



The Legacy of Boston's Ambassadors of Abolition

BACKGROUND

In December 1865, the 13th Amendment to the Constitution was ratified, abolishing slavery in the United States. William Lloyd Garrison, *The Liberator*, and Boston's ambassadors of abolition had accomplished their primary goal.



Bronze statue of William Lloyd Garrison, 1886

[\[ENLARGE\]](#)

BRONZE STATUE

The City of Boston paid tribute to its famous citizen by erecting a bronze statue in his honor on Commonwealth Avenue. The statue was unveiled in 1886.

In Focus

1. Look closely at this statue. How has the artist chosen to portray Garrison? Point to specific details that convey the artist's point of view.
2. Why do you think the City of Boston decided to display a statue of Garrison? What political message did the city's decision send?

Activities and Investigations

1. Imagine that the City of Boston has asked you to write a brief speech to be delivered at the unveiling of Garrison's statue. Which of Garrison's achievements and values would you choose to highlight? Write the text of this speech. Then share your remarks with classmates.
2. Create a special anniversary edition of *The Liberator* using writing and illustrations generated from the questions and activities in this guide.

THE 13TH AMENDMENT

1865 was a year of monumental significance in American history. The Civil War, which claimed more than 600,000 lives, officially ended on April 9, 1865. Five days later, President Abraham Lincoln was assassinated. Congress adopted the 13th Amendment, banning slavery, the first of the Reconstruction Amendments.

AMENDMENT XIII

Passed by Congress January 31, 1865. Ratified December 6, 1865.

Note: A portion of Article IV, section 2, of the Constitution was superseded by the 13th amendment.

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.

WORDS OF THUNDER Teacher's Guide

On December 29, 1865, the last issue of *The Liberator* newspaper was published. Referring to the 13th Amendment, Garrison wrote: “With our own hands, we have put in type this unspeakably cheering and important official announcement that, at last, the old ‘covenant with death’ is annulled, and the ‘agreement with hell’ no longer stands.... It is, consequently, the complete triumph as well as utter termination of the Anti-Slavery struggle, as such.”

In Focus

1. Read and discuss the wording of the 13th Amendment to the Constitution. What does it say? What did Garrison mean when he wrote that the “agreement with hell’ no longer stands”?
2. How many amendments have followed the 13th? What issues do they address?
3. After the 13th Amendment became law, Garrison decided to stop publishing *The Liberator*. Why do you think he made this decision? Would you have done the same thing? Why or why not?

Activities and Investigations

1. Prior to 1865, the Quaker abolitionist and suffragist Abby Kelley Foster predicted that even if slavery were abolished, “the hate of the colored race will still continue” and “the poison of that wickedness will destroy us as a nation.” What is your reaction to Foster’s predictions? Was she right? Cite evidence to support your argument.
2. Find out if your city or town has been home to 19th-, 20th-, or 21st-century civil rights activists. Choose one or more people to research.
3. If you live in or have the chance to visit Boston before April 2006, be sure to see the **Words of Thunder** Exhibition at the Museum of Afro-American History. Go to www.wordsofthunder.org to learn more. You may also want to consider following one of Boston’s walking trails, which highlight sites related to the history of liberation and equal rights for African Americans and women. Information on each is available at their Web sites:



- **The Abolition Trail** (www.wordsofthunder.org/trail_map.htm), a walking tour that focuses on key sites in Boston’s abolitionist movement.
- **The Black Heritage Trail** (www.afroammuseum.org/trail.htm), a walking tour that explores the history of Boston’s 19th-century African American community.
- **The Boston Women’s Heritage Trail** (www.bwht.org), nine self-guided walks that focus on four centuries of women’s contributions and achievements.

You may also want to speak with your local historical society, museums, and libraries about visiting a local exhibit, trail, or collection related to this period.

4. Explore the resources listed on pages 25–27. Then consider planning a presentation for younger students at your school or at a nearby school on the story of abolitionism in Boston.
5. Given the foundation laid by Garrison, *The Liberator*, and the ambassadors of abolition, how far have we come today, in the United States and around the world? Where does slavery still exist today? In *Disposable People: New Slavery in the Global Economy* (1999), author Kevin Bales reports that at least 27 million people are currently “enslaved by violence and held against their wills for purposes of exploitation.” Who, according to Bales, is fighting enslavement today, and in what ways can ordinary people help bring an end to slavery once and for all?