The Emancipation Act and the Emancipation Proclamation

ACCESS THIS RUBENSTEIN LIBRARY INSTRUCTION SESSION GUIDE ONLINE AT:
guides.library.duke.edu/emancipation

BRIEF OVERVIEW
This class session encourages students to engage with three primary documents: two legal documents and one a persuasive speech. Edward Henry Rollins’ speech in favor of the Abolition Act was scanned from an original print copy in the Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library. The texts of the Emancipation Act and the Emancipation Proclamation are typed transcripts made available from the National Archives.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES
- **Characterize** the abolitionists’ arguments against the institution of slavery.
- **Analyze** legal documents related to enslavement.
- **Identify and explain** the relationship between the values and rhetoric of the abolition movement and a contemporary social justice movement.

BEFORE CLASS
- Have your students take a moment to read the Rubenstein Library’s How We Teach and Learn. It’s very short, but includes things students will want to keep in mind as they work with primary sources now and in the future.
- Have your students read Congressman Rollins’ speech, the District of Columbia Emancipation Act, and the Emancipation Proclamation.

SESSION OUTLINE
Students will work in pairs or small groups. Depending on the time available, the instructor may have them read the three documents and take a few notes prior to class. When class begins, break students into groups and identify one member to serve as the reporter.

**Activity I: The Rhetoric of Social Justice**
Review Congressman Rollins’ speech. Make a list of his arguments in favor of abolishing slavery in Washington, D.C.
- Can you identify a current social movement that uses similar arguments to persuade people to support their cause?
- What are the similarities and differences between the abolitionist arguments and those of the current social movement you have identified?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:
- How did Rollins appeal to the “better angels” of his listeners?
- Are these still effective arguments today?
- What social justice movement(s) did you discuss?
Activity II: Compare the Emancipation Act and the Emancipation Proclamation

Return to the small groups. Review the District of Columbia Emancipation Act and the Emancipation Proclamation.

- Are financial resources pledged to facilitate the goal of freeing enslaved people? If so, how will the money be used?
- Do you notice any of the ideas expressed by Representative Rollins in the text of the Emancipation Act and/or the Emancipation Proclamation?
- If you could travel back in time to advise President Lincoln, what provisions would you recommend that he add to these documents?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- What surprised you about the differences between the two documents?
- What was left out?
- What questions about abolition and emancipation would you like to explore further?