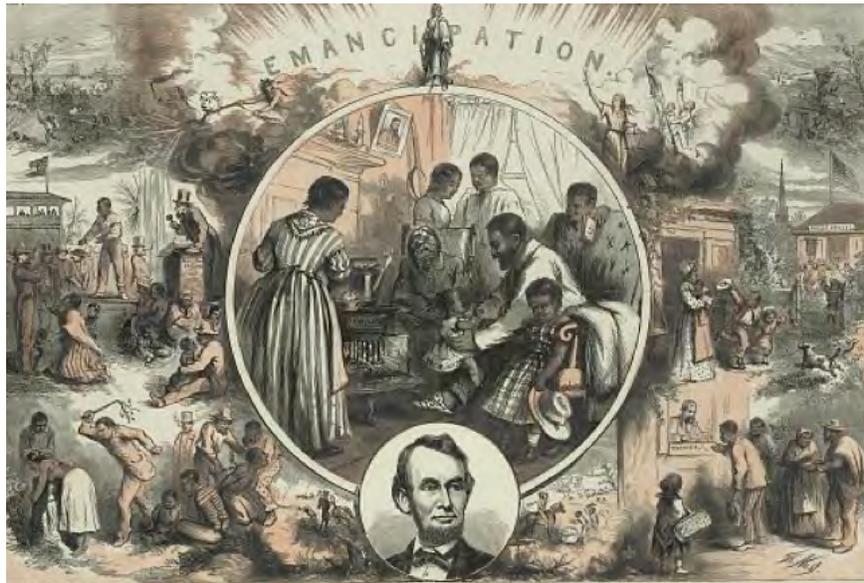




# Thomas Nast's "Emancipation" Explained



The following description of Nast's lithograph is adapted from the Library of Congress:

- The central scene shows the interior of a freedman's home with the family gathered around a "Union" wood stove. The father bounces his small child on his knee while his wife and others look on.
- On the wall near the mantel hang a picture of Abraham Lincoln and a banjo.
- Below this scene is an oval portrait of Lincoln and, above it, Thomas Crawford's statue of "Freedom," which sits atop the dome of the U.S. Capitol.
- On either side of the central picture are scenes contrasting Black life in the South under the Confederacy (left) with visions of the freedman's life after the war (right).
- At top left, fugitive enslaved people are hunted down in a coastal swamp.
- Below, a Black man is sold, apart from his wife and children, on a public auction block.
- At bottom, a Black woman is flogged and an enslaved man branded.
- Above, two "hags," one holding the Cerberus (a multi-headed dog from Greek mythology that guards the gates of the Underworld), preside over these scenes and flee from the gleaming apparition of Freedom.
- In contrast, on the right, a woman with an olive branch and scales of justice stands triumphant. Here, a freedman's cottage can be seen in a peaceful landscape.
- Below, a Black mother sends her children off to "Public School."
- At bottom, a free Black man receives his pay from a cashier.
- Two smaller scenes flank Lincoln's portrait. In one, a mounted overseer flogs a Black field slave (left); in the other, a foreman politely greets Black cottonfield workers.

SOURCE: "Emancipation." Library of Congress. Accessed October 29, 2020. <https://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2004665360/#:~:text=Summary%3A%20Thomas%20Nast's%20celebration%20of,a%20%22Union%22%20wood%20stove.>