

**Grades 9–10**  
**TCAP Writing Assessment**

**Prompt 2**

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**Text 2 Introduction**

In “**Hesitant Emancipator**” by **H.W. Brands**, the author reflects on the authorship of the Emancipation Proclamation and the freeing of U.S. slaves.

Please read “Hesitant Emancipator” and then answer Prompt 2.

*For MIST version, please insert text here.*

**Prompt 2**

You have now read two texts relating to the Emancipation Proclamation:

- “**The Slow End of Slavery**” by Frank Clancy
- “**Hesitant Emancipator**” by H.W. Brands

Brands writes that “Abraham Lincoln would come to be remembered as the Great Emancipator.” Consider whether this is an appropriate title for Lincoln given the historical evidence and arguments in both texts. Then, write an essay that argues whether Lincoln deserves credit for being “the Great Emancipator.” Be sure to cite evidence from both texts to support your argument. Follow the conventions of standard written English. Write your essay in the space provided.



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## The Slow End of Slavery

Frank Clancy

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1 President Abraham Lincoln signed one of the pivotal documents of American history. On Jan. 1,  
2 1863, after several hours spent greeting visitors, the president set his pen to the Emancipation  
3 Proclamation, thus declaring freedom for most of the nation’s slaves—more than 3 million men,  
4 women, and children in 10 states.

5 Opponents of slavery celebrated. In Washington, D.C., they marched in front of the White  
6 House, cheering the president, who appeared briefly in an upstairs window but did not address  
7 the crowd. “An immense gathering, including black and white abolitionist leaders, stood vigil at  
8 Boston’s Tremont Temple, awaiting word that the proclamation had been signed,” Eric Foner  
9 writes in *Reconstruction: America’s Unfinished Revolution*. “Wild cheering” greeted news of the  
10 signing, which arrived near midnight. In Union-occupied Norfolk, Va., some 4,000 blacks  
11 paraded through the streets, carrying Union flags and hailing the death of slavery.

12 Alas, as Lincoln well knew, the Emancipation Proclamation liberated few if any slaves since it  
13 applied only to states and portions of states where the people were in rebellion against the United  
14 States. They were unlikely to comply with the edict of a president whose authority they rejected.

15 For the vast majority of America’s slaves, freedom did not come suddenly and swiftly in  
16 response to a presidential decree; it came sporadically, in waves, often on the heels of the  
17 Northern army. Though Lincoln had declared at the onset of the Civil War that his objective was  
18 to preserve the Union, not to abolish slavery, the gradual process of emancipation began almost  
19 immediately. A month into the war, Union Gen. Benjamin F. Butler declared the runaway slaves  
20 who sought refuge at occupied Fortress Monroe near Norfolk to be “contraband of war,”  
21 justifying the confiscation of “property” that was being used to further the Confederate war  
22 effort. In Tennessee, northern Virginia, parts of Louisiana, and elsewhere, tens of thousands of  
23 men, women, and children tasted this limited sort of freedom months and even years before  
24 Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation. Traveling by night, hiding in woods and swamps  
25 by day, many risked their lives to reach Union troops in places like Natchez, Miss., and Hilton  
26 Head, S.C. As historian John Hope Franklin puts it, “slavery merely ceased to exist” when the  
27 Union army gained control of an area. . . .

28 One challenge that slaves faced was the unsettled nature of federal law. In drafting the  
29 Emancipation Proclamation, Lincoln had, for legal and political reasons, incorporated several  
30 key compromises. The president’s order did not, for example, apply to slave-holding states that  
31 had remained loyal to the Union, such as Kentucky and Missouri. And it specifically excluded  
32 Union-occupied areas of Louisiana and Virginia—including the city of Norfolk, where thousands



33 of blacks marched and hailed the signing of the proclamation. In those regions, Lincoln wrote,  
34 slavery continued “precisely as if this proclamation were not issued.” The claim of many fleeing  
35 slaves to freedom thus depended on how individual Union officers interpreted the law. As late as  
36 mid-1864, some continued to enforce the Fugitive Slave Act, returning runaway slaves to their  
37 “owners” in the South.

38 While abolitionists bitterly criticized the compromises, they applauded another clause in the  
39 proclamation, which declared that former slaves “of suitable condition” would for the first time  
40 be welcomed into the Union army. On the simplest level, the freedmen, as they were known,  
41 provided badly needed manpower to an army that had suffered heavy casualties. More than  
42 50,000 black men joined the union army in 1863; by the end of the war, 186,000—one of every  
43 five black men under 45—would serve.

#### 44 **Abolitionists Advance**

45 The Emancipation Proclamation also gave an enormous boost to the abolitionist cause.  
46 Prominent abolitionist leaders, including former slave Frederick Douglass, had urged the  
47 government to recruit black soldiers from the very start of the war, arguing that it would  
48 empower blacks, demoralize the South, and lend moral authority to the Northern cause. . . .

49 On a more complex level, the recruitment of black soldiers had a profound psychological impact.  
50 Though many slaves had long resisted the brutal institution that treated them as property, until  
51 the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation their opposition had usually been covert. . . .

52 Historian Eugene Genovese says black troops “transformed the black countryside. . . . The slaves  
53 marveled at the soldiers’ pride in dealing with whites, including their own officers, at their self-  
54 control and self-confidence, at their determination. . . .”

55 Despite its limitations, then, the Emancipation Proclamation profoundly altered the Civil War.  
56 After January 1863, the North was fighting to end slavery as well as preserve the Union. If the  
57 North won, slavery was dead. . . .

#### 58 **The Law in Progress**

59 The law, too, was unsettled. Lincoln had justified the Emancipation Proclamation, which  
60 contradicted prior Supreme Court opinions, as “a fit and necessary war measure”; the 13th  
61 Amendment, which completely banned slavery, was ratified in December 1865. Two-and-a-half  
62 years later, the states ratified the 14th Amendment, the so-called Equal Protection Clause. In  
63 February 1870, they amended the Constitution once more, this time to guarantee the right to vote  
64 to all male citizens, regardless of “race, color, or previous condition of servitude.” . . .



65 Throughout the South, whites went to extraordinary lengths to restrict the freedom of blacks  
66 through legislation, court decisions, and outright intimidation. In some places, for example,  
67 “violence against blacks reached staggering proportions in the immediate aftermath of the war,”  
68 Foner writes. The triumph of those reactionary forces explains the subtitle of Foner’s epic history  
69 of Reconstruction: He calls it “America’s unfinished revolution.” As W.E.B. Du Bois wrote in  
70 1935, the “slave went free; stood a brief moment in the sun; then moved back again toward  
71 slavery.”

72 This struggle over the meaning of freedom for blacks would last for more than a century. Not  
73 coincidentally, Martin Luther King Jr. began his “I Have a Dream” speech, 100 years after  
74 Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation, by calling it “a great beacon light of  
75 hope.” Despite its flaws, the declaration was crucial to slavery’s end: It launched the chain of  
76 events that led, however slowly, to freedom.

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Clancy, Frank. “The Slow End of Slavery.” *The History Channel Magazine*. Jul/Aug. 2003. Reprinted from  
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## Hesitant Emancipator

H. W. Brands

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*Abraham Lincoln endured hours of personal anguish before he unveiled the proclamation that ended slavery.*

1 Although Lincoln would come to be remembered as the Great Emancipator, he did not begin his  
2 presidency with the goal of freeing the slaves. He insisted that his primary responsibility as the  
3 nation’s chief executive was to preserve the Union, not to conduct a revolutionary crusade. Nor  
4 did Lincoln’s opposition to slavery make him a believer in racial equality. . . . The demands of  
5 politics, the dictates of morality, the strictures of law and the fortunes of battle combined to vex  
6 Lincoln for months, till he finally determined to release his confidential document to the world,  
7 and transform the stakes and meaning of the Civil War.

8 AT THE HEART OF LINCOLN’S conundrum was the question of what he and the North were  
9 fighting for. It was the Union, he long told anyone who would listen. But the South didn’t  
10 believe him, and hadn’t from the start. Lincoln intended to free the slaves, the Southerners said,  
11 which was why their states had seceded. Northern abolitionists didn’t want to believe him. They  
12 hoped he would free the slaves, which was why they had voted for him in 1860. Lincoln didn’t  
13 help matters, having talked both sides of the slavery issue for years. As a candidate he had said  
14 that neither the president nor Congress had the power to interfere with the peculiar institution<sup>1</sup> in  
15 the states where it existed, but meanwhile he asserted that slavery must vanish from American  
16 soil. The onset of the war simply extended his balancing act. Lincoln knew he mustn’t alienate  
17 residents of the four border slave states that had remained loyal to the Union—Missouri,  
18 Kentucky, Maryland and Delaware—as well as Democratic voters who supported a war for the  
19 Union but might not support a war against slavery. Yet he also had to hold onto antislavery  
20 partisans in his own Republican Party.

21 If the fighting had gone well, it might have been easier for Lincoln to address the issue of slavery  
22 head on. The Union Army embarrassed itself in the first major battle of the war, at Bull Run  
23 (what the Confederates called Manassas) in July 1861, and afterward bumbled around  
24 Virginia. . . .

25 To solve his problem with the Border States he pressed a program of compensated emancipation.  
26 A principal argument against emancipation was that it would destroy the value that slaveholders  
27 had acquired in their slaves; Lincoln proposed to compensate the slaveholders for their loss. The  
28 concept outraged many Northern abolitionists, who contended that it legitimized the ownership  
29 of human beings. It also upset Northern taxpayers, who resisted footing the bill for the program.

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<sup>1</sup> **peculiar institution:** slavery



30 Lincoln responded to the latter objection by pointing out that the war was burning through more  
31 money than providing compensation for all the slaves in the Border States would cost. To the  
32 abolitionists he could say only that moral purity was sometimes the enemy of earthly  
33 improvement. . . .

34 Lincoln couldn't envision a biracial society in democratic America. "On this broad continent,"  
35 he told [a group of free African Americans who visited the White House], "not a single man of  
36 your race is made the equal of a single man of ours. Go where you are treated the best, and the  
37 ban is still upon you." Such was the basic fact of racial politics in America. . . .

38 Lincoln, of course, knew that Africans hadn't chosen to come to America. All the more reason,  
39 he concluded, that their descendants should leave America. Lincoln's solution to the problem of  
40 what to do with blacks after the abolition of slavery was to encourage them to emigrate. A few  
41 thousand American blacks had already gone to Liberia, but they hadn't thrived there, and  
42 Lincoln thought Central America afforded a more likely home. . . .

43 "It is better for us both," he said.

44 Soon after his meeting with the African American group, Lincoln received a letter from Horace  
45 Greeley. The editor of the *New York Tribune* took the president to task for failing to use what he  
46 considered the most potent weapon in his arsenal against the Confederacy: emancipation. . . .

47 Lincoln responded by telling Greeley that first things came first. "My paramount object in this  
48 struggle is to save the Union, and is not either to save or to destroy slavery," he said. "If I could  
49 save the Union without freeing any slave I would do it, and if I could save it by freeing all the  
50 slaves I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing some and leaving others alone I would also  
51 do that." Lest Greeley have any doubt regarding the administration's priorities, Lincoln added:  
52 "What I do about slavery, and the colored race, I do because I believe it helps to save the Union;  
53 and what I forbear<sup>2</sup>, I forbear because I do not believe it would help to save the Union. I shall do  
54 less whenever I shall believe what I am doing hurts the cause, and I shall do more whenever I  
55 believe doing more will help the cause." Yet Lincoln assured Greeley that his heart was in the  
56 right place. "I have here stated my purpose according to my view official duty. . . . I intend no  
57 modification of my oft-expressed personal wish that all men every where could be free."

58 Lincoln might have said more, but in doing so he would have spilled the best-kept secret in  
59 Washington: that he had already drafted an emancipation order<sup>3</sup> and was engaged in a spirited

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<sup>2</sup> **forbear:** refrain from doing

<sup>3</sup> **emancipation order:** (also known as the Emancipation Proclamation) an order issued by President Lincoln in 1862 to free the slaves; took effect January 1, 1863



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60 debate with members of his Cabinet about when he should release it. The troubles of the Union  
61 Army had pushed him toward this fateful step. “Things had gone on from bad to worse,” he later  
62 recounted, “until I felt that we had reached the end of our rope on the plan of operations that we  
63 had been pursuing. We had about played our last card, and must change our tactics or lose the  
64 game.”

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Brands, H.W. “Hesitant Emancipator.” *American History*, Jun. 2009, Vol. 44 Issue 2, p. 54–59. Used by permission.  
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