

Abolitionist Persuasion:

The Varied Lenses of 19th Century Abolitionist Writings

Fellow-Citizens of Massachusetts!

READ AND CONSIDER

Last Saturday, the Kidnapper's Counsel, (Seth J. Thomas and Edward G. Parker!) drew up a paper stating "that the person named ANTHONY BYRNES, now and here claimed as a Slave, will be sold by his alleged master for a sum certain, to wit: TWELVE HUNDRED DOLLARS." Saturday night, the money was tendered by Rev. Mr. Grimes and Hamilton Willis, Esq. The Kidnapper's counsel, with Messrs. Grimes and Willis, went to the Office of Commissioner Loring. He drew up papers for the man's release. They all went to the Marshal's Office, to execute the documents, where they met Hallett and the Marshal, who PURPOSELY DELAYED operations until after 12 o'clock, when the deed could not be legally done. The Counsel and the Commissioner agreed to meet Mr. Grimes at 8 o'clock, Monday morning, execute the documents, and release the man. THIS (Monday) MORNING, at 8 o'clock, they were waited on, at the Marshal's Office, by Mr. Grimes. The Kidnapper refused to take the money when tendered to him!

**REFUSED TO SELL THE MAN AT ANY PRICE!
And now declares that he will take
HIS SLAVE BACK TO VIRGINIA!
MONDAY MORNING, MAY 29, 1854.**

Compiled By: Sean Robertson
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Amazing Grace
Professor Basker

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Anthology Introduction

This anthology is intended to be a supplemental component to the *Junior Historians' Field Manual: Book Two (Tension, War, and Reconstruction)* that is currently in use at Harlem Academy. The *JHFM* is a standalone primary source centered two year US history curriculum created by Sean Robertson. Students at Harlem Academy have studied how to be "junior historians" in doing close reads of primary sources and using the information and historical details they provide to defend arguments and arrive at historical conclusions. As an extension of historical investigation of the 19th century, this anthology chronicles eleven abolitionist works and narratives that carry the anti-slavery arc from the Revolutionary Era up to Reconstruction. As slavery is the essential problem at the heart of 19th century American life, it is fitting that we pause to investigate various abolitionist arguments as we examine this time period in our history class.

Abolitionism

Abolitionism, as we have discussed in class can trace its roots all the way back to the first instances of the "peculiar institution" of slavery in the New World with the incorporation of the Jamestown colony in 1609. Abolitionists were the Quakers who in 1688 rallied and proposed cutting all business ties with slave-related businesses, to the first northern states banning slavery in their constitutions, the era of failed compromises of the 19th century, secessionism, the Civil War, and ending with the Reconstruction Era (though the fight to enforce the protections of civil rights would take another movement). It is impossible to discuss 19th century American history without tying it back to the abolitionist movement that was consistently and ever more fervently and stridently espousing their beliefs and cause. The eleven documents presented in this collection span the time from 1773 and the heart of Revolutionary fervor until the passage of the 13th Amendment in 1865. It is not a comprehensive or exhaustive compilation of abolitionist works, but rather a cross section of various "lenses" or views/arguments for abolition. Perhaps most importantly, this anthology seeks to keep the works of abolitionists in the forefront of our minds as we progress, decade by decade, through historical events towards the inevitable Civil War.

About this Anthology

This anthology does not include the more notable or famous abolitionist works or actions of figures like Frederick Douglass, Sojourner Truth, Harriet Tubman, or even Harriet Beecher Stowe. This collection seeks to expand your understandings and exposure to abolitionist arguments and approaches. It includes the works of former slaves, women, politicians, poets, activists, and journalists. Their varied approaches span the gamut of moral, religious, legal, sectional, political arguments through the medium of poetry, narratives, speeches, letters, and pamphlets. Abolitionist approaches and arguments were as varied as the kinds of people that were united in this righteous cause. It is not a comprehensive anthology, nor a definitive collection, but should serve to encourage you to dig deeper into the world of abolitionist works (beginning in our class library of primary sources and branching out to other resources).

As we progress through this anthology, you should consider not only the historical context of the writer's work, but also how and why certain approaches and arguments would be the most persuasive. Would this poem be most effective in the north or south? Would this speech appeal to slave owners, masters, or to the enslaved people themselves? Think critically about the intent and audience for each of the works presented to you.

As critical readers, we will also chart the progression of the abolitionist movement through these eleven sources. How did historical developments, tension, and a growing sense of urgency influence the forms abolitionist writing took and how they crafted their arguments?

But this collection is not just for reading. Each source is introduced with historical and author context and a series of guiding questions. Each source itself (whenever possible) is offset on the margin to allow you to annotate and note keywords/phrases as you read. As this anthology is a supplement to our *Junior Historians' Field Manual*, you should keep in mind throughout our investigations, the historical context and events that we are studying (Missouri Compromise, Compromise of 1850, Kansas-Nebraska Act, Dred Scott decisions, etc).

How to Use This Anthology

Much like our *Junior Historians Field Manuals*, this anthology is comprised of only primary sources. As such, we must approach these resources as we would any others we encounter in our daily investigations. As we approach each author and resource, follow these steps:

- Read introduction and investigation questions
- Read over the primary source, noting unfamiliar vocabulary
- Read over the primary source a second time for main idea and supporting details (keywords/phrases)
 - When available, utilize the given margin space to annotate keywords/phrases
- Compose a full summary for the primary source
 - Attribution sentence (author, title, year, and main idea)
 - Summary – using keywords/phrases as evidence to support stated main idea
 - Conclusion sentence
- Answer the given investigation questions in complete sentences
 - Whenever possible, quote passages or paraphrase supporting details
- Identify and explain the role of historical context in the author’s approach and argument:
 1. What historical events might have influenced the intent or audience of the passage?
 2. What type of argument was presented in the passage?

Final Assessment

The main objective in presenting this anthology, aside from historical and scholarly work it entails, is to expose readers to varying perspectives on abolitionism (notably and intentionally absent are dissenting views – those are covered in *JHFM Book Two*). Your overarching task and goal is to track the various “lenses” of abolitionism, understand the significance of their intent and audience, and to come to your own conclusion as to which approach you believe was the most effective.

Once we have completed our investigations in this supplemental anthology, you will be asked to compose an essay identifying the most impactful passage we encountered. Your essay will place the selected work into proper historical context as well as explain its importance (in your opinion) to the abolitionist cause.

Additional credit will be considered for any student who would like to create their own proposed selection for inclusion in subsequent versions of this anthology. For this project, students will research and access a primary source of abolitionist work, draft a brief introduction to the source which introduces the text and author as well as lay out the argument for future inclusion in the anthology, compose guiding questions as companions for the text, and submit their own summary of the document they selected.

Suggested Abolitionist Arguments

To help keep your historical context responses organized, below is a partial list of argument categories that you may wish to refer to:

- moral
- religious
- legal
- sectional
- political
- direct involvement
- empathy/humanity
- American ideals (*DOI*, Constitution)
- unified cause/problem

Patrick Henry, *Letter to John Alsop, January 13th, 1773*

Though this anthology will examine the abolitionist writings of the 19th century, it is helpful for our purposes to understand that the issue of slavery existed concurrently with the movement for independence in the United States in the 1770s. This letter, written by the Virginian attorney and politician, Patrick Henry, speaks to the hypocrisy inherent in the independence movement that sought to unshackle the colonists from the tyrannical and oppressive King George III but also strove to keep intact the burgeoning institution of slavery. Henry, the same man who proudly proclaimed “Give me liberty or give me death,” is writing to his Quaker friend, John Alsop relating his personal account of slavery. The Quakers were among the first groups to speak out publicly against the institution of slavery, signing a denunciation of the practice in 1688 upon the founding of Germantown, Pennsylvania. Henry refers to a book by Anthony Benezet, a Quaker leader who pushed for his society to break all ties with slavery in his work in the 1740s and 1750s.

As you investigate the letter excerpt, consider the following questions:

- What does Patrick Henry state as his personal opinions on the institution of slavery?
- How does Henry justify the continuation of slavery in spite of those beliefs?
- How might Henry’s explanation provide an opportunity for the patriots to empathize with enslaved Africans?
- How might this letter expose hypocrisies in the movement for independence and in the Declaration of Independence?

HANOVER, Va., Jan. 13, 1773.

DEAR SIR: I take this opportunity to acknowledge the receipt of ANTHONY BENEZETS book against the Slave trade. I thank you for it. It is not a little surprising that Christianity, whose chief excellence consists in softening the human heart, in cherishing and improving its finer feelings, should encourage a practice so totally repugnant to the first impressions of right and wrong. What adds to the wonder is that this abominable practice has been introduced in the most enlightened ages. Times that seem to have pretensions to boast of high improvements in arts, sciences and refined morality, have brought into general use and guarded by many laws a species of violence and tyranny which our more rude and barbarous, but more honest ancestors detested.

Is it not amazing that at a time when the rights of humanity are defined and understood with precision, in a country, above all others, fond of liberty -- that in such an age and such a country we find men professing a religion the most humane, mild, meek, gentle and generous, adopting a principle as repugnant to humanity as it is inconsistent with the Bible and destructive to liberty? Every thinking, honest man rejects it in speculation. How few, in practice, from conscientious motives!

The world, in general, has denied your people a share of its honors; but the wise will ascribe to you a just tribute of virtuous praise for the practice of a train of virtues, among which your disagreement to Slavery will be principally ranked. I cannot but wish well to a people whose system imitate the example of Him whose life was perfect; and, believe me, I shall honor the Quakers for their noble efforts to abolish Slavery. It is equally calculated to promote moral and political good.

Would any one believe that I am master of slaves by my own purchase? I am drawn along by the general inconvenience of living without them. I will not -- I cannot justify it, however culpable my conduct. I will so far pay my devoir to Virtue, as to own the excellence and rectitude of her precepts, and to lament my want of conformity to them. I believe a time will come when an opportunity will be afforded to abolish this lamentable evil. Everything we can do, is to improve it, if It happens in our day; if not, let us transmit to our descendants, together with our slaves, a pity for their unhappy lot, and an abhorrence of Slavery. If we cannot reduce this wished-for reformation to practice, let us treat the unhappy victims with lenity. It is the furthest advancement we can make toward justice. It is a debt we owe to the purity of our religion, to show that it is at variance with that law which warrants Slavery.

Here is an instance that silent meetings (the scoff of reverend doctors) have done that which learned and elaborate preaching cannot effect; so much preferable are the general dictates of conscience, and a steady attention to its feelings, above the teachings of those men who pretend to have found a better guide. I exhort you to persevere in so worthy a resolution, Some of your people disagree, or at least are lukewarm in the Abolition of Slavery. Many treat the resolution of your meeting with ridicule; and among those who throw ridicule and contempt on it are clergymen whose surest guard against both ridicule and contempt, is a certain act of Assembly.

I know not where to stop. I could say many things on this subject, a serious review of which gives a gloomy perspective to future times. Excuse this scrawl, and believe me, with esteem, your humble servant, PATRICK HENRY, JR. JOHN ALOSTP Hudson, N.Y.

Anonymous, *The African Slave*, 1802ⁱⁱ

Composed by an anonymous prisoner in Trenton, New Jersey, this poem was first published as part of a larger collection (*The Prisoner*) in 1802. Told from the perspective of the African "Itaniko," *The African Slave* tells of his capture, loading onto a slave ship attempted suicide, role in stopping a slave mutiny onboard the ship, and eventual sale as a slave in the United States. The advent of the cotton gin in 1791 had produced a boom in slave demands, as plantations in the south could easily increase production with an increase in their labor force. Though perhaps a fictionalized account, this poem offers a humanizing effect to the enslaved peoples and serves as a clear argument against the long-held rhetoric that the Africans were being "Christianized" and their lives improved through the slave trade. Penned just six years before Congress approved the ban on importation of slaves (1808) this poem gives insight into the "faultless" anguish of the captured African slaves as they were transported to the Americas and sold at auction.

As you investigate this poem, consider the following questions:

- How does "Itaniko" show himself to be "faultless" in his abduction and enslavement?
- How does "Itaniko" describe his "reward" for informing the white ship masters of the rebellion?
- How does "Itaniko" admonish Americans for violating the spirit of our nation's founding?
- What is the mood and tone the author uses in this poem? To what effect?

*Ye Sons of Columbia, who taste every blessing
That Liberty, Plenty, and Peace can bestow,
Give ear to my story, and think how distressing!
Ah! hear the sad tale of an African's woe:
Tho' guiltless my life was, without provocation
I was torn from my country, companions, and nation
And doom'd to the toils of a life's Mancipation;
Ah! such the hard fate is of Itaniko.*

*One morn, I my juvenile gambols was playing,
No ill did I bode, for no fear did I know,
As thro' the palm-forest, thus carelessly straying,
A prey I was seiz'd by the steel-hearted foe:
Who dragg'd me on board, where in fetters they bound me,
While pale-visag'd hell-hounds in horror surround me
I plung'd in the deep hoping death would have found me,
They snatch'd from the billows poor Itaniko.*

*My father! I utter'd in wild exclamation
When life's crimson current a while ceas'd flow:
Awake, O my Country! in just indignation,
The swift-feather'd vengeance elance from the bow!
In vain all their efforts their power to vanquish.
What language can picture my heart-rending anguish!
In cold galling chains for my freedom to languish!
Oh! such the hard fate is of Itaniko.*

*On board of our ship there rose a dire faction,
I let my curs'd fiends the conspiracy know;
But mark the reward of this life-saving action.
Altho' I befriend them no pity they show;
For when om the shores of Columbia we landed,
The caitiffs I sav'd with what infamy branded!
The christian's base gold was the boon they demanded,
And sold as a slave was poor Itaniko.*

*You boast of your Freedom ... your mild Constitution
See tears undissembled for Liberty flow!
Unmov'd can you witness such cruel delusion,
Who feel in your bosoms Philanthropy glow?
Were we not by the same common Parent created?
Why then for the hue of my race am I hated?
Why, faultless, to mis'ry and chains am I fated?
Ah! why is thus wretched poor Itaniko?*

*Each morn to fresh toils I awake broken-hearted
The blood-streaming lash & the sweat-reeking hoe;
By Country, by Hope, by all Pleasure deserted,
A victim, alas! to unspeakable woe:
O, GOD of Columbia! behold with compassion,
The Cruelties, Insults, and Wrongs of my nation,
And blast, by thy justice, that Tyrant-Oppression,
That holds from his country poor Itaniko!*

James Forten, *Letters from a Man of Colour on a Late Bill Before the Senate of Pennsylvania [Letter II], 1813*ⁱⁱⁱ

James Forten (1766-1842) was born in Pennsylvania to parents who were free African Americans (Forten's grandfather had "freed" himself from bondage and moved north). Educated at the African Free School established by Anthony Benezet (remember him from Patrick Henry's *Letter to John Alsop*), Forten was indoctrinated in the Quaker belief of abolitionism. At age fourteen he joined the Revolutionary War and was captured and imprisoned by the British on a prison ship docked in Brooklyn's Navy Yard. Upon his release Forten worked to bring true meaning to the sentiments expressed in the Declaration of Independence for African Americans, most especially in protesting the kidnapping of free Africans in the north to be sold into southern slavery. The following excerpt is from a pamphlet that James Forten published anonymously in 1813 in opposition to a bill that was to be debated in the Pennsylvania state senate. The bill, which never passed, would have restricted the rights and freedoms of freedmen living in the north out of fears that slaves were escaping to Pennsylvania and compete with whites for job opportunities. A man of word and action, Forten's *Letter II*, discusses the hypocrisies (or at least misinterpretation) of the founding documents and the deplorable conditions that passed for freedoms and liberties for freed African Americans in the early 19th century.

As you investigate , consider the following questions:

- How does Forten invoke biblical themes to induce sympathy for African Americans?
- How does Forten view those who profess to uphold liberty but do nothing to stop slavery?
- How does Forten's hypothetical visit from his brother illustrate the absurdity of the proposed Pennsylvania senate bill?
- How does Forten argue the unconstitutional nature of the proposed Pennsylvania senate bill?

LETTER II.

Those patriotic citizens, who, after resting from the toils of an arduous war, which achieved our independence and laid the foundation of the only reasonable Republic upon earth, associated together, and for the protection of those inestimable rights for the establishment of which they had exhausted their blood and treasure, framed the Constitution of Pennsylvania, have by the ninth article declared, "that all men are born equally free and independent, and have certain inherent and indefeasible rights, among which are those of enjoying life and liberty." Under the restraint of wise and well administered laws, we cordially unite in the above glorious sentiment, but by the bill upon which we have been remarking, it appears as if the committee who drew it up mistook the sentiment expressed in this article, and do not consider us as men, or that those enlightened statesmen who formed the constitution upon the basis of experience intended to exclude us from its blessings and protection. If the former, why are we not to be considered as men. Has the God who made the white man and the black, left any record declaring us a different species. Are we not sustained by the same power, supported by the same food, hurt by the same wounds, pleased with the same delights, and propagated by the same means. And should we not then enjoy the same liberty, and be protected by the same laws. — We would wish not to legislate, for our means of information and the acquisition of knowledge are, in the nature of things, so circumscribed, that we must consider ourselves incompetent to the task: but let us, in legislation be considered men. It cannot be that the authors of our Constitution intended to exclude us from its benefits, for just emerging from unjust and cruel emancipation, their souls were too much affected with their own deprivations to commence the reign of terror over others. They know we were deeper skinned than they were, but they acknowledged us as men, and found that many an honest heart beat beneath a dusky bosom. They felt that they had no more authority to enslave us, than England had to tyrannize over them. They were convinced that if amenable to the same laws in our actions, we should be protected by the same laws in our rights and privileges. Actuated by these sentiments they adopted the glorious fabric of our liberties, and declaring "all men" free, they did not particularize white and black, because they never supposed it would be made a question whether we were men or not. Sacred be the ashes, and deathless be the memory of those heroes who are dead; and revered be the persons and the characters of those who still exist and lift the thunders of admonition against the traffic in blood. ...

It seems almost incredible that the advocates of liberty, should conceive the idea of selling a fellow creature to slavery. It is like the heroes of "Vive la Republic," while the decapitated Nun was precipitate into the general reservoir of death, and the palpitating embryo decorated the point of the bayonet. Ye, who should be our protectors, do not destroy. — We will cheerfully submit to the laws, and aid in bringing offenders against them of every colour to justice; but do not let the laws operate so severely, so degradingly, so unjustly against us alone.

Let us put a case, in which the law in question operates peculiarly hard and unjust — I have a brother, perhaps, who, resides in a distant part of the Union, and after a separation of years, actuated by the same fraternal affection which beats in the bosom of a white man, he comes to visit me. Unless that brother be registered in twenty four hours after, and be able to produce a certificate to that effect, he is liable, according to the second and third sections of the bill, to a fine of twenty dollars, to arrest, imprisonment and sale. Let the unprejudiced mind ponder upon this, and then pronounce it the justifiable act of a free people, if he can. To this we trust our cause, without fear of the issue. The unprejudiced must pronounce any act tending to deprive a free man of his right, freedom and immunities, as not only cruel in the extreme, but decidedly unconstitutional both as regards the letter and spirit of that glorious instrument. The same power which protects the white man, should protect the black.

William Lloyd Garrison, *On the Constitution and the Union*, 1832^{iv}

William Lloyd Garrison (1805-1879) was an ardent abolitionist and journalist who wrote passionately for full and immediate emancipation of the American slaves. Most famous as the editor for his abolitionist newspaper, *The Liberator*, Garrison was also a key founding member of the American Anti-Slavery Society. This article was taken from a larger collection called *The Great Crisis!*, first published in *The Liberator* in December of 1832. The piece calls for a radical idea – the dissolution of the United States, based in the belief that the nation’s founding document was cursed by the compromise over the issue of slavery. As you recall, the 3/5 Compromise (as well as a provision to not infringe upon the slave trade) was an essential agreement in creating the constitution. This compromise provided for the inclusion of slaves in the count of population for the purpose of state representation in Congress. To Garrison abiding by the Constitution was akin to participating in the enslavement of millions of human beings. This political and legal argument would have necessitated a formal re-establishing of the United States, one in which the true ethos and creed of the Declaration of Independence would be laid out and protected by the government. Written only twelve years after the passage of the Missouri Compromise – which we investigated and saw as one that allowed slavery to continue and spread in the United States – Garrison’s argument pushes Americans to examine their role in the slavery crisis.

As you investigate this excerpt, consider the following questions:

- The United States Constitution is regarded, the world over, as an important and influential document. How and why does this author argue that it is flawed?
- How does this author argue that the Constitution (and therefore the Missouri Compromise) is not valid?
- How does the author insist that Northerners, those not directly tied to owning slaves, are invested and involved in the slavery crisis?
- What impact does the author foresee slavery having on the Union? How does the author feel about this?

"There is much declamation [said] about the sacredness of the compact which was formed between the free and slave states, on the adoption of the Constitution. A sacred compact, forsooth [indeed, said sarcastically]! We pronounce it the most bloody and heaven-daring arrangement ever made by men for the continuance and protection of a system of the most atrocious villainy [sic] ever exhibited on earth. Yes—we recognize the compact, but with feelings of shame and indignation [resentment]; and it will be held in everlasting infamy by the friends of justice and humanity throughout the world.

... By the infamous bargain which they made between themselves, they virtually dethroned the Most High God, and trampled beneath their feet their own solemn and heaven-attested Declaration, that all men are created equal, and endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights — among which are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. They had no lawful power to bind themselves, or their posterity, for one hour—for one moment — by such an unholy alliance. It was not valid then—it is not valid now.

... People of New-England, and of the free States! is it true that slavery is no concern of yours? Have you no right even to protest against it, or to seek its removal? Are you not the main pillars of its support? ... Never hope to be a united, or happy, or prosperous people while he exists. He has an appetite like the grave—a spirit as malignant as that of the bottomless pit—and an influence as dreadful as the corruption of death.

... Be assured that slavery will very speedily destroy this Union, if it be left alone; but even if the Union can be preserved by treading upon the necks, spilling the blood, and destroying the souls of millions of your race, we say it is not worth a price like this, and that it is in the highest degree criminal for you to continue the present compact. Let the pillars thereof fall—let the superstructure crumble into dust—if it must be upheld by robbery and oppression."

Henry Bibb, *The Narrative Life and Adventures of Henry Bibb, An American Slave, Written by Himself*, 1849^v

Henry Bibb (1815-1854) was an American author and abolitionist who was born a slave. His terrible condition was such that he was sold to over a half-dozen different owners, in various states throughout the south. Bibb had to watch as all six of his younger siblings were sold off from the family to other slaveholders. Escaping to Detroit in 1842, he began his career as an abolitionist writer and would go on to publish an autobiography detailing his life experiences. Not long after the publishing of his work, Bibb was on the move again as the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act – as part of the Compromise of 1850 – meant that his northern neighbors were now legally required to capture and return him to slavery. Bibb traveled to Canada, began publishing his own abolitionist paper, *The Voice of the Fugitive*, and traveled the United States giving speeches. This excerpt from Chapter IX of his autobiography retells of his experiences in the slave trade and describes how slaves were prepared to be sold and how they were evaluated by potential slave owners. Again, the first-person perspective serves to coolly remind the reader that though inspected, bought, and sold as draft animals or inanimate objects, these enslaved Africans were human beings. In particular, this excerpt from Chapter IX serves to inform the reader of the intricacies of the slave auction. Pay particular attention to the warning signs that Bibb reveals slave owners were acutely aware of and avoided in slaves to be purchased.

As you investigate this excerpt, consider the following questions:

- What did the “city officer” look for in inspecting incoming slaves for the market in Vicksburg?
- How were the inspectors able to gauge the age of slaves at auction?
- In what ways did inspectors check “mental capacity” and why was that important?
- How did the slave seller prepare his slaves for the auctions?
- What would happen to slaves that were insolent or tried to delay their sale at auction?

WHEN we arrived at the city of Vicksburg, he intended to sell a portion of his slaves there, and stopped for three weeks trying to sell. But he met with very poor success.

We had there to pass through an examination, or inspection by a city officer, whose business it was to inspect slave property that was brought to that Market for sale. He examined our backs to see if we had been much scarred by the lash. He examined our limbs, to see whether we were inferior.

As it is hard to tell the ages of slaves, they look in their mouths at their teeth, and prick up the skin on the back of their hands, and if the person is very far advanced in life, when the skin is pricked up, the pucker will stand so many seconds on the back of the hand.

But the most rigorous examinations of slaves by those slave inspectors, is on the mental capacity. If they are found to be very intelligent, this is pronounced the most objectionable of all other qualities connected with the life of a slave. In fact, it undermines the whole fabric of his chattelhood; it prepares for what slaveholders are pleased to pronounce the unpardonable sin when committed by a slave. It lays the foundation for running away, and going to Canada. They also see in it a love for freedom, patriotism, insurrection, bloodshed, and exterminating war against American slavery.

Hence they are very careful to inquire whether a slave who is for sale can read or write. This question has been asked me often by slave traders, and cotton planters, while I was there for market. After conversing with me, they have sworn by their Maker, that they would not have me among their negroes; and that they saw the devil in my eye; I would run away, &c.

I have frequently been asked also, if I had ever answer run away; but Garrison would generally this question for me in the negative. He could have sold my little family without any trouble, for the sum of one thousand dollars. But for fear he might not get me off at so great an advantage, as the people did not like my appearance, he could do better by selling us all together. They all wanted my wife, while but very few wanted me. He asked twenty-five hundred dollars, but was not able to get us off at that price.

He tried to speculate on my Christian character. He tried to make it appear that I was so pious and honest that I would not runaway for ill treatment; which was a gross mistake, for I never had religion enough to keep me from running away from slavery in my life.

But we were taken from Vicksburgh, to the city of New Orleans, were we were to be sold at any rate. We were taken to a trader's yard or a slave prison on the corner of St. Joseph street. This was a common resort for slave traders, and planters who wanted to buy slaves; and all classes of slaves were kept there for sale, to be sold in private or public--young or old, males or females, children or parents, husbands or wives.

Everyday at 10 o'clock they were exposed for sale. They had to be in trim for showing themselves to the public for sale. Every one's head had to be combed, and their faces washed, and those who were inclined to look dark and rough, were compelled to wash in greasy dish water, to look slick and lively.

When spectators would come in the yard, the slaves were ordered out to form a line. They were made to stand up straight, and look as sprightly as they could; and when they were asked a question, they had to answer it as promptly as they could, and try to induce the spectators to buy them. If they failed to do this, they were severely paddled after the spectators were gone. The object for using the paddle in the place of a lash was, to conceal the marks which would be made by the flogging. And the object for flogging under such circumstances, is to make the slaves anxious to be sold.

The paddle is made of a piece of hickory timber, about one inch thick, three inches in width, and about eighteen inches in length. The part is applied to the flesh is bored full of quarter inch auger holes, and every time this is applied to the flesh of the victim, the blood gushes through the holes of the paddle, or a blister makes its appearance. The persons who are thus flogged, are always stripped naked, and their hands tied together. They are then bent over double, their knees are forced between their elbows, and a stick is put through between the elbows and the bend of the legs in order to hold the victim in that position, while the paddle is applied to those parts of the body which would not be so likely to be seen by those who wanted to buy slaves.

Charles Sumner, *The Crime Against Kansas*, 1856^{vi}

Charles Sumner (1811-1874) was an abolitionist Senator from Massachusetts. Inspired by the annexation of Texas and its admittance to the Union as a slave state, Sumner ran for political office as a Free-Soil Democrat, an abolitionist off-shoot of the Democratic party (remember, the Republican party was formed in 1854 as **the** abolitionist party in major politics). The following speech excerpt was given during the debate over the crisis of “Bleeding Kansas” from May 19th to May 20th, 1856. As we investigated, Free-Soilers and Border Ruffians were locked in a violent struggle to settle the popular sovereignty question of whether or not slavery would be permitted in the new territories of Kansas and Nebraska. Senator Sumner’s remarks are of particular importance as they reflect the growing tension of “sectionalism” that was pitting the North and South against one another in the years before the Civil War. Sumner spoke at length against the Kansas-Nebraska Act which established popular sovereignty as the compromise on slavery in 1854 and the architects of the law, Senators Douglas (Ill) and Butler (South Carolina). In fact, Sumner’s remarks were so personal that the son-in-law of Senator Butler (mentioned by name in the excerpt), Preston Brooks, attacked Senator Sumner in the Senate chamber with a metal-tipped cane. The beating was so severe that Sumner would need a three-year absence from government to coalesce. The attack galvanized the abolitionist movement in the North – making Sumner a martyr – and rallied support around the South’s new slavery champion – Preston Brooks.

As you investigate this excerpt, consider the following questions:

- How does Senator Sumner use the medieval idea of “chivalry” to demean Senator Butler and other slave-defending politicians?
- How does Senator Sumner explain that slavery will lead to South Carolina’s exit from the Union?
- How does the last paragraph forebode of the coming secession movement and Civil War?

I must say something of a general character, particularly in response to what has fallen from Senators who have raised themselves to eminence on this floor in championship of human wrongs. I mean the Senator from South Carolina [A. P. Butler], and the Senator from Illinois [Stephen Douglas], who, though unlike as Don Quixote and Sancho Panza, yet, like this couple, sally forth together in the same adventure. . . The Senator from South Carolina has read many books of chivalry, and believes himself a chivalrous knight, with . . . honor and courage.

Of course he has chosen a mistress to whom he has made his vows, and who, though ugly to others, is always lovely to him; . . . I mean . . . Slavery . . . The asserted rights of Slavery, which shock equality of all kinds, are cloaked by a fantastic claim of equality. If the slave States cannot enjoy what, in mockery of the great fathers of the Republic, he misnames equality under the Constitution in other words,

the full power in the National Territories to compel fellowmen to unpaid toil, to separate husband and wife, and to sell little children at the auction block then, sir, the chivalric Senator will conduct the State of South Carolina out of the Union! Heroic knight ! Exalted Senator! A second Moses come for a second exodus! . . .

With regret, I come again upon the Senator from South Carolina, who . . . shows an incapacity of accuracy, whether in stating the Constitution, or in stating the law, whether in the details of statistics or the diversions of scholarship. He cannot open his mouth, but out there flies a blunder. . .

The contest, which, beginning in Kansas, has reached us, will soon be transferred from Congress to a broader stage, where every citizen will be not only spectator, but actor; and to their judgment I confidently appeal. . .

Susan B. Anthony, *Let's Make the Slaves' Cause Our Own*, 1859^{vii}

Susan B Anthony (1820-1906) was a social reformer best known for her work in the women's suffrage movement but who also spoke and acted on behalf of abolitionist organizations, such as her role as agent of the American Anti-Slavery Society for New York. In the 1840s and 1850s, as the women's suffrage movement was gaining momentum, they often worked hand-in-hand with abolitionists. The two groups bonded over their common goal of equality for all as stated in the Declaration of Independence and rooted in their discussions and debates about true freedom and liberty. Others like Lucretia Mott, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Harriet Beecher Stowe (*Uncle Tom's Cabin*) had stoked the flames of discontent by linking the slave's condition that of women in the nation. The argument put forth by Susan B Anthony is one that is factual and moral in that it states with clarity the issue and then renders the reader to juxtapose those truths with moral and religious conviction. Her words in this speech, written only a few years after the devastating Dred Scott Supreme Court ruling, argues that the Constitution is not simply an ideal but the right of all humans – be they women, man, black, or white.

As you investigate this excerpt, consider the following questions:

- How does the author describe the condition of slavery as it existed in the nation when she spoke?
- How does the author refer to the Declaration of Independence as part of her argument?
- How does the author evoke religious morals to make her argument?
- How does the author use the “golden rule” to argue for immediate and full emancipation?

We are assembled here, this evening, for the purpose of discussing the question of American Slavery: -- The startling fact that there are in these United States, under the sanction of this professedly Christian, Republican Government, nearly Four millions of human beings now clanking the chains of Slavery. -- Four millions of men and women and children, who are owned like horses and cattle, -- and bought and sold in the market. -- Four millions of thinking, acting, conscious beings, like ourselves, driven to unpaid toil, from the rising to the setting of the sun, through the weary [end of first page] days and years of their wretched life times.

Let us, my friends, for the passing hour, make the slave's case our own. As much as in us

lies, let us feel that it is ourselves, and our kith and our kin who are despoiled of our inalienable rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, that it is our own backs that are bared to the slave driver's lash. That it is our own flesh that is lacerated and torn. That it is our own life blood that is poured out. Let us feel that it is our own children, that are ruthlessly torn from our yearning mother hearts ...

Could we, my friends, but make the slave's case our own -- could we but feel for the slave, as bound with him (Heb 13:3) -- could we but make the slave our neighbor, and "love him as ourself" (Mt 22:39), and do unto him as we would that he should do unto us (Lk 6:31) -- how very easy would be the task of converting us all to Abolitionism.

If, by some magic power, the color of our skins could be instantly changed and the slave's fate made really our own, then would there be no farther need of argument or persuasion, or rhetoric or eloquence. Then would we, everyone, with heart and soul, and tone and action, respond to the truth and the justice of the glorious doctrine of "immediate and unconditional emancipation," as the right of the slave and the duty of the master.

John Brown, *Last Speech*, 1859^{viii}

John Brown (1800-1859) was a divisive and controversial abolitionist reformer who believed that insurrection (armed rebellion) was the only means for full and immediate emancipation of the slaves. Brown first came to prominence when he led Free-Soilers to murder pro-slavery activists in the Kansas Territory during the "Bleeding Kansas" crisis. In 1859 Brown and a group of co-conspirators (including his own sons) led a raid at the arsenal in Harpers Ferry, Virginia in an effort to procure weapons to arm the slaves to bring about a violent insurrection. His plot was foiled and within thirty-six hours all perpetrators were either captured (in fact, Robert E Lee – soon to be of Confederate Army fame - would lead Marines in capturing many) or killed. Brown was put on trial for murder, conspiring with slaves to rebel, and treason against the state of Virginia. Having been found guilty of his crimes, John Brown was sentenced to hang. The raid, the verdict, and the famous last words of Brown were to many the final straw in the growing "sectionalist" divide in the country. Many in the South feared that similar actions from violent abolitionists would imperil people and property while many in the North held up Brown as a just and righteous man for committing his crimes that were only means to an end (of slavery). Building upon "Bleeding Kansas," the Dred Scott decision, the Charles Sumner speech and attack, Brown's raid on Harpers Ferry was emblematic of the widening gulf and movement towards secessionism.

As you investigate this excerpt, consider the following questions:

- What does Brown state was his intent in raiding Harpers Ferry?
- How does Brown argue against his "punishment" for his supposed "crime?"
- How does Brown justify the need and purpose of his death for the abolitionist movement?

“I have, may it please the Court, a few words to say. In the first place, I deny everything but what I have all along admitted,—the design on my part to free the slaves. I intended certainly to have made a clean thing of that matter, as I did last winter, when I went into Missouri and there took slaves without the snapping of a gun on either side, moved them through the country, and finally left them in Canada. I designed to have done the same thing again, on a larger scale. That was all I intended. I never did intend murder, or treason, or the destruction of property, or to excite or incite slaves to rebellion, or to make insurrection.

I have another objection; and that is, it is unjust that I should suffer such a penalty. Had I interfered in the manner which I admit, and which I admit has been fairly proved (for I admire the truthfulness and candor of the greater portion of the witnesses who have testified in this case),—had I so interfered in behalf of the rich, the powerful, the intelligent, the so-called great, or in behalf of any of their friends,—either father, mother, brother, sister, wife, or children, or any of that class,—and suffered and sacrificed what I have in this interference, it would have been all right; and every man in this court would have deemed it an act worthy of reward rather than punishment

Now, if it is deemed necessary that I should forfeit my life for the furtherance of the ends of justice, and MINGLE MY BLOOD FURTHER WITH THE BLOOD OF MY CHILDREN, and with the blood of millions in this Slave country whose rights are disregarded by wicked, cruel, and unjust enactments, - - I say LET IT BE DONE.”

Abraham Lincoln, *Emancipation Proclamation*, 1863^{ix}

Elected to office in 1860 on the abolitionist Republican Party ticket, Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865), was president during an unprecedented time in United States history. As we have seen in our investigations, the raid at Harpers Ferry coupled with the election of an abolitionist candidate for president prompted South Carolina, and then many others, to secede from the Union and establish the Confederate States of America. President Lincoln chose not to let this action go unchecked, famously stating that “the Union must and shall be preserved.” In late 1862, the president began drafting an executive order that would take aim at the slave populations in the rebelling southern states. Citing his power as Commander in Chief, Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation to take effect on January 1st, 1863. The order was only in effect in the ten rebelling states and the Executive Branch (including the Army and Navy), and effectively freed those enslaved in those areas. It did not, however, provide compensation to those former owners, grant citizenship to the freed peoples, nor outlaw or ban slavery as a legal practice. Though constitutionally unenforceable – given that the rebelling states did not count themselves among the United States, and therefore not under the Constitution’s directive – the impact was clear as slaves fled from the plantations wherever the Union Army brought the triumphant news.

As you investigate this excerpt, consider the following questions:

- What Constitutional power gave President Lincoln the power to issue the Emancipation Proclamation?
- What did the Emancipation Proclamation do? Where?
- What is the given reason for issuing this executive order?
- What is the military purpose in issuing this document?
 - How could this help the Union’s cause (or hurt the Confederacy’s)?

By the President of the United States of America:

A Proclamation.

Whereas, on the twenty-second day of September, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-two, a proclamation was issued by the President of the United States, containing, among other things, the following, to wit:

"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."

Now, therefore I, Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States, by virtue of the power in me vested as Commander-in-Chief, of the Army and Navy of the United States in time of actual armed rebellion against the authority and government of the United States, and as a fit and necessary war measure for suppressing said rebellion, do, on this first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, and in accordance with my purpose so to do publicly proclaimed for the full period of one hundred days, from the day first above mentioned, order and designate as the States and parts of States wherein the people thereof respectively, are this day in rebellion against the United States, the following, to wit:

Arkansas, Texas, Louisiana, (except the Parishes of St. Bernard, Plaquemines, Jefferson, St. John, St. Charles, St. James Ascension, Assumption, Terrebonne, Lafourche, St. Mary, St. Martin, and Orleans, including the City of New Orleans) Mississippi, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, and Virginia, (except the forty-eight counties designated as West Virginia, and also the counties of Berkley, Accomac, Northampton, Elizabeth City, York, Princess Ann, and Norfolk, including the cities of Norfolk and Portsmouth[]), and which excepted parts, are for the present, left precisely as if this proclamation were not issued.

And by virtue of the power, and for the purpose aforesaid, I do order and declare that all persons held as slaves within said designated States, and parts of States, are, and henceforward shall be free; and that the Executive government of the United States, including the military and naval authorities thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of said persons.

And I hereby enjoin upon the people so declared to be free to abstain from all violence, unless in necessary self-defence; and I recommend to them that, in all cases when allowed, they labor faithfully for reasonable wages.

And I further declare and make known, that such persons of suitable condition, will be received into the armed service of the United States to garrison forts, positions, stations, and other places, and to man vessels of all sorts in said service.

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.

In witness whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the seal of the United States to be affixed.

Done at the City of Washington, this first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty three, and of the Independence of the United States of America the eighty-seventh.

*By the President: ABRAHAM LINCOLN
WILLIAM H. SEWARD, Secretary of State.*

Abraham Lincoln, *Second Inaugural Address*, 1865^x

Elected to a second term in office – though only Northern, pro-abolition states remained in the Union – President Lincoln was sworn in on March 4th, 1865. The Civil War had been raging for four years but the end was in sight. After issuing the Emancipation Proclamation, the major victory at the Battle of Gettysburg, and Sherman’s march – waging “total war” on the South – had turned the tide in the Union’s favor. Within a month of this inaugural address, Generals Grant and Lee would meet at Appomattox court house to settle the terms of the Confederate’s unconditional surrender. Another important milestone had also been reached – the 13th Amendment which would abolish slavery officially had passed Congress and was on its way to the states for ratification. With all this in the air, Lincoln sought to speak to a tired and still-divided nation with much less fanfare than his initial inaugural address. Striking notes of reconciliation triumph over defeat, and hopes for healing a nation, Lincoln sought to begin to “bind the nation’s wounds.” Careful to be factual in his assessment of the conflict over slavery and the ensuing Civil War, Lincoln laid out what many historians believe was to be his idea for Reconstruction. Unfortunately that framework would never be fully fleshed out as John Wilkes Booth’s fated assassin bullet would strike down Lincoln at Ford’s Theater a mere weeks after this address.

As you investigate this excerpt, consider the following questions:

- How does President Lincoln explain the war at hand (Civil War)?
- What are three instances (cite evidence fragments) in which President Lincoln clearly lays the blame for the Civil War on the South?
- How does President Lincoln believe the Civil War was “penance” for the sin of slavery?
- What hopes and framework does President Lincoln set forth in his speech for Reconstruction?

Fellow Countrymen

At this second appearing to take the oath of the presidential office, there is less occasion for an extended address than there was at the first. Then a statement, somewhat in detail, of a course to be pursued, seemed fitting and proper. Now, at the expiration of four years, during which public declarations have been constantly called forth on every point and phase of the great contest which still absorbs the attention, and engrosses the energies of the nation, little that is new could be presented. The progress of our arms, upon which all else chiefly depends, is as well known to the public as to myself; and it is, I trust, reasonably satisfactory and encouraging to all. With high hope for the future, no prediction in regard to it is ventured.

On the occasion corresponding to this four years ago, all thoughts were anxiously directed to an impending civil-war. All dreaded it -- all sought to avert it. While the inaugural address was being delivered from this place, devoted altogether to saving the Union without war, insurgent agents were in the city seeking to destroy it without war -- seeking to dissolve the Union, and divide effects, by negotiation. Both parties deprecated war; but one of them would make war rather than let the nation survive; and the other would accept war rather than let it perish. And the war came.

One eighth of the whole population were colored slaves, not distributed generally over the Union, but localized in the Southern half part of it. These slaves constituted a peculiar and powerful interest. All knew that this interest was, somehow, the cause of the war. To strengthen, perpetuate, and extend this interest was the object for which the insurgents would rend the Union, even by war; while the government claimed no right to do more than to restrict the territorial enlargement of it. Neither party expected for the war, the magnitude, or the duration, which it has already attained. Neither anticipated that the cause of the conflict might cease with, or even before, the conflict itself should cease. Each looked for an easier triumph, and a result less fundamental and astounding. Both read the same Bible, and pray to the same God; and each invokes His aid against the other. It may seem strange that any men should dare to ask a just God's assistance in wringing their bread from the sweat of other men's faces; but let us judge not that we be not judged. The prayers of both could not be answered; that of neither has been answered fully. The Almighty has His own purposes. "Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!" If we shall suppose that American Slavery is one of those offences which, in the providence of God, must needs come, but which, having continued through His appointed time, He now wills to remove, and that He gives to both North and South, this terrible war, as the woe due to those by whom the offence came, shall we discern therein any departure from those divine attributes which the believers in a Living God always ascribe to Him? Fondly do we hope -- fervently do we pray -- that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet, if God wills that it continue, until all the wealth piled by the bond-man's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash, shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said [four] three thousand years ago, so still it must be said "the judgments of the Lord, are true and righteous altogether"

With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation's wounds; to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan -- to achieve and cherish a lasting peace among ourselves and with the world. to do all which may achieve and cherish a just, and a lasting peace, among ourselves, and with the world. all nations.

13th Amendment to the United States Constitution, 1865^{xi}

The 13th Amendment to the United States Constitution marks the end of the American abolitionist movement as it federally codified the abolition of slavery. Passed by Congress (narrowly meeting the 2/3 threshold needed for proposed amendments) on January 31st, 1865, the 13th Amendment was officially ratified on December 6th, 1865 with Georgia's adoption of the amendment (meeting the ¾ threshold for state approvals on amendments). Later Reconstruction Era amendments would grant citizenship to the formerly enslaved people (14th Amendment) and the right for African American **males** to vote (15th Amendment). Despite these newly minted Constitutional rights and freedoms, the Reconstruction Era would prove to be a failure for most African Americans with southern states introducing new Jim Crow Laws and Black Codes that systematically stripped the new freedmen of their rights. Also lost in the Reconstruction Era amendments were the women's suffrage activists who worked tirelessly for the abolition movement. The 15th Amendment guaranteed the right to vote for males only, and as the abolitionist movement claimed triumph and disbanded, the women's suffrage movement was left disillusioned and disenfranchised.

Many millions of human beings were brutally ripped from home and family and set to toil for another without compensation but the 13th Amendment ended the "peculiar institution's" over two hundred year reign in the United States of America. This would prove to be only the first step in the movement for true equality as outlined in our nation's founding documents, but certainly an important one that helped move the country towards its stated goal of forming "a more perfect union."

AMENDMENT XIII

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.

Passed by Congress January 31, 1865. Ratified December 6, 1865.

End Notes

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- ⁱ Basker, James G. "Patrick Henry, 'Letter to John Alsop, January 13, 1773'" *American Antislavery Writings: Colonial Beginnings to Emancipation*. New York: Library of America, 2012. 52-53. Print.
- ⁱⁱ Basker, James G. "Anonymous 'The African Slave'" *American Antislavery Writings: Colonial Beginnings to Emancipation*. New York: Library of America, 2012. 182-183. Print.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Basker, James G. "James Forten from 'Letters from a Man of Colour on a Late Bill Before the Senate of Pennsylvania'" *American Antislavery Writings: Colonial Beginnings to Emancipation*. New York: Library of America, 2012. 213-215. Print.
- ^{iv} Garrison, William Lloyd. "On the Constitution and the Union." Editorial. *The Liberator* 29 Dec. 1832, Vol. II ed., No. 52 sec.: n. pag. Web. 2 Dec. 2014. <<http://fair-use.org/the-liberator/1832/12/29/on-the-constitution-and-the-union>>.
- ^v Basker, James G. "Henry Bibb from 'The Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Henry Bibb, an American Slave, Written by Himself'" *American Antislavery Writings: Colonial Beginnings to Emancipation*. New York: Library of America, 2012. 52-53. Print.
- ^{vi} Basker, James G. "Charles Sumner from 'The Crime Against Kansas'" *American Antislavery Writings: Colonial Beginnings to Emancipation*. New York: Library of America, 2012. 758-59. Print.
- ^{vii} "Make the slave's case our own." [ca. 1859]. Susan B. Anthony Papers. Manuscript Division. Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
- ^{viii} Gilder Lerhman Institute of American History. Address of John Brown to the Virginia Court, When about to Receive the Sentence of Death, for His Heroic Attempt at Harper's Ferry.... Printed by C.C. Mead, n.d. Web. 2 Dec. 2014.
- ^{ix} Abraham Lincoln, "Emancipation Proclamation," January 1, 1863
- ^x Abraham Lincoln: "Inaugural Address," March 4, 1865. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=25819>. Web. 2 Dec. 2014.
- ^{xi} The House Joint Resolution proposing the 13th amendment to the Constitution, January 31, 1865; Enrolled Acts and Resolutions of Congress, 1789-1999; General Records of the United States Government; Record Group 11; National Archives.