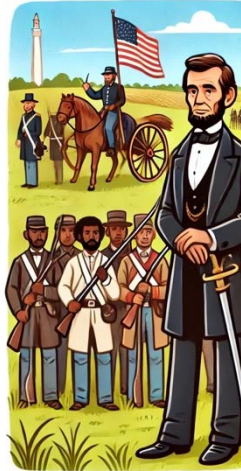
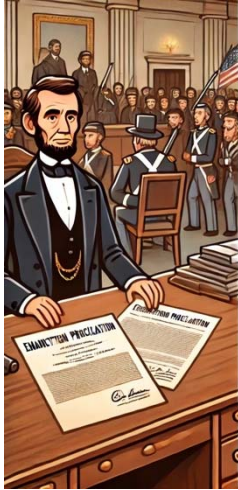


Name _____



Turning Point

During the Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln wanted to keep the country together. At first, his main goal was to preserve the Union, not to end slavery. However, as the war continued, Lincoln realized that freeing enslaved people could help weaken the South and give the North an advantage. He waited for the right moment to announce a major decision—the Emancipation Proclamation. That moment came after the Battle of Antietam in September 1862.

The Battle of Antietam

The Battle of Antietam was fought in Maryland on September 17, 1862. It was the bloodiest single day in American history, with over 22,000 soldiers killed, wounded, or missing. The Union, led by General George McClellan, stopped the Confederate Army, commanded by General Robert E. Lee, from advancing further north. While the battle was not a clear victory, it gave Lincoln the opportunity he had been waiting for.

Why Did Lincoln Wait?

Lincoln had wanted to issue the Emancipation Proclamation earlier, but he needed a Union victory first. He believed that if he announced it after a Union defeat, people might think he was desperate. But after Antietam, Lincoln saw the battle as a turning point and the perfect time to make his announcement. On September 22, 1862, just five days after the battle, Lincoln told the country that enslaved people in Confederate states would be free starting January 1, 1863.

How Did the Emancipation Proclamation Change the War?

The Emancipation Proclamation changed the goal of the war. Instead of just fighting to reunite the country, the North was now fighting to end slavery. It also prevented European countries, like Britain and France, from helping the South because they did not want to support slavery. Additionally, it allowed Black men to join the Union Army, adding thousands of new soldiers to the fight.

A Step Toward Freedom

Although the Emancipation Proclamation did not free all enslaved people immediately, it was a crucial step toward ending slavery in the United States. It paved the way for the 13th Amendment, which officially abolished slavery in 1865. Lincoln's decision to issue the proclamation after Antietam helped change the course of history, making the fight for freedom and justice a central part of the Civil War.