

## The Gettysburg Address

*Speech given by Abraham Lincoln on November 19, 1863 at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania.*

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. Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battle-field of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field, as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

But, in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate -- we cannot consecrate -- we cannot hallow -- this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. 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.

*Source: Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln, edited by Roy Basler.*

## Analyzing Lincoln's *Gettysburg Address*

### Step 1: Background notes on *Gettysburg Address*

In July of 1863 the Union and Confederate armies met in a three-day battle in fields outside of Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. Despite heavy losses on both sides, the battle was considered a Union victory and a turning point in the Civil War in favor of the North. In November, President Lincoln traveled to the site to dedicate the Soldiers' National Cemetery. His short *Gettysburg Address* has become one of the most famous speeches in American history.

### Step 2: Read Lincoln's *Gettysburg Address*.

- Circle the words that you don't understand.
- Ask any questions you have about this speech by writing them in the left-hand column.
- Write down any thoughts you have about what Lincoln may have meant in this Address in the left-hand column.

### Step 3: Vocabulary Definitions

Copy down the definitions from the *Gettysburg Address* on the back of your copy of the *Gettysburg Address*.

#### Vocabulary:

- score = 20 years
- endure = to last
- nobly = for a good or noble cause
- dedicate = to devote or pledge oneself
- consecrate = to declare something sacred
- hallow = to make holy
- devotion = loyalty or faithfulness
- perish = to die

**Step 4: Reread the Gettysburg Address and answer the following questions with your partner. After your answer, cite a line from the speech as evidence of your answer.**

1. What event is Lincoln referring to in the very first line of the Gettysburg Address?

2. To whom is Lincoln referring in the line, “ ... those who gave their lives that the nation might live.”

3. What is Lincoln asking his audience to do in the future?

4. In your opinion, why did this become one of the most famous speeches in American history.

**Step 5: Perform the *Gettysburg Address***

Use reader’s theater to perform the Gettysburg Address with your classmates. Be sure to practice and read your line at the appropriate time.