

Name: _____

Date: _____

Period: _____

The Gettysburg Address

November 19th, 1863

Abraham Lincoln gave the Gettysburg Address during the dedication of the cemetery for Union soldiers who fought and died in the Battle of Gettysburg. In the address, Lincoln expressed the great need for Americans to remember the sacrifice made by these soldiers.

Directions: Read the following selection and answer the questions that follow:

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 the 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 that 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.

- Abraham Lincoln, 1863

Reflection Questions:

1. In the first sentence of Gettysburg Address, Lincoln ties the meaning of America back to what American Document? (Hint: What significant event happened in America eighty-seven years before 1863?)
2. According to Lincoln, what do the American people have to do to make sure that the U.S. soldiers who were killed at Gettysburg (and other battlefields) had not died “in vain”?
3. What is “the unfinished work” or “great task remaining before” his audience, the American people?
4. What is “the new birth of freedom” Lincoln calls for, and how does it differ from the nation’s original birth? (Hint: Who were the main beneficiaries of the original birth of freedom in 1776, and who does Lincoln think will experience the new birth of freedom if the federal military wins the war?)
5. How do you think the Union citizens responded to this address? Why do you think the speech was so important?