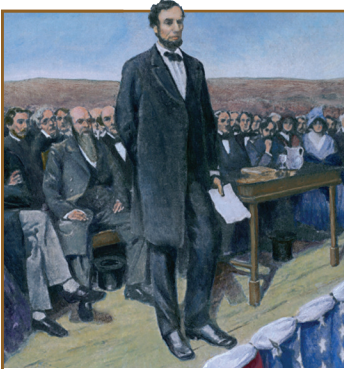


PRIMARY SOURCE ANALYSIS:

LINCOLN'S GETTYSBURG ADDRESS



A painting of Lincoln delivering the Gettysburg Address to more than 10,000 people

The Battle of Gettysburg was fought along the rocky hillsides of Pennsylvania during the first three days of July 1863. It was one of the bloodiest battles of the Civil War. Over 51,000 soldiers were killed, injured, or reported missing. If the Confederate army had won the battle, the Southerners could have captured or destroyed Philadelphia, a major Northern city. But the Union army declared victory, and the battle marked a turning point in the war.

On November 19, 1863, President Lincoln delivered a speech at the dedication of the battlefield's cemetery. His speech lasted only two minutes but is celebrated as one of the most powerful statements in the English language. Lincoln's speech linked the sacrifices of the fallen soldiers to the early struggles for freedom that had begun "four score and seven years ago" with the signing of the Declaration of Independence.

Read the opening sentences of Lincoln's Gettysburg Address. Then answer the questions.

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**.

four score and seven years ago: 87 years ago, when the Declaration of Independence was signed

dedicated to the proposition: based on the idea

so conceived: created for the purpose of liberty and equality

endure: continue to exist

1 What is the main idea of the first sentence?

- a. Lincoln thinks that ideas from "four score and seven years ago" no longer apply to the United States.
- b. Lincoln does not plan to give liberty to the South if the Union wins the war.
- c. Lincoln believes the United States was built on the belief that all men are created equal.
- d. Lincoln is concerned that the proposition of equality for all men is not a good reason to fight a war.

2 Lincoln says the Civil War is a test for the country. What is it testing?

- a. whether the ideals in the Declaration of Independence were misunderstood
- b. whether the nation can peacefully split into two parts
- c. whether a war between the North and South is helping the nation
- d. whether a nation based on freedom and equality can survive and uphold those principles

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Lincoln's next sentences focus on the task of dedicating a cemetery to bury the soldiers who died on the battlefield. Read the next part of the speech. Then answer the questions.

We are met on a great battlefield 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.

those who here gave their lives: the soldiers who died at the Battle of Gettysburg
consecrate: make sacred or special
hallow: make holy

3 Use the words below to fill in the blanks.

Word Bank: ~~sacrificed~~, ~~dedication~~, ~~ground~~, ~~consecrated~~

Members of some religions believe that people should be buried in cemeteries where the ground has been consecrated, or made sacred. Lincoln is speaking at the dedication of a cemetery for soldiers killed at Gettysburg. But he says he cannot consecrate the ground, since the soldiers already did so when they sacrificed their lives for the country.

4 Why do you think Lincoln said, "The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here"? Sample answer

Lincoln said that the sacrifice the soldiers made by giving their lives was more important than anything he could say in a speech. Lincoln's message in his Gettysburg Address was that the living should not honor the wartime dead with just a speech. They should honor the dead by continuing to fight for the ideas the soldiers gave their lives to protect.

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Lincoln ends his speech with a challenge to the nation to finish the work these soldiers began. Read the final section of the speech. Then answer the questions.

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.

take increased devotion to that cause: commit to winning the war

gave the last full measure of devotion: gave their lives

highly resolve: make a promise

in vain: for no reason

perish: disappear

5 Lincoln asked Americans to make some promises. Which three things did he ask people to do?

- a. to make sure the reason the soldiers died is not forgotten
- b. to create a new era of freedom and equality in the United States
- c. to end the fighting, even if the North must surrender
- d. to make sure the U.S. government remains an example of democracy

6 Lincoln's main purpose when speaking at Gettysburg was to honor soldiers who had died there. But Lincoln also wanted to persuade Americans to continue fighting the war. How did his speech achieve that goal? Describe two arguments that Lincoln made to convince people to continue fighting. **Sample answer**

Lincoln makes two arguments in the Gettysburg Address to convince people to continue fighting. In the beginning of the speech, Lincoln states that the Civil War is testing whether a democracy like the United States "can long endure." He is arguing that the survival of America as an example of democracy is important to the world. In the final lines of the speech, Lincoln makes a second argument. He reminds his audience that the soldiers will have "died in vain" if the Union does not win the war. He tells the American people that to honor the soldiers, they need to do all they can to win the war.