

# the gettysburg address abraham lincoln

The Enduring Power of the Gettysburg Address: Abraham Lincoln's Timeless Speech

**the gettysburg address abraham lincoln** is one of the most iconic moments in American history, a brief yet profoundly impactful speech that continues to resonate more than 150 years after it was delivered. This address, given during the American Civil War at the dedication of the Soldiers' National Cemetery in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, encapsulates not only the tragedy of the war but also the enduring ideals of liberty, equality, and national unity. Understanding the context, content, and legacy of the Gettysburg Address reveals why Abraham Lincoln's words remain a cornerstone of American identity and political rhetoric.

## The Context Behind the Gettysburg Address

To fully appreciate the significance of the Gettysburg Address, it's important to grasp the circumstances under which Abraham Lincoln delivered it. The speech was given on November 19, 1863, four and a half months after the Battle of Gettysburg, one of the bloodiest and most pivotal battles of the Civil War.

## The Battle of Gettysburg: A Turning Point

The battle, which lasted three days in early July 1863, resulted in a significant Union victory against Confederate forces. With over 50,000 casualties, Gettysburg symbolized the enormous cost of the war and the profound divisions tearing the nation apart. The Union's success at Gettysburg marked a critical turning point, halting the Confederate advance into Northern territory and bolstering Northern morale.

## Purpose of the Address

The dedication of the Soldiers' National Cemetery was intended to honor those who had fallen in the battle and provide a dignified resting place for the deceased soldiers. Abraham Lincoln was invited to speak alongside other dignitaries, but his address was notably succinct compared to the lengthy speeches typical of the time. His goal was not only to consecrate the cemetery but to redefine the meaning of the war and the nation itself.

# Breaking Down the Gettysburg Address

Though it lasted only about two minutes and comprised just 272 words, the Gettysburg Address is a masterpiece of rhetoric and meaning. Abraham Lincoln's choice of words and themes reflect a deep understanding of the nation's crisis and a vision for its future.

## Opening with Historical Gravitas

Lincoln begins by referencing the founding principles of the United States: "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." This opening immediately connects the Civil War to the ideals of the Declaration of Independence, reminding listeners that the nation's founding values were at stake.

## Honoring the Fallen and the Living

Lincoln pays tribute to those who fought and

## Frequently Asked Questions

### What is the Gettysburg Address?

The Gettysburg Address is a famous speech delivered by President Abraham Lincoln on November 19, 1863, during the American Civil War at the dedication of the Soldiers' National Cemetery in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania.

### Why did Abraham Lincoln deliver the Gettysburg Address?

Lincoln delivered the Gettysburg Address to honor the fallen Union soldiers of the Battle of Gettysburg and to reaffirm the principles of liberty and equality upon which the United States was founded.

### How long is the Gettysburg Address?

The Gettysburg Address is very brief, consisting of just about 272 words and lasting approximately two minutes when delivered.

## **What are the main themes of the Gettysburg Address?**

The main themes include national unity, the sacrifice of soldiers, the importance of equality, and a renewed commitment to the principles of democracy.

## **Where was the Gettysburg Address delivered?**

It was delivered at the Soldiers' National Cemetery in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania.

## **How is the Gettysburg Address significant in American history?**

The Gettysburg Address is significant because it redefined the purpose of the Civil War, emphasizing the preservation of a nation dedicated to freedom and equality.

## **What famous phrase did Abraham Lincoln use in the Gettysburg Address?**

One of the most famous phrases from the Gettysburg Address is "government of the people, by the people, for the people."

## **How did the public initially react to the Gettysburg Address?**

Initial reactions were mixed; some newspapers criticized its brevity and style, but over time it became regarded as one of the greatest speeches in American history.

## **Additional Resources**

The Gettysburg Address: Abraham Lincoln's Enduring Testament to Unity and Freedom

**the gettysburg address abraham lincoln** delivered on November 19, 1863, remains one of the most iconic speeches in American history. In just a few minutes and fewer than 300 words, President Lincoln encapsulated the essence of the Civil War and redefined the nation's purpose. This brief yet profound oration at the dedication of the Soldiers' National Cemetery in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, not only honored fallen soldiers but also reasserted the principles of liberty and equality that underpin the United States. As a pivotal moment in the Civil War and American rhetoric, the Gettysburg Address continues to be dissected, studied, and revered for its eloquence and enduring relevance.

# Contextualizing the Gettysburg Address

The Gettysburg Address was delivered during the American Civil War, a brutal conflict between the Union (Northern states) and the Confederacy (Southern states) primarily over slavery and states' rights. The Battle of Gettysburg, fought from July 1 to July 3, 1863, was one of the bloodiest battles of the war and marked a turning point in favor of the Union forces. The speech was given at the dedication ceremony for the national cemetery established to bury Union soldiers who had died in the battle.

Lincoln's address came at a time when the nation was deeply fractured. The speech sought to heal these divisions by emphasizing themes of national unity, sacrifice, and the broader democratic ideals on which the country was founded. It was a call to remember the sacrifices made on the battlefield as a means to ensure "a new birth of freedom" and the survival of the American experiment in democracy.

## Historical and Political Significance

The Gettysburg Address reframed the Civil War from a mere struggle to preserve the Union into a transformative conflict about human equality and democratic governance. Lincoln famously began with the phrase "Four score and seven years ago," invoking the Declaration of Independence and its promise that "all men are created equal." By linking the war to this foundational document, Lincoln elevated the stakes beyond territorial or political disputes.

Politically, Lincoln's address reinforced the legitimacy of the Union cause and bolstered morale at a critical juncture. While the speech was initially met with mixed reactions—some contemporaries considered it too brief or understated—its reputation grew over time as a masterpiece of American oratory. The address helped solidify Lincoln's leadership and vision during one of the darkest periods in U.S. history.

## Analyzing the Language and Structure

Though succinct, the Gettysburg Address is meticulously crafted. Its rhetorical power lies in its carefully balanced structure and use of repetition, parallelism, and evocative imagery. Lincoln's choice of words was deliberate, aiming for clarity and emotional resonance.

## Key Features of the Address

- **Conciseness:** The speech contains approximately 272 words, making it remarkably brief yet impactful.
- **Rhythmic Cadence:** Lincoln employed parallel structures and balanced phrases that give the speech a memorable rhythm.
- **Repetition for Emphasis:** Phrases like “we cannot dedicate, we cannot consecrate, we cannot hallow this ground” emphasize the sacredness of the soldiers’ sacrifice.
- **Appeal to Shared Values:** The speech invokes shared American ideals such as liberty, equality, and democracy, creating a unifying message.
- **Forward-Looking Vision:** Lincoln concludes with a hopeful call for national regeneration and dedication to the unfinished task of ensuring freedom and equality.

## Comparisons with Other Speeches

When compared with other famous speeches from the era, such as Lincoln’s Second Inaugural Address or the Emancipation Proclamation, the Gettysburg Address stands out due to its brevity and poetic quality. Unlike the more detailed policy statements or proclamations, it functions as a philosophical and moral testament, making it accessible and timeless.

## The Enduring Impact of the Gettysburg Address

The lasting legacy of the Gettysburg Address lies in its ability to resonate across generations. It has been studied in schools, quoted in political discourse, and invoked during times of national crisis. Its reaffirmation of the principles of democracy and human dignity continues to inspire debates about civil rights and equality.

## Educational and Cultural Influence

The Gettysburg Address is a staple in American education, often memorized by students as an example of effective rhetoric and national ethos. It is frequently cited in discussions about leadership and the power of words to unite and motivate. The speech’s themes have been referenced in civil rights movements, presidential speeches, and global discussions on democracy.

## Critiques and Interpretations

Despite its acclaim, the Gettysburg Address has not been without criticism. Some historians argue that Lincoln's speech glossed over the complex political realities of the war and the ongoing struggles faced by African Americans. Others debate the extent to which the address directly influenced public opinion at the time, given its modest initial reception.

Nevertheless, these critiques contribute to a richer understanding of the address's role. They highlight the challenges of balancing brevity, symbolism, and political messaging in a speech meant to serve multiple purposes: honoring the dead, rallying the living, and defining national identity.

## Conclusion: The Gettysburg Address in Contemporary Perspective

More than 150 years after Abraham Lincoln delivered the Gettysburg Address, its significance has not diminished. The speech remains a powerful reminder of the sacrifices made in pursuit of a more perfect union and the ongoing struggle to realize the ideals of equality and democracy. As a foundational text in American political rhetoric, it continues to shape how the nation understands itself and its responsibilities.

The gettysburg address abraham lincoln crafted was not just a eulogy for fallen soldiers but a profound statement of national purpose and hope. Its enduring power lies in its simplicity, eloquence, and universal message—qualities that ensure it will be studied and revered for generations to come.

## [The Gettysburg Address Abraham Lincoln](#)

**the gettysburg address abraham lincoln: The Gettysburg Address** Abraham Lincoln, 2009-08-27 The Address was delivered at the dedication of the Soldiers' National Cemetery in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, on the afternoon of Thursday, November 19, 1863, during the American Civil War, four and a half months after the Union armies defeated those of the Confederacy at the decisive Battle of Gettysburg. In just over two minutes, Lincoln invoked the principles of human equality espoused by the Declaration of Independence and redefined the Civil War as a struggle not merely for the Union, but as a new birth of freedom that would bring true equality to all of its citizens, and that would also create a unified nation in which states' rights were no longer dominant. Throughout history, some books have changed the world. They have transformed the way we see ourselves - and each other. They have inspired debate, dissent, war and revolution. They have enlightened, outraged, provoked and comforted. They have enriched lives - and destroyed them. Now Penguin brings you the works of the great thinkers, pioneers, radicals and visionaries whose

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**the gettysburg address abraham lincoln:** The Gettysburg Address Charles River Charles River Editors, 2015-03-20 \*Includes pictures \*Includes accounts of the speech and reactions written by people who were there \*Discusses the influences on the speech and debates over the various versions that exist \*Includes online resources and a bibliography for further reading \*Includes a table of contents 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 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. - Abraham Lincoln Without question, the most famous battle of the American Civil War took place outside of the small town of Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, which happened to be a transportation hub, serving as the center of a wheel with several roads leading out to other Pennsylvanian towns. From July 1-3, Robert E. Lee's Confederate Army of Northern Virginia tried everything in its power to decisively defeat George Meade's Union Army of the Potomac, unleashing ferocious assaults that inflicted nearly 50,000 casualties in all. When a crowd came to Gettysburg in November 1863 to commemorate the battle fought there 4 months earlier and dedicate a new national cemetery, they came to hear a series of speeches about the Civil War and the events of that battle. Today it may seem obvious to invite the president to such an occasion, but Lincoln was initially an afterthought, and though he did come to deliver remarks, he was not in fact the keynote speaker. Instead, the man chosen to give the keynote speech was Edward Everett, a politician and educator from Massachusetts. Everett had already been a Congressman, the 15th Governor of Massachusetts, Minister to Great Britain, and Secretary of State, and by the Civil War, he was considered perhaps the greatest orator in the nation, making him a natural choice to be the featured speaker at the dedication ceremony. Everett is still known today for his oratory, but more for the fact that he spoke for over two hours at Gettysburg immediately before President Lincoln delivered his immortal two-minute Gettysburg Address. Everett would later say, I should be glad if I could flatter myself that I came as near to the central idea of the occasion, in two hours, as you did in two minutes. At the time, however, Lincoln and many others present at the event thought his speech fell flat and was ultimately a failure that would be consigned to the dustbin of history. Perhaps Lincoln's most impressive feat is that he was able to convey so much with so few words; after Everett spoke for hours at Gettysburg, Lincoln's Gettysburg Address only took a few minutes, but in those few minutes, Lincoln invoked the principles of human equality espoused by the Declaration of Independence. In the process, he redefined the Civil War as a struggle not merely for the Union but as a new birth of freedom that would bring true equality to all of its citizens, ensure that democracy would remain a viable form of government, and would also create a unified nation in which states' rights were no longer dominant. 150 years later, Lincoln's speech is still considered arguably the greatest in American history, yet the exact wording of the speech is disputed. The five known manuscripts of the Gettysburg Address differ in a number of details and also differ from contemporary newspaper reprints of the speech. In fact, at the time, few Americans knew the president had even given a speech at Gettysburg, and the Gettysburg Address was not widely covered in newspapers. The irony is lost on few, given that the Gettysburg Address continues to represent a concise and eloquent statement on the very purpose of the United States.

**the gettysburg address abraham lincoln:** The Gettysburg Address of Abraham Lincoln Abraham Lincoln, 1894 Alleged copy of original manuscript and the final revised form.

**the gettysburg address abraham lincoln:** The Battle of Gettysburg and Lincoln's Gettysburg Address Carin T. Ford, 2004 A detailed account of the three days of the Battle of Gettysburg, the bloodiest war fought on American soil, plus an examination of Abraham Lincoln's famous Gettysburg address.

**the gettysburg address abraham lincoln: *Gettysburg Replies*** Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Foundation, 2015-04-01 Almost five months after the Civil War's deadliest clash, President Abraham Lincoln and other Union leaders gathered to dedicate the Soldiers' National Cemetery in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. The program for the occasion featured music, prayer, orations, and benedictions. In the middle of it all, the president gave a few commemorative remarks, speaking for just two minutes, delivering what we now know as the Gettysburg Address. Challenged to mark the enormity of the battle—which had turned the tide of the war, though neither side realized it yet—Lincoln used 272 words in ten sentences to rededicate the Union to the preservation of freedom. It remains the most important statement of our nation's commitment to personal liberty since the Revolutionary War and has become one of the most important speeches in American history, a cornerstone of who we are as a country. A century and a half later, we still hold Lincoln's message in our hearts. For *Gettysburg Replies*, the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum challenged presidents, judges, historians, filmmakers, poets, actors, and others to craft 272 words of their own to celebrate Lincoln, the Gettysburg Address, or a related topic that stirs their passions. President Jimmy Carter reveals how the Gettysburg Address helped bring Egypt and Israel closer at the Camp David Peace Accords. Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor reflects on Lincoln's dedication to the importance of civic education. General Colin Powell explains how Martin Luther King Jr. took up Lincoln's mantle and carried it forward. Filmmaker Steven Spielberg touches on the benefits and perils of hero worship. Poet Laureate Billy Collins explores the dichotomy between the private man who wrote poetry ("My Childhood Home I See Again") and the president who stood before all. Attorney Alan Dershowitz echoes Lincoln's words to rally us to the freedom from weapons of mass destruction. *Gettysburg Replies* features images of important Lincoln documents and artifacts, including the first copy of the address that Lincoln wrote out after delivering it, the program from the cemetery dedication, Lincoln's presidential seal, and more. Together, these words and images create a lasting tribute not only to Lincoln himself but also the power of his devotion to freedom.

**the gettysburg address abraham lincoln: *The Gettysburg Address*** Abraham Lincoln, Michael McCurdy, 1998-02-02 For use in schools and libraries only. The power and strength of President Abraham Lincoln's words are accentuated by illustrations of the Gettysburg Address of 1863.

**the gettysburg address abraham lincoln: *The Gettysburg Address and Other Writings*** Abraham Lincoln, 2011-06-21 Abraham Lincoln is a near legendary figure in American history, and the dimensions of his legend assure many shapes based on the historical reality of his achievements. He was the quintessential self-made man who rose from humble origins to become the chief executive of his nation. He was a political idealist whose dedication to ensuring liberty and equality for all resulted in his assassination. And, as the documents collected in this volume attest, he was, although largely self-educated, the author of some of the most eloquent and insightful addresses, speeches, and correspondence in American letters of the nineteenth century.

**the gettysburg address abraham lincoln: *Gettysburg Address of Abraham Lincoln, Gettysburg, Pa., November 19, 1863*** Abraham Lincoln, Northwestern National Life Insurance Company (U.S.), 1885

**the gettysburg address abraham lincoln: *The Long Shadow of Lincoln's Gettysburg Address*** Jared Peatman, 2013-10-30 When Abraham Lincoln addressed the crowd at the new national cemetery in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, on November 19, 1863, he intended his speech to be his most eloquent statement on the inextricable link between equality and democracy. However, unwilling to commit to equality at that time, the nation stood ill-prepared to accept the full message of Lincoln's Gettysburg Address. In the ensuing century, groups wishing to advance a particular position hijacked Lincoln's words for their own ends, highlighting the specific parts of the speech that echoed their stance while ignoring the rest. Only as the nation slowly moved toward equality did those invoking Lincoln's speech come closer to recovering his true purpose. In this incisive work, Jared Peatman seeks to understand Lincoln's intentions at Gettysburg and how his words were received,

invoked, and interpreted over time, providing a timely and insightful analysis of one of America's most legendary orations. After reviewing the events leading up to November 19, 1863, Peatman examines immediate responses to the ceremony in New York, Gettysburg itself, Confederate Richmond, and London, showing how parochial concerns and political affiliations shaped initial coverage of the day and led to the censoring of Lincoln's words in some locales. He then traces how, over time, proponents of certain ideals invoked the particular parts of the address that suited their message, from reunification early in the twentieth century to American democracy and patriotism during the world wars and, finally, to Lincoln's full intended message of equality during the Civil War centennial commemorations and the civil rights movement of the 1960s. Peatman also explores foreign invocations of the Gettysburg Address and its influence on both the Chinese constitution of 1912 and the current French constitution. An epilogue highlights recent and even current applications of the Gettysburg Address and hints at ways the speech might be used in the future. By tracing the evolution of Lincoln's brief words at a cemetery dedication into a revered document essential to American national identity, this revealing work provides fresh insight into the enduring legacy of Abraham Lincoln and his Gettysburg Address on American history and culture.

**the gettysburg address abraham lincoln: Gettysburg Address** Abraham Lincoln, Borrower's Press, 1983

**the gettysburg address abraham lincoln: Gettysburg Address** Abraham Lincoln, 1900  
Despite its short length?fewer than 300 words?Abraham Lincoln's speech is considered one of the greatest in American history. Lincoln delivered the speech during the American Civil War at the dedication of the Soldiers' National Cemetery in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, on November 19, 1863. Speaking for just over two minutes, Lincoln reminded listeners of the Declaration of Independence's principles of equality. While at first affirming that the American Civil War was a struggle for the preservation of the Union, Lincoln then suggested that it would lead to a new birth of freedom that would bring true equality to all citizens.

**the gettysburg address abraham lincoln: The Gettysburg Address** Abraham Lincoln, 2014-04-30 Pages are bound in an accordion-like fashion; book protected by sleeve.

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**the gettysburg address abraham lincoln:** *Abraham Lincoln* Roy Edgar Appleman, 1956

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