

Emancipation Proclamation

A classroom play by Team HOPE

Cast List

Salmon P. Chase (CHASE).....Secretary of the Treasury

John Nicolay (NICO).....Personal Secretary to President Lincoln

Elijah Lovejoy (ANCH).....anchor of “The History News Report”

Margaret Fuller (R1).....reporter for “The History News Report”

Nellie Bly (R2)reporter for “The History News Report”

Ernie Pyle (R3).....reporter for “The History News Report”

TEACHER NOTES

SETTING: A contemporary classroom. It is advised to set up the anchor in the front of the room facing the class, in front of some sort of background with “The History New Report.” You may choose to set up the different reporters conducting the interviews around the classroom and have the historical figures come to them. This way it gives the appearance of different locations. A name plate in front of each cast member is highly recommended. A 5x8 index card folded in half works great for this purpose.

COSTUMES: Although not necessary, any period costumes for the historical figures are a great addition. Even a simple hat or wig is excellent.

MASKS: Masks are an easy addition that will add to the drama and make the entire event more fun for the students. First, go to www.google.com and click on “image search.” Type in the historical figure’s name and find an image of the person. Copy and paste the picture in a Word document. You may need to crop and then enlarge the photo so you get a picture large enough to be used as a mask. Portraits obviously work best for this use. Print out the picture and paste it onto a cardboard backing. You can tape a plastic spoon or popsicle stick to be used as a handle. You may decide to make masks for the student correspondents as well, using pictures of television news personalities for the masks.

Note: If there is a historical person you cannot find a picture for, don’t despair! Almost any random “period” person’s picture (as long as it not someone easily recognizable) would work as a mask.

ROLES: Encourage students to act out the roles with as much energy as possible. Do not be too terribly concerned that the sex of the historical figure matching with the sex of the student.

The teacher may decide to take a part in the play, role-modeling one of the historical figures. It is recommended that five copies of the scripts are specifically set aside for each character in the play. For each character, *highlight all their lines* in order to facilitate a faster pace of dialogue. All other students should receive an unmarked copy of the play to read as the play is performed.

ANCHOR AND REPORTERS: In order to facilitate the historical discussions that exist in the plays, actual famous journalist names have been used in the plays. Teachers should point out that these journalists come from different times in American history and do not necessarily reflect the period they report on. It is as if they can travel in time to deliver “The History News Report.” A teacher may also decide to substitute the names given in the script for student names if desired. A brief description of the journalists is as follows:

- **Elijah Lovejoy** (1802-1837) A minister and journalist for the *St. Louis Observer* and later editor of the abolitionist newspaper the *Alton Observer* of Alton, Illinois. In 1837, pro-slavery forces attacked his warehouse in order to destroy his printing press and he was murdered on the scene.
- **Margaret Fuller** (1810-1850) An early woman rights activist, Margaret was the first female journalist to work on the staff of a major American newspaper, *The New York Tribune*. She was a widely read literary critic who was also sent on overseas assignments to Europe.
- **Nellie Bly** (1864-1922) After a writing a fiery rebuttal to a sexist column in the *Pittsburgh Dispatch*, Nellie was hired by a very impressed editor at the newspaper. She went on to become a famous investigative journalist on the plight of working women, and gained further fame for having faked insanity in order to investigate the treatment of the mentally ill.
- **Ernie Pyle** (1900-1945) An American journalist who was a roving correspondent for Scripps Howard newspaper chain. His articles were read in over 200 newspapers. He is most famous for having been a war correspondent during World War II. He led the charge for Congress to give soldiers “battle pay” while in combat. He died under heavy fire from a Japanese machine gun nest in the Pacific on April 18, 1945.

DISCUSSION: Use the accompanying worksheet to facilitate discussion before and after the play. Students who are not directly involved in the play can attempt to write preliminary answers as the play is performed. The audience should be told that they will be the primarily responsible for the discussion questions at the end of the lesson.

Emancipation Proclamation

NOTE: All responses by historical figures reflect actual events and beliefs as closely as possible.

CAST ABBREVIATIONS

Salmon P. ChaseCHASE
John NicolayNICO
Elijah LovejoyANCH
Margaret Fuller..... R1
Nellie Bly.....R2
Ernie Pyle.....R3

ANCH Welcome to the History News Report, I am your anchor Elijah Lovejoy. On September 22, 1862, President Lincoln issued the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation. To gain a deeper understanding of the events and thoughts behind this famous document, we have in studio Lincoln’s Secretary of the Treasury Salmon P. Chase and President Lincoln’s personal secretary John Nicolay. I’m joined in studio by Margaret Fuller, Nellie Bly, and Ernie Pyle, History News Report contributors all. First, let’s start with Secretary Chase. Secretary Chase, what prompted Lincoln to issue the Emancipation Proclamation?

CHASE Well, first he was motivated by Lee’s retreat out of Maryland after the Battle of Antietam.

R1 Had he been looking for good news in the war before announcing it?

CHASE Exactly. He had actually presented the idea of the Proclamation to the Cabinet on July 22, 1862. He told us then that he was not seeking opinions on the idea of the Proclamation, he had already made up his mind, but he was wondering about the timing. Secretary of State Seward felt strongly that if he issued it when the war was going badly, it would look like a desperate move. Better to wait for a victory. Lincoln agreed.

R2 Antietam though wasn’t exactly a smashing victory.

CHASE No, it wasn’t, but at that point Lincoln couldn’t be picky. It was as close to a victory as we had!

R3 What exactly did the Proclamation do?

CHASE It freed the slaves held in rebellious states. On September 22, Lincoln gave a preliminary Proclamation where he warned the Confederate states that if they did not end the rebellion by January 1, 1863, then he would sign the Proclamation into law.

- R1** Wait, you said it freed the slave in rebellious states? That means that it did not free all the slaves?
- CHASE** Right. The border states of Delaware, Maryland, Kentucky, and Missouri would be allowed to keep their slaves. They were not in rebellion so President Lincoln felt under the Constitution he had no power to end slavery there.
- R2** He could justify ending slavery in the rebellious states, but not the border states?
- CHASE** Yes, because he saw ending slavery in the Confederate states as a military necessity.
- R3** In what way?
- CHASE** Slave labor provided the foundation that supported the South's ability to wage war. It is a legitimate power of war to confiscate enemy property. If an area wasn't at war with the U.S. government, then as President, Lincoln had no right to take property. This is also why occupied areas in Tennessee, Louisiana, Florida, Virginia, and North Carolina also were allowed to keep their slaves.
- R1** Some people have accused Lincoln of freeing slaves where he had no power and left in bondage those over whom he exercised control. How do you answer that charge?
- CHASE** It is unfair. As I said before, Lincoln had no constitutional authority to free slaves in loyal border states or in areas where the rebellion was quelled. However, the practical effect of the Emancipation Proclamation was that the Union army became an army of liberation.
- ANCH** Did this also have an effect on relations with Great Britain?
- CHASE** I think so. Many people in the South have hoped that the British would come to their aid and join the South's cause. Most forget however that the people of Great Britain are fiercely anti-slavery and became the first country in world history to abolish slavery in 1833. There was no chance of British entry into the war after the Emancipation Proclamation.
- R3** What was the Southern reaction?
- CHASE** Typical outrage. Once Lincoln signed the Proclamation, he immediately began plans to recruit and train freed slaves to join the Union army. The Confederates threatened to hang any black soldiers that were captured. Lincoln's answer was to decree that a Union prisoner put to death would be matched by a Southern POW chosen by lot—and shot!
- ANCH** Thanks Secretary Chase. We appreciate your contribution. We now turn to Mr. Nicolay, President Lincoln's personal secretary. Mr. Nicolay, you were present on January 1, 1863, when Lincoln signed the Proclamation. Can you describe the scene?

NICO To start the day, Mr. Lincoln took the various manuscript notes during the morning with his own hand carefully rewrote the entire body of the draft of the proclamation. But it is was also a custom in the Executive Mansion to hold on an official and public reception on New Year's Day, beginning at eleven o'clock in the morning, which keeps the President at his post in the Blue Room until two in the afternoon. The hour for this reception came before Mr. Lincoln had entirely finished revising the engrossed copy of the proclamation.

R1 So he didn't sign it right off?

NICO No, he hurried away for much friendly hand shaking and greetings.

R2 How long did the ceremony last?

NICO About three hours.

R3 After the New Year's greetings, did the President hold a public ceremonial signing?

NICO No ceremony was made or attempted for the final official signing. The afternoon was well advanced when Mr. Lincoln went back from his New Year's greetings, with his right hand so fatigued that it was an effort to hold the pen. There was no special convocation of the Cabinet or of prominent officials. Those who were in the house came to the executive office merely from the personal impulse of curiosity joined to momentary convenience.

R2 How many were in attendance?

NICO Less than a dozen. His signature was attached to one of the greatest and most beneficent military decrees of history; after which it was carried to the Department of State to be attested by the great seal and deposited among the archives of the Government.

ANCH Thank you Mr. Nicolay. We will end with the conclusion of the document: "*And upon this act, sincerely believed to be an act of justice, warranted by the Constitution upon military necessity, I invoke the considerate judgment of mankind, and the gracious favor of Almighty God.*" For History News Report, I am Elijah Lovejoy.

Bennett, William J., *America: The Last Best Hope*, Nelson Current, Nashville: 2006, p. 349-354.

Colbert, David, "Lincoln Proclaims Emancipation," Random House, New York: 1997, p. 254-255.

"President Lincoln Signs the Emancipation Proclamation, 1863" EyeWitness to History, www.eyewitnesstohistory.com (2006).