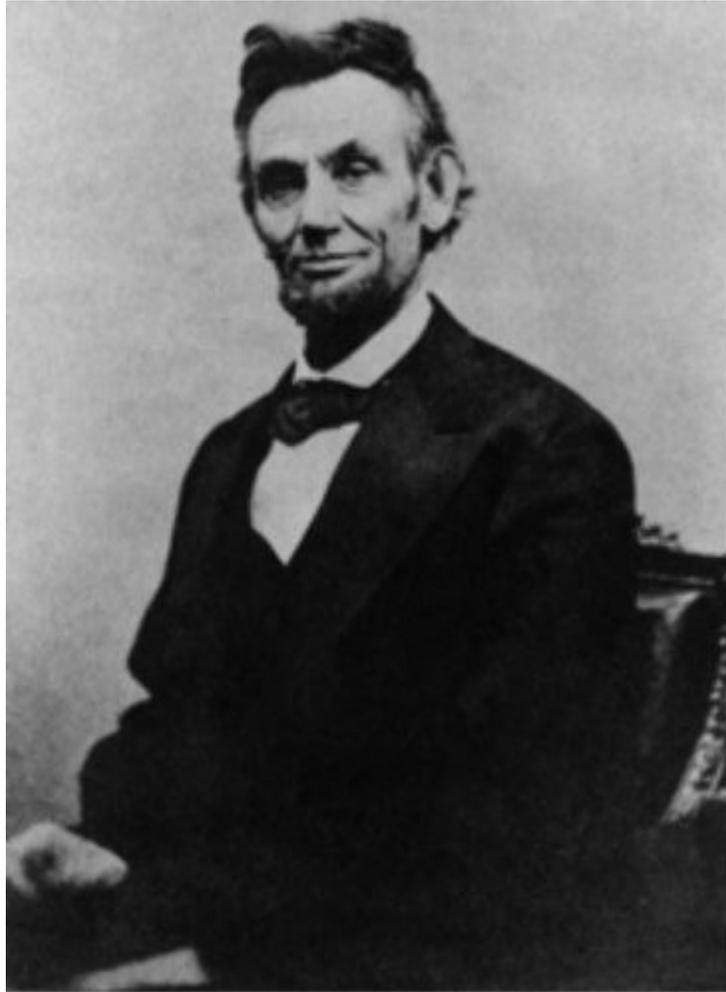


# Lincoln and the 13th Amendment to End Slavery

by ReadWorks



Abraham Lincoln was the sixteenth president of the United States. Today, Lincoln is widely regarded as one of the greatest presidents in the nation's history, in part because he helped to permanently end slavery in America. He did this by pushing Congress to pass the 13th Amendment before the end of the Civil War.

An "amendment" is a change. The 13th Amendment was the 13th change to the United States Constitution. The United States Constitution is the fundamental law of the nation. The people who wrote the Constitution in 1787 wanted to make it possible but difficult to change the Constitution. In order to add a Constitutional Amendment, two-thirds of the members of both the Senate and the House of Representatives must vote for it. Then three-quarters of the states must approve, or "ratify," it.

In 1864, President Lincoln pressed to achieve the difficult task of getting the 13th Amendment passed, two years after he had signed the Emancipation Proclamation. The Emancipation Proclamation declared slaves free, but it only applied to the three million slaves who lived in the so-called Confederacy. The Confederacy was made up of the 11 states that were rebelling against the Union. There were more than 700,000 other slaves who lived in areas that were not rebelling, and they were not legally free. Lincoln believed he had the legal right, given to the president by the Constitution in times of war, to take action necessary to defeat the rebels. He thus thought he could legally free the slaves in those regions of the country that were rebelling. This helped the war effort in a practical way, since the Proclamation also directed the United States Army to allow African American men to enlist. By the end of the Civil War, almost 200,000 African Americans had served in the Union Army.

But Lincoln did not believe he had the legal right to free the slaves in the "border states," which included Delaware, Kentucky, Maryland, and Missouri. These states had remained loyal to the Union. All four states permitted slavery.

Lincoln also feared that once the war was over, leaders of the nation would reverse the Emancipation Proclamation. He feared they might consider the Emancipation Proclamation only a wartime measure.

That is why Lincoln wanted a ban on slavery written right into the Constitution.

In 1864 the Senate passed the amendment with the necessary two-thirds majority. But the House of Representatives failed to pass the amendment.

Before the House voted on the amendment for the second time, Lincoln invited individual congressmen to the White House. Lincoln acted friendly and polite, using arguments he thought would convince each congressman. He told Congressman James Rollins from the border state of Missouri that a vote for the amendment would send a signal to the South from the border states, including Missouri. Lincoln argued this would quickly end what had been a long and bloody war.

He didn't just try to reason with the congressmen opposed to the amendment. He asked his allies in the House to double their efforts to convince their colleagues. When they asked how they could convince two more congressmen, Lincoln said, "I am President of the United States, clothed with great power. The abolition of slavery by constitutional provision settles the fate, for all coming time, not only of the millions now in bondage, but of unborn millions to come—a measure of such importance that these two votes must be procured. I leave to you to determine how it shall be done..."

To change their votes to support the amendment, some congressmen were offered high-paying government jobs once they left the House, or jobs for their friends or relatives.

The effort paid off. The House reversed its previous vote, gaining a two-thirds majority. The amendment was ratified by rapidly reaching the required number of states.

By the end of 1865, the Constitution had a new amendment, which reads:

**"Section 1.** Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.

**"Section 2.** Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation."

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Lincoln helped to permanently end slavery in America by pushing Congress to pass which Amendment?

- A. the 10th Amendment
- B. the 12th Amendment
- C. the 13th Amendment
- D. the 14th Amendment

2. The problem that Lincoln saw with the Emancipation Proclamation was that it could potentially be reversed after the end of the Civil War, if leaders viewed it as only a wartime measure. How did Lincoln attempt to solve this problem?

- A. Lincoln declared all slaves in the border states free.
- B. Lincoln tried to acquire more legal rights as president.
- C. Lincoln invited Congressmen to the White House.
- D. Lincoln pressed to pass the 13th Amendment.

3. It is difficult to change the Constitution of the United States. What evidence from the passage supports this conclusion?

- A. Two thirds of both the Senate and the House must vote for the change, then three quarters of the states must approve it.
- B. The 13th Amendment to the Constitution states that, "Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation."
- C. A change to the United States Constitution is called a Constitutional Amendment. The 13th Amendment was the 13th change made to the Constitution.
- D. Lincoln believed he had the legal right, given to the president by the Constitution in times of war, to take action necessary to defeat the rebels.

4. Read the following sentences: "To change their votes to support the amendment, some congressmen were offered high-paying government jobs once they left the House, or jobs for their friends or relatives. The effort paid off. The House reversed its previous vote, gaining a two-thirds majority." Based on this information, what can you conclude?

- A. The congressmen could not be persuaded to change their votes on the Amendment.
- B. The congressmen could be persuaded to change their votes with offers that personally benefited them.
- C. Lincoln got in trouble for bribing congressman to vote for the Amendment.
- D. The congressmen were less concerned with personal gain than they were with the impact of slavery on the nation.

5. What is this passage mostly about?

- A. President Lincoln and the Emancipation Proclamation
- B. how the 13th Amendment helped to end the Civil War
- C. the African Americans who served in the Union army
- D. how and why Lincoln pressed to pass the 13th Amendment

6. Read the following sentence: "The abolition of slavery by constitutional provision settles the fate, for all coming time, not only of the millions now in **bondage**, but of unborn millions to come—a measure of such importance that these two votes must be procured."

As used in this sentence, what does the word "**bondage**" refer to?

- A. slavery
- B. the South
- C. the North
- D. freedom

7. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence below.

Lincoln was afraid that slavery would be reestablished after the Civil War, \_\_\_\_\_ he pressed to have a ban on slavery written into the Constitution.

- A. yet
- B. namely
- C. so
- D. for example

8. What did the Emancipation Proclamation declare?

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9. Lincoln believed that he could legally free slaves in the rebel states. But he also believed that he should not free slaves in states loyal to the Union. Why did Lincoln believe these two things?

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**10.** Explain the role that the Civil War played in the passage of the 13th Amendment. Support your answer using information from the passage.

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