

7.4

African Americans & The War



As a Young Historian, I will be able to...

- **Analyze why Lincoln decided to issue the Emancipation Proclamation and what it achieved.**
- **Assess the different roles that African Americans played in the Civil War.**

Emancipation

Union officers had to decide what to do with African Americans under their control

Some Generals declared them **contraband, captured war supplies**

Some would offer freedom for fighting for the Union, although Lincoln would reverse this.

Eventually Lincoln realized he could not avoid the issue & began to work on a plan for **emancipation, freedom from slavery.**

Battle of Antietam

General Lee leads his troops into Maryland, hoping to inspire a southern uprising.

Union soldiers find a copy of the plan around some cigars at an abandoned campsite.

The two armies fight over the course of a day with 23,000 dead at the [Battle of Antietam](#)

General Lee is forced to retreat to Virginia, leading to an important Union victory

Emancipation Proclamation

**Lincoln signs the Emancipation Proclamation,
freeing all enslaved people in the South**

**Many in the North celebrated, but some felt it did
not go far enough.**

**While it did not actually free a slave, it made the war
“about slavery” & Confederates now
determined they must fight till the end.**

**Congress passes the [Militia Act](#), allowing African
Americans into the military**

African Americans Join the Fight

The 54th Massachusetts Regiment was the first all African American regiment.

While many whites had low expectations, these were false as they proved to be skilled soldiers as well.

The 54th & Robert Shaw attempt an assault at Ft. Wagner, they fail but earn respect for courage

While successful, they still faced prejudice in the military being used for menial tasks

Support for the Union

**Confederate soldiers would often massacre
African American soldiers during the war**

**Southern Slaves would often produce food &
manage farms for the North**

**Many would often use their familiarity to serve as
spies & scouts for the Union**