DBQ: Lincoln’s Ideas on Slavery and Union

Background Information

Lincoln has been elected President. Southern states are worried that there will be a change in the policy toward slavery. Remember that the Congress has been continually making compromises over slavery in the territories. Now new ways of keeping all the states together are being examined. Tempers are flaring, and the South is threatening to secede.

Student Directions:

1. For the next 2-4 days you will be participating in a Gallery Walk that examines 10 of the major documents that show Abraham Lincoln’s views on slavery and keeping the nation together. You are being asked to do several things:

   - Read and discuss each of the documents within an assigned group.
   - Answer the questions that follow each document with your group in your packet.
   - You may need to go back and look a second time at some of the documents to answer some of the later questions to make necessary connections about Lincoln’s ideas about slavery and the preservation of the union.

2. Once you and your group have completed the Gallery Walk, you and your group will be asked to present one of the documents to the overall class and address the following points. You and your group will:

   - Determine whether or not the document you’ve been assigned shows Lincoln being in support or opposition of slavery.
   - Select a spokesman who will place a sticky note representing Lincoln’s policy from the document in the appropriate year-column on the Lincoln poster in the front of the classroom. Use a yellow sticky note if you believe Lincoln is expressing a pro-slavery opinion on your document; use a blue sticky note if the opinion is against slavery, and use a pink sticky note if undecided. Be sure to put the document number on the sticky note.
   - The spokesman will support his group’s views and then open the discussion to the class for debate.

3. Finally, you will write a well-written essay that addresses the following:

   Using the primary sources given and your knowledge of American history, discuss how Lincoln’s stand on the preservation of the union influenced his policies on slavery and how these policies agreed or disagreed with his personal viewpoint. Cite at least three evidences from the primary sources.

   ** Be sure to follow each step in the process.
Document 1: “A Job for the Cabinet Maker” (Featured in Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Magazine, February 2, 1861)
Document 1: “A Job for the Cabinet Maker” – Questions and Answers:

1. What is broken in the picture, and what does it represent?

2. How are repairs being made?

3. Is the damage small or great? Why?

4. Who in history is the “cabinet maker?”

5. What is the cartoonist telling the reader about the cabinet maker’s goal?
Document 2 – The Corwin Amendment
(Approved by House of Representatives, February 28, 1861 and by Senate March 2, 1861 but not ratified by the States. Had this amendment been ratified, it would have become the 13th Amendment.)

“No amendment shall be made to the Constitution which will authorize or give to Congress the power to abolish or interfere, within any State, with the domestic institutions thereof, including that of persons held to labor or service by the laws of said State.”

Document 2: The Corwin Amendment - Questions and Answers

1. What do the terms “domestic institution” and “persons held to labor or service” mean? ________________________________________________________________
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2. What does the proposed amendment say about slavery? ________________________
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3. How does this amendment compare with the actual 13th Amendment ratified in 1865? (You may have to wait until later to answer this question after you see Document 10).
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Document 3 – Lincoln’s 1st Inaugural Address March 4, 1861

Excerpt 1:

It is found in nearly all the published speeches of him who now addresses you. I do but quote from one of those speeches when I declare that "I have no purpose, directly or indirectly, to interfere with the institution of slavery in the States where it exists. I believe I have no lawful right to do so ..."

Excerpt 2:

...I understand a proposed amendment (Corwin Amendment) to the Constitution...has passed Congress, to the effect that the Federal Government shall never interfere with the domestic institutions of the States, including that of persons held to service ... I have no objection to its being made express and irrevocable.”

Document 3:  Lincoln’s 1st Inaugural Address - Questions and Answers:

1. What are three terms that mean slavery in the above excerpts?

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2. What was Lincoln’s policy concerning the abolition of slavery at the time he assumed the office of the Presidency in 1861?

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3. What was Lincoln’s position on the Corwin amendment as stated in the above document?

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4. In your opinion, why would Lincoln support this amendment?

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Document 4 – Lincoln, “I’m sorry to have to drop you, Sambo, but this concern won’t carry us both.” Illustrated in Frank Leslie’s illustrated newspaper, v 12, no. 308 (1861 Oct 12), p. 352.
Document 4: Lincoln, “I’m sorry to…”— Questions and Answers:

1. Who is in the life preserver? ____________________________

2. Who is the other person? ______________________________

3. What is happening in the picture? _____________________
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4. What is the cartoonist trying to say about Lincoln? ________
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“I would save the Union. I would save it the shortest way under the Constitution...My paramount object in this struggle is to save the Union, and is not either to save or to destroy slavery. If I could save the Union without freeing any slave I would do it, and if I could save it by freeing all the slaves I would do it...What I do about slavery, and the colored race, I do because I believe it helps to save the Union...

I have here stated my purpose according to my view of official duty; and I intend no modification of my oft-expressed personal wish that all men everywhere could be free.”

Document 5:  Lincoln Letter to Horace Greeley—Questions and Answers:

1. What is Lincoln’s personal wish about slavery? __________________________
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2. Under what circumstances is slavery acceptable to Lincoln? _________________
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Document 6– Excerpts from The Emancipation Proclamation, January 1, 1863

"...Now, therefore I, Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States, by virtue of the power ... I do order and declare that all persons held as slaves within (the Confederate) 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 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.

Document 6: Excerpts from The Emancipation Proclamation—Questions and Answers:

1. The document does not free all slaves - who does the Emancipation Proclamation free?

2. Why does Lincoln say he freed those slaves?

3. In your opinion, why didn’t Lincoln free all the slaves?
“Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal...

But, in a larger sense, we can not dedicate – we can not consecrate – we can not hallow – this ground... It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us – that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion – that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain – that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom – and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.”

**Document 7: The Gettysburg Address - Questions and Answers**

1. What is Lincoln referring to as the “great task remaining before us?”

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2. In your opinion what does Lincoln mean by “that this nation... shall have a new birth of freedom?”

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Document 8 - Lincoln Letter to Senator A.G. Hodges (Excerpt from Letter to A.G. Hodges, April 4, 1864)

“...I am naturally anti-slavery. If slavery is not wrong, nothing is wrong. I cannot remember when I did not so think, and feel. And yet I have never understood that the Presidency conferred upon me an unrestricted right to act officially upon this judgment and feeling. It was in the oath I took that I would, to the best of my ability, preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution of the United States..."

Document 8: Lincoln Letter to Senator A.G. Hodges—Questions and Answers

1. What is Lincoln’s “personal” view of slavery? __________________________

2. What was one thing Lincoln committed to when he took the oath to become President?

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3. Why didn’t Lincoln make his personal viewpoint on slavery public policy?

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"... All knew that this interest (the institution of slavery) 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.

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 do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations..."
Document 9: Excerpt from Lincoln’s 2nd Inaugural Address—Questions and Answers

1. What did Lincoln say was the cause of the Civil War? (Paragraph 2)

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2. Based on the last paragraph, how do you think Lincoln will treat the defeated South after the War?

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3. How is Lincoln’s proposed treatment of the South consistent with his views on preserving the Union?

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Document 10 – The 13th Amendment
(Proposed on January 31, 1865 and ratified on December 1865. Lincoln approved on February 1, 1865 and actively ensured its passage. 20 states had ratified the amendment at the time of Lincoln’s assassination on April 12, 1865.)

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.

Document 10: The 13th Amendment - Questions and Answers

1. What does the 13th amendment say about slavery? __________________________

2. How will this amendment be enforced? __________________________

3. In your opinion, how could Lincoln have supported both the 13th Amendment and the Corwin amendment? (You may have to wait until you’ve examined Document 2 to answer this question).

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Part II – Essay
Using the primary sources given and your knowledge of American history, discuss how Lincoln’s stand on the preservation of the union influenced his policies on slavery and how these policies agreed or disagreed with his personal viewpoint. Cite at least three evidences from the primary sources.