Had these states joined the Confederacy, the task of conquering it would have been vastly more difficult.

Interpreting meanings: It went beyond the Confiscation Act of 1861, which set rules for when slaves could and could not be taken from their owners.

Point of view: It does not express a view about slavery. It merely focuses on the legal issue.

Corroborating sources: Documents 3, 4, and 6 in particular may help.

Source Analysis: Document 3

Sourcing: Answers should focus on the stark contrast between a private opinion and a public statement meant to sway state and federal politicians.

Interpreting meanings: He is thinking of gradual emancipation as a way to preserve the Union.

He seeks to end the hope that the Border States will join the Confederacy once the North starts to lose or gives up the struggle entirely.

Point of view: Answers will vary. Some may see Lincoln simply agreeing to what he is legally bound to accept, others may see it as a sign he does not care about slavery himself.

Source Analysis: Document 4

Sourcing: It perhaps explains his caution in appealing only to their self-interest on the topic of slavery.

Contextualizing: The war had been going badly for the North, and it was clear by then it would be very hard to conquer the entire South.

Interpreting meanings: Lincoln may be referring to the fact that as the war goes on, more slaves will be confiscated, run away, etc., and the South will be unable to bring back the institution, etc.

As to his phrase about it being “wholly lost,” answers will vary and should be discussed.

Source Analysis: Document 5

Sourcing: They are all from states where slavery was legal, states Lincoln desperately wanted to keep out of the Confederacy.

Contextualizing: This context could suggest how the Emancipation Proclamation fit in with Lincoln’s overall efforts to deal with slavery and the war.

Interpreting meanings: They doubted the federal government would actually pay compensation for freed slaves and that they would never be able to afford it.

Point of view: Answers will vary, since attitudes about slavery itself must be inferred from what these leaders did say.

Source Analysis: Document 6

Sourcing: It probably means Lincoln would be thinking about public reaction to it and its political effect, etc.

Contextualizing: Answers will vary. It could be that Lincoln was preparing people in some way for what he was about to do.

Point of view: Answers will vary and should be discussed.

Corroborating sources: Answers will vary, but Document 9 does seem to back it up, whereas Documents 1, 4, and perhaps others may raise doubts about it.

Source Analysis: Document 7

Contextualizing: It was a huge battle and at least a partial Union victory. Lincoln probably felt it was enough to make the proclamation not appear to be an act of desperation.

Interpreting meanings: He counted on his authority as commander-in-chief to make the proclamation stand legal challenge.

As for the second paragraph, answers will vary and could be discussed.

As for the last paragraph, perhaps because the proclamation was a legal document that had to stand up in court

Source Analysis: Document 8

Contextualizing: Overall, the North had yet made little headway in taking back territory in the South.

Neither Halleck and McClellan had done that well in fighting the war, and Lincoln was especially worried about McClellan's effectiveness.

Interpreting meanings: A draft would bring more men into the Union ranks and bolster the war effort.

Point of view: Answers here will vary, but the cartoon does seem to imply it was mainly a practical measure to make it easier to fight the war.

Source Analysis: Document 9

Sourcing: Carpenter was about to start to paint a picture of that very scene.

Contextualizing: It could mean he was still thinking mainly in strategic and political ways in explaining his decisions.

Interpreting meanings: This suggests he felt the proclamation was necessary in some way to aid the war effort and prevent a total loss.

Point of view: It means he did see it as aiding him in winning the war; whether that was in fact the only reason remains debatable. Answers here will vary and should be discussed.

Source Analysis: Document 10

Sourcing: Answers will vary. It still could be seen as reliable evidence of how Americans later viewed the meaning of the Emancipation Proclamation.

Interpreting meanings: Answers should stress the dramatic lighting, the sense of danger, the prayerful expressions of the family, etc.

Point of view: It presents the act as a moment of moral triumph, bringing light to a dark time, etc.

Corroborating sources: Answers will vary and should be discussed.

Evaluating Secondary Sources: Activity 1

These are not definitive answers to the questions. They are suggested points to look for in student responses.

1. How clearly does this account focus on a problem or question. What do you think that problem or question is? Sum it up in your own words here.?

Hofstadter does not explicitly ask a question or pose a problem here. He does imply one, however. He seems to address the question of why the Emancipation Proclamation is praised so often when in his view it did so little.

Guelzo in a way also deals with the issue of the limited nature of the Emancipation Proclamation. He seeks to explain why Lincoln needed to take such a cautious approach in crafting it.

2. Does the secondary source take a position or express a point of view about the Emancipation Proclamation? If so, briefly state that point of view or quote an example of it.

Hofstadter challenges the view that the Emancipation Proclamation was a noble act of idealism. He harshly criticizes it for failing to condemn slavery on moral grounds and for being a dry legalistic document with little philosophical worth and little actual effect.

Guelzo sees the Emancipation Proclamation as a step that doomed slavery in the long run. He also sees it as the only wise step Lincoln could take at that point that would survive constitutional challenge.

3. How well does the secondary source seem to base its case on primary source evidence? Take notes about any specific examples, if you can identify them.

Hofstadter makes his case by referring to a number of events for which he supplies documentation elsewhere in his book. He does cite the letter to Greeley in this passage.

Guelzo does quote a statement by Lincoln himself to back up the idea that Lincoln was from the start a strong foe of slavery. The rest of the passage is a summary of his conclusions.

4. Does the secondary source seem aware of alternative explanations or points of view about this topic? Underline points in the passage where you see this.

Hofstadter does not refer directly to alternative views of the Emancipation Proclamation. However, his entire argument is, by implication, directed at those who historians who praise the Emancipation Proclamation as a noble act motivated by moral opposition to slavery.

Guelzo also does not refer explicitly to other views at odds with his either. However, his defense of the importance and idealism of the proclamation can be seen as directed at those (such as *Hofstadter*) who see it differently.

