

emancipation *inure certum*. Because slave-grown crops sustained the Confederacy, activists justified black emancipation on military grounds. As Frederick Douglass put it, "Arrest that hoe in the hands of the Negro, and you smite the rebellion in the very seat of its life."

**"Contrabands"** As abolitionists pressed their case, African Americans exploited wartime chaos to seize freedom for themselves. When three slaves reached the camp of Union general Benjamin Butler in Virginia in May 1861, he labeled them "contraband of war" (enemy property that can be legitimately seized, according to international law) and refused to return them. Butler's term stuck, and soon thousands of "contrabands" were camping with Union armies. Near Fredericksburg, Virginia, an average of 200 blacks appeared every day, "with their packs on their backs and handkerchiefs tied over their heads—men, women, little children, and babies." This influx created a humanitarian crisis; abolitionist Harriet Jacobs reported that hundreds of refugees were "[p]acked together in the most miserable quarters," where many died from smallpox and dysentery. To provide legal status to the refugees—some 400,000 by the war's end—in August 1861 Congress

seizure of all property, including slave property, used to support the rebellion.

With the Confiscation Act, **Radical Republican**—the members of the party who had been bitterly opposed to the "Slave Power" since the mid-1850s—began to use wartime legislation to destroy slavery. Their leaders were treasury secretary Salmon Chase, Senator Charles Sumner of Massachusetts, and Representative Thaddeus Stevens of Pennsylvania. A long-time member of Congress, Stevens was a masterful politician, skilled at fashioning legislation that could win majority support. In April 1862, Stevens and the Radicals persuaded Congress to end slavery in the District of Columbia by providing compensation for owners; in June, Congress outlawed slavery in the federal territories (finally enacting the Wilmot Proviso of 1846); and in July, it passed a second Confiscation Act, which declared "forever free" the thousands of refugee slaves and all slaves captured by the Union army. Emancipation had become an instrument of war.

**The Emancipation Proclamation** Initially, Lincoln rejected emancipation as a war aim, but faced with thousands of refugees and Radical Republican pressure, he moved cautiously toward that goal. The president

**Eastman Johnson, *A Ride for Freedom—The Fugitive Slaves*, c. 1862**

At the second battle of Manassas in September 1862, American genre painter Eastman Johnson (1824–1906) witnessed this "veritable incident" of an African American family fleeing slavery—and then painted it. A powerful, split-second image of the riders' silhouettes, Johnson's painting captures the father looking forward toward freedom, while the mother cradles a young child and looks back apprehensively for possible pursuers. By "freeing themselves," this family and thousands of blacks set the stage for Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation. Brooklyn Museum of Art, New York, USA/The Bridgeman Art Library.



drafted a general proclamation of emancipation in July 1862, and he publicly linked black freedom with the preservation of the Union in August. “If I could save the Union without freeing any slave, I would do it,” Lincoln told Horace Greeley of the *New York Tribune*, “and if I could save it by freeing all the slaves, I would do it.”

Now he waited for a Union victory. Considering the Battle of Antietam “an indication of the Divine Will,” Lincoln issued a preliminary proclamation of emancipation on September 22, 1862, basing its legal authority on his duty as commander in chief to suppress the rebellion. The proclamation legally abolished slavery in all states that remained out of the Union on January 1, 1863. The rebel states could preserve slavery by renouncing secession. None chose to do so.

The proclamation was politically astute. Lincoln conciliated slave owners in the Union-controlled border

states, such as Maryland and Missouri, by leaving slavery intact in those states. It also permitted slavery to continue in areas occupied by Union armies: western and central Tennessee, western Virginia, and southern Louisiana. In Indian Territory, also under Union control, most mixed-blood Cherokee slave owners remained committed to the Confederacy

and to bondage. They did not formally free their 4,000 slaves until July 1866, when a treaty with the U.S. government specified that their ex-slaves “shall have all the rights of native Cherokee.”

Consequently, the **Emancipation Proclamation** did not immediately free a single slave. Yet, as abolitionist Wendell Phillips understood, Lincoln’s proclamation had moved slavery to “the edge of Niagara,” and would soon sweep it over the brink. Advancing Union troops became the agents of slavery’s destruction. “I became free in 1863, in the summer, when the yankees come by and said I could go work for myself,” recalled Jackson Daniel of Maysville, Alabama. As Lincoln now saw it, “the old South is to be destroyed and replaced by new propositions and ideas” — a system of free labor.

Hailed by reformers in Europe, emancipation was extraordinarily controversial in America. In the Confederacy, Jefferson Davis labeled it the “most execrable measure recorded in the history of guilty man”; in the North, white voters unleashed a racist backlash. During the elections of 1862, the Democrats denounced emancipation as unconstitutional, warned of slave uprisings, and predicted that freed blacks would take

white jobs. Every freed slave, suggested a nativist-minded New Yorker, should “shoulder an Irishman and leave the Continent.” Such sentiments propelled Democrat Horatio Seymour into the governor’s office in New York; if abolition was a war goal, Seymour argued, the South should not be conquered. In the November election, Democrats swept to victory in Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Illinois and gained thirty-four seats in Congress. However, Republicans still held a twenty-five-seat majority in the House and gained five seats in the Senate. Lincoln refused to retreat. Calling emancipation an “act of justice,” he signed the final proclamation on New Year’s Day 1863. “If my name ever goes into history,” he said, “it was for this act.”



To see a longer excerpt of the Jefferson Davis document, along with other primary sources from this period, see *Sources for America's History*.

## UNDERSTAND POINTS OF VIEW

Some historians argue that slaves “freed themselves” by fleeing to Union armies, thereby forcing Lincoln to issue the Emancipation Proclamation. How persuasive is that argument?

## Vicksburg and Gettysburg

The Emancipation Proclamation’s fate would depend on Republican political success and Union military victories, neither of which looked likely. Democrats had made significant gains in 1862, and popular support was growing for a negotiated peace. Two brilliant victories in Virginia by General Robert E. Lee, whose army defeated Union forces at Fredericksburg (December 1862) and Chancellorsville (May 1863), further eroded northern support for the war.

**The Battle for the Mississippi** At this critical juncture, General Grant mounted a major offensive to split the Confederacy in two. Grant drove south along the west bank of the Mississippi in Arkansas and then crossed the river near Vicksburg, Mississippi. There, he defeated two Confederate armies and laid siege to the city. After repelling Union assaults for six weeks, the exhausted and starving Vicksburg garrison surrendered on July 4, 1863. Five days later, Union forces took Port Hudson, Louisiana (near Baton Rouge), and seized control of the entire Mississippi River. Grant had taken 31,000 prisoners; cut off Louisiana, Arkansas, and Texas from the rest of the Confederacy, and prompted thousands of slaves to desert their plantations. Confederate troops responded by targeting refugees for re-enslavement and massacre. “The battlefield was sickening,” a Confederate officer reported from Arkansas, “no orders, threats or commands could restrain the men from vengeance on the negroes, and they were piled in great heaps about the wagons, in the tangled brushwood, and upon the muddy and trampled road.”

# an Americans he Fight

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**duce** Display Color Transparency: *African Americans in the War*. Draw students' attention to photographs and illustrations in textbook of African Americans joined the fight." Have students use visuals and the chart to make generalizations about African American involvement in the Union Color Transparencies A-42

Using the Numbered Heads Strategy (TE, p. T23), discuss Union treatment of African American soldiers and the ways that enslaved African Americans in the South supplied the Union cause. Ask **How African Americans served in the Union army during the war (more than 180,000) What the Confederates from joining African Americans? did not think that African Americans would fight to preserve the Union.) How did some African Americans in the South manage to fight? (They organized their own military units to help the Union.)**

**Activity** Emphasize that although African Americans fought bravely and their performance in battle was recognized, they still suffered prejudice. Have students compare *Biography: African American Soldiers*. Teaching Resources, p. 17

**Independent Practice** Assign students to write a speech for a general honoring the 54th Massachusetts Regiment. Students' speeches should explain how the regiment was different and provide an account of their experience at Fort Wagner.

**Assess Progress** Review students' speeches, circulate to ensure that students are incorporating accurate information and appropriate language.

**Assess** because they fought for their freedom despite racist attitudes and discrimination in both the North and the South. The Emancipation Proclamation focused attention on slavery for northerners, convinced southerners not to negotiate but to fight to the end, and encouraged more African Americans in the North to join the army to fight against slavery.  
Civil War

This drummer had been enslaved prior to his service in the 79th U.S. Colored Infantry. ▼



**African Americans Display Courage in War**

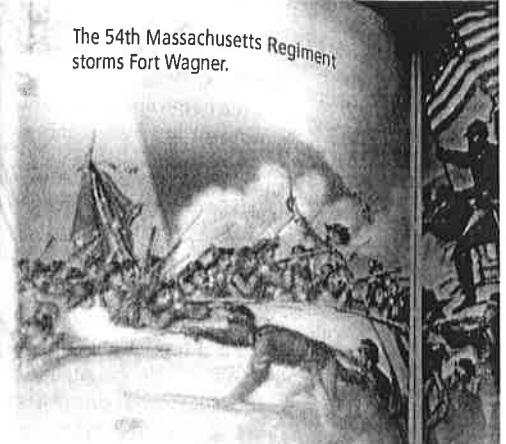
The photos and illustrations above testify to the dedication and bravery of African American soldiers during the war. The attack of the 54th Massachusetts on Fort Wagner was memorialized in both a monument and an award-winning film. *Why do you think these soldiers were so honored by succeeding generations of Americans?*

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▲ Poster used to recruit African American regiments

The 54th Massachusetts Regiment storms Fort Wagner.



the frontlines—had led the Union to reconsider its ban on African American soldiers. Just two months before the proclamation, Congress had passed the **Militia Act**, mandating that black soldiers be accepted into the military.

✓ **Checkpoint** What were the effects of the Emancipation Proclamation?

## African Americans Join the Fight

With the Emancipation Proclamation, the Union moved from allowing black troops to actively recruiting them. African American leaders were asked to seek volunteers. The abolitionist governor of Massachusetts enthusiastically supported the formation of the all-black **54th Massachusetts Regiment**. By war's end, more than 180,000 African American volunteers had served in the Union military. The Confederacy considered drafting slaves and free blacks in 1863 and 1864, but most southerners opposed the enlistment of African Americans.

**African American Soldiers Fight Bravely** Racist attitudes left many whites with low expectations for black troops. But performance in battle proved these expectations to be false. In June 1863, accounts appeared of a battle in Port Hudson, Mississippi—the first major test for African American soldiers. A Union officer declared that "my prejudices with regard to negro troops have been dispelled by the battle. . . . The brigade of negroes behaved magnificently."

A few weeks later, the 54th Massachusetts followed Robert Gould Shaw, their respected white officer, into battle at Fort Wagner in Charleston harbor. During the unsuccessful assault, Shaw and many of his men were killed. Nevertheless, the 54th had earned respect for its discipline and courage. One soldier received the Congressional Medal of Honor—the first of almost two dozen African American soldiers to be decorated for bravery.

Still, African American troops faced prejudice. They were usually assigned menial tasks, such as cooking, cleaning, or digging latrines. They often served the longest guard duty and were placed in exposed battle positions. It took a three-year effort to win equal pay. Black soldiers also knew that if captured, they would be killed. In one bloody incident, Confederates massacred more than 100 African American soldiers who were trying to surrender at Fort Pillow, Tennessee. Nevertheless, African Americans supported the Union in hundreds of battles, and some 70,000 lost their lives.

## History Background

**African American Soldiers** African Americans in the North had been prepared for some time to fight to end slavery. As early as the 1850s, African Americans in many northern cities began to form their own military units. These units offered to serve when the Civil War broke out in 1861, but the federal government refused to accept black troops. President Lincoln was concerned that African American troops on the Union side would alienate the border states and perhaps give them a reason to join the Confederacy.

Although some military commanders allowed African Americans to join their troops without official sanction, it was not until 1862 that Congress made it legal for African Americans to fight for the Union. Growing casualties had created a demand for new recruits, and African American soldiers quickly met this need. They fought bravely but were paid less than white soldiers and had to endure racial prejudice. When the war ended, 24 African American soldiers received the Medal of Honor.



Massachusetts Regiment  
in 1863.

Can African Americans  
help pass the  
Emancipation  
Proclamation?

How did black  
soldiers seek  
military support.  
By war's end  
the Union  
armies in 1863  
included African  
Americans.

How many  
African American  
soldiers served  
in the battle of  
Fort Wagner. A  
majority were  
from the 54th  
Massachusetts  
Regiment. How  
did their service  
affect the course  
of the war?

How did the  
Emancipation  
Proclamation  
affect the course  
of the war?

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▲ Monument to the 54th Massachusetts Regiment in Boston



▲ Actor Denzel Washington in the 1989 movie *Glory*

**Enslaved People Help the Union Cause** Enslaved African Americans in the South also played an important role in the war, finding a variety of ways to passively or actively help the Union forces. White owners often abandoned plantations for the safety of southern cities, leaving trusted slaves to manage the farm. Advancing Union forces often enlisted these African Americans to produce food for the northern troops. Other African Americans used their familiarity with the terrain to serve as spies or scouts for Union armies. Sometimes, emancipated slaves organized their own military units. Regiments of former slaves appeared in such places as South Carolina, Kansas, and Missouri. Across the South, ambitious slaves seized the opportunity to begin to shape their own civilian lives. Some demanded, and got, wages for their work. Others simply abandoned their masters, fleeing to Union camps or to the North or West. They turned Lincoln's promise of freedom into a reality.

✓ **Checkpoint** How did African Americans respond to Union recruitment efforts after the Emancipation Proclamation?

## SECTION 2 Assessment

### Progress Monitoring Online

For: Self-test with vocabulary practice  
[www.pearsonschool.com/ushist](http://www.pearsonschool.com/ushist)

#### Comprehension

- 1. Terms and People** For each of the following terms, write a sentence explaining its significance.
  - Amintean
  - Emancipation Proclamation
  - 54th Massachusetts Regiment

- 2. NoteTaking Reading Skill: Identify Supporting Details** Use your outline to answer the Section Focus Question: How did the Emancipation Proclamation and the efforts of African American soldiers affect the course of the war?

#### Writing About History

- 3. Quick Write: Write Headlines** Choose three events described in this section. Imagine you are writing a news article about each one. Write a headline for each article that will capture its main idea and attract the attention of readers.

#### Critical Thinking

- 4. Make Decisions** Do you think Lincoln was right to wait so long before declaring emancipation? Why or why not?
- 5. Identify Effects** What do you think was the most important effect of the Emancipation Proclamation?
- 6. Draw Inferences** A corporal in the 54th Massachusetts wrote to President Lincoln: "Your Excellency, we have done a Soldier's Duty. Why can't we have a Soldier's pay?" What does this letter suggest about conditions for black soldiers in the Civil War?

## Section 2 Assessment

- Sentences should reflect an understanding of each term's significance to the Civil War.
- The Emancipation Proclamation redefined the Union cause, making the war about slavery. After the Emancipation Proclamation, the Union started actively recruiting African American troops, who fought bravely and helped the Union cause.

- Students' headlines should focus on three events and demonstrate an understanding of their significance.
- Possible response: Yes, waiting until after a major Union victory made the proclamation a decree that the Confederates would have to take seriously.
- Example: The Emancipation Proclamation made slavery the focus of the war for northerners.

- The letter suggests that African American soldiers were neither paid nor treated the same as white soldiers.

For additional assessment, have students access **Progress Monitoring Online** at [www.pearsonschool.com/ushist](http://www.pearsonschool.com/ushist)

## Assess and Reteach

### Assess Progress

- Have students complete the Section 2 Assessment.
- Administer the Section 2 Progress Monitoring Resources, p. 24
- To further assess student understanding, use Progress Monitoring Transparencies, 63.

### Reteach

If students need more instruction, have them read the section. Use the Reading and Note Taking Study Guide, Adapted Reading and Note Taking Study Guide, Spanish Reading and Note Taking Study Guide.

### Extend

Have students write an essay explaining whether they agree with the Douglass quotation at the beginning of the section. Remind students to support their opinions with facts, exact logical reasoning.

## Answer Key

- ✓ African Americans responded to Union recruitment efforts by volunteering to serve in the Union army.