

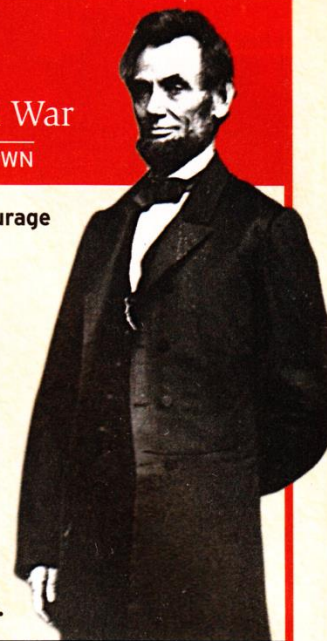
Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth, upon this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

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 here on a great battle-field of that war. We ^{have} ~~and~~ come to dedicate a portion of it as ^a ~~the~~ final resting place ^{for} of 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 can not dedicate—we can not consecrate—we can not 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 can never forget what they did here. It is for us, the living, rather to be dedicated here to the unfinished ^{work}, which they have, thus far, so nobly carried on. It is rather

The Gettysburg Address

In fewer than 300 words, President Lincoln managed to recast the Civil War in a new light and give the nation a “new birth of freedom” **BY BRYAN BROWN**



President Lincoln wasn't even the featured speaker at the dedication of the Soldiers' National Cemetery in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, on Nov. 19, 1863. Yet his Gettysburg Address, which lasted less than three minutes, is considered one of the most important speeches in American history.

The battle at Gettysburg that July was a turning point of the Civil War (see p. 16). It helped pave the way for the Union's victory over the Confederacy, but it came at a high cost: 50,000 men dead, wounded, or missing on both sides.

Edward Everett, a famous orator, gave the main memorial address. He spoke for two hours in

soaring language about the battle and the courage of Union soldiers.

But Lincoln's simple remarks are what we remember 150 years later. He invoked images of birth and rebirth and stressed the ideals of the Declaration of Independence. Americans came away from Lincoln's speech with a new understanding of the nation's purpose.

“By accepting the Gettysburg Address, and its concept of a single people dedicated to a proposition, we have been changed,” writes historian Garry Wills. “Because of it, we live in a different America.”

Here's a look at some of Lincoln's key points.

Fourscore and seven years ago:

The year 1776. A score is 20; so Lincoln is counting back 4 times 20 years plus 7, or 87 years.

testing whether that nation . . . can long endure:

Lincoln refers to the primary goal of the North in the Civil War: to preserve the young nation in the face of the Confederacy's rebellion.



consecrate/hallow: Consecrate and hallow are synonyms, meaning “to declare something sacred or set it apart for a holy use.”

The world will little note:

The Gettysburg Address is actually one of the most treasured and quoted speeches in history.

a new birth of freedom:

Without coming right out and saying it, Lincoln makes it clear that along with preserving the Union, ending slavery is a key goal of the Civil War. At the start of 1863, he had issued the Emancipation Proclamation, declaring the South's slaves free.

Fourscore 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 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**. 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.

nation: Lincoln uses the word *nation* five times to drive home his view of the U.S. as a unified country under a central government, not just a loose alliance of states.



all men are created equal:

A quote from the Declaration of Independence, written in 1776

a final resting place: About 3,500 Union soldiers would be buried at Gettysburg. (Most of the Confederate dead were buried at Hollywood Cemetery in Richmond, Va.)

what they did here: The Battle of Gettysburg is credited, along with the Battle of Vicksburg in Mississippi, with turning the tide of the war for the North.

great task remaining:

In November 1863, a Northern victory was far from assured. The Civil War finally ended after four years in 1865, following General Robert E. Lee's surrender to Union General Ulysses S. Grant at Appomattox, Va.



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Lincoln's Handwritten Speech

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About 15,000 people heard Lincoln's speech in Gettysburg, Pa., on Nov. 19, 1863.