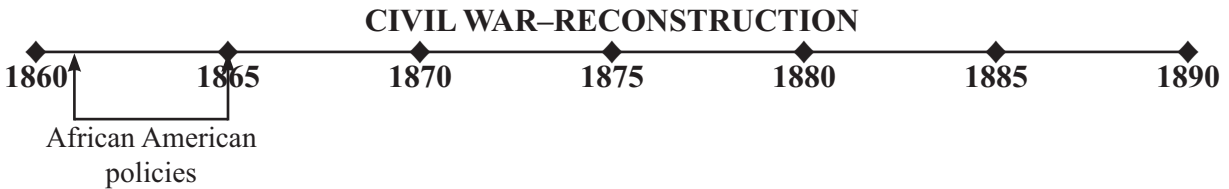


# LESSON 1: POLICIES TOWARD AFRICAN AMERICANS

## Student Handout 1: Problem



You are President Lincoln in 1861. Unfortunately, the South seceded from the Union soon after you were elected, which has led to a civil war between the North (which you lead) and the South. It has been a difficult war so far, with the North losing the first battles. The North has to win this war, and you are ready to play a key role in making that happen. One area you need to consider is the role of African Americans in the war.



Lincoln in 1861

**Decision 1—War aims:** One of your main duties as president and commander-in-chief is to determine the aims of the war. Northerners need to know why they are fighting. Many, especially abolitionists, are pushing for abolition of slavery as a war aim. We need a moral reason to fight, they argue, and freeing four million slaves is certainly a noble goal. Abolitionist Lewis Tappan has argued, “Slavery is the cause of the present war. What is the remedy? We unhesitatingly answer; immediate and universal emancipation.” However, many Northerners and Northern soldiers hold racist views of African Americans; they won’t be motivated to fight for people they don’t even like. Almost half of Northern voters supported the Democrats—who opposed the abolition of slavery—in the 1860 election. Congress passed a resolution last month stating that the purpose of the war is to preserve the Union.

There are also the border states to consider. These states—Missouri, Kentucky, Maryland, and Delaware—have slaves, so they might join the Confederacy if you abolish slavery in all states. That would mean the North would face 14 or 15 states in the Confederacy instead of just 11. It would hurt Northern chances of winning the war. Which of the following will you do? Explain your choice.

1. Preserving the Union, not abolishing slavery: The North has to win the war. Since abolishing slavery might hurt the war effort (by lowering morale in the North and by adding more states to the Confederacy), it should be avoided.
2. Abolishing slavery only in the states that seceded from the Union, and continue to allow slavery in the border states
3. Abolishing slavery only in the states that seceded from the Union; offer to pay slaveholders in the border states for their slaves if they gradually abolish slavery

4. Abolishing slavery in all of the United States. The people of the border states will have to decide if they want to do what is right.

**Decision 2—African American soldiers:** Northern abolitionists want African Americans to serve in the Northern army. They argue that African Americans should be able to fight for their freedom. On the other hand, white officers and soldiers do not want to fight alongside African Americans, since many whites even in the North believe African Americans are inferior. Which of the following will you do? Explain your choice.

1. Do not allow African Americans to become soldiers in the Northern armies. White soldiers do not want African Americans in the army, so don't force the issue.
2. Allow African Americans to become soldiers but keep them in separate units, keep their pay below whites' pay, and use white officers to lead them. White soldiers do not want to be in the same units with African Americans, and they wouldn't want to be paid the same as African Americans, either.
3. Allow African Americans to become soldiers and grant them equal rights in return, including equal pay, integrated units, and the right to vote.

**Decision 3—Slaves:** As the Northern army advances, slaves have been fleeing to the Union lines, and many have been captured. Which of the following will you do? You can choose more than one option. Explain your choice(s).

1. Allow the Union army to "confiscate" slaves and recruit them into the Northern army. Going further, declare that any slaves confiscated are forever free. Two Northern generals have already declared the slaves of Southern sympathizers to be free.
2. Require confiscated slaves to work under labor contracts for farm owners and businessmen. The farm work is necessary to grow cotton for the textile mills in the North. Without enough labor on cotton plantations, cotton factories in the North will have to close and workers will be fired. The ex-slaves would make a wage, but they would not be given land by the federal government (although they could buy land if they save enough money).
3. Distribute captured Confederate land to the ex-slaves and let them grow whatever crops they choose. The South chose to rebel against the Union; those rebels deserve to lose their land to slaves, who suffered under the horrors of slavery. Under this plan, thousands of slaves would each get a small farm for free.
4. Do not confiscate slaves or other property of Confederate sympathizers. Return slaves to their owners. This will reassure the border states and may keep them from seceding.
5. Give federal aid to states that begin gradual emancipation. The national government would provide money to states to help pay slaveholders who release their slaves. This compensated emancipation would end slavery in a moderate way, helping to bring an end to the war. This plan also wouldn't push border states to join the South, since it would be entirely voluntary.