

THE HISTORY® CHANNEL DOCUMENTARY EVENT
FROM PULITZER PRIZE-WINNING AUTHOR DORIS KEARNS GOODWIN

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

EDUCATION GUIDE



INTRODUCTION

The HISTORY Channel's three-night documentary event *Abraham Lincoln* is a definitive biography of the 16th president, the man who led the country during its bloodiest war and greatest crisis. Executive produced by world-renowned presidential historian and Pulitzer Prize®-winning bestselling author Doris Kearns Goodwin, *Abraham Lincoln* is based upon bestselling book *Leadership: In Turbulent Times*. From the impoverished childhood of Lincoln to his days as a young prairie lawyer and budding politician, through his unlikely election to the presidency and his assassination only five days after the end of the Civil War, *Abraham Lincoln* offers viewers new and surprising insights into the man consistently ranked by historians and the American people as the country's greatest president.

Viewers will learn about Lincoln's life and leadership through premium dramatic live-action scenes where his humility, empathy, resilience, ambition, political acumen, and humor are on full display. Combined with expert interviews, archival photos and news accounts, Lincoln's letters, writings and speeches, and remembrances from his contemporaries, this miniseries provides a fresh understanding of the complexities of young Abraham Lincoln who grows to become President Lincoln, the man who saved the Union, won the war and helped secure emancipation.

CURRICULUM LINKS:

Abraham Lincoln would be useful for History, American History, Social Studies, Political Science, and Government courses. The content is appropriate for middle school through college students.

TO THE EDUCATOR:

Abraham Lincoln explores Abraham Lincoln's life and presidency, and provides opportunities for students to examine Lincoln's character, leadership skills, and decision-making, as well as the impact his presidency had on U.S. history. We encourage educators to use this guide as a resource and to develop their own lesson plans and activities to best suit their students and their specific educational needs and benchmarks.

PRE-VIEWING ACTIVITIES

Students can visit www.history.com/lincoln to read about Abraham Lincoln before or after viewing.



GENERAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

In addition to the questions throughout this guide, students can consider these questions before or after watching the series.

1. Why was Abraham Lincoln such an important leader?
2. What are some words you would use to describe Lincoln?
3. How do you think Lincoln compares with other American presidents?
4. What is Lincoln's legacy today? How is his influence still apparent in our world today?
5. If you could talk with Lincoln today, what would you want to ask him and why?

QUICK LINKS:

Learn more about this series on History.com

[Abraham Lincoln Full Episodes, Video & More | HISTORY](#)

Find resources from The American Battlefield Trust

[Abraham Lincoln | American Battlefield Trust \(battlefields.org\)](#)

Explore the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library

[Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum \(illinois.gov\)](#)

Abraham Lincoln's Crossroads Game: National Constitution Center

<https://constitutioncenter.org/lincoln/>

PART ONE

Having grown up poor on a small farm in Indiana, Abraham Lincoln is determined to strike out on his own. He moves to Illinois, where he establishes himself as a politician and learns to be a lawyer. While there, he meets and marries his wife, Mary Todd. Lincoln's national profile begins to rise after a series of spirited debates with longtime political rival Stephen Douglas. When the budding Republican Party looks for a compromise candidate in the 1860 presidential election, they turn to Lincoln. He wins the presidency and enters office just as the simmering tension between the North and South over the issue of slavery reaches an all-time high.

TERMS TO DEFINE

- Handbill
- Whig
- Abolition
- Kansas-Nebraska Act
- Dred Scott Decision
- Republican Party
- Lincoln-Douglas Debates
- John Brown's Raid
- Fort Sumter
- Telegraph

PART ONE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How do you think Lincoln's childhood experiences influenced him? What traits do you think he developed as a young man that proved helpful to him later in life?
2. Who was Frederick Douglass and why was he such an important person in the 19th century?
3. What role does humor and storytelling play in Lincoln's life?
4. Why do you think Lincoln was interested in pursuing political office?
5. What were Lincoln's views on slavery in the years before he became president? How was he hoping slavery would end?
6. Why was Lincoln opposed to the Kansas-Nebraska Act?
7. How did the debate over slavery contribute to the formation of the Republican Party?
8. What do you think Lincoln meant when he said "a house divided against itself cannot stand"?
9. What are the major challenges Lincoln faced when he became president? Compare and contrast America's political climate in 1860 and today.

DID YOU KNOW?

As a young man, Lincoln was an accomplished wrestler. He was defeated only once in approximately 300 matches. According to Carl Sandburg's biography of Lincoln, after beating an opponent, Lincoln once challenged an entire crowd of onlookers: "I'm the big buck of this lick. If any of you want to try it, come on and whet your horns." There were no takers.

PRIMARY SOURCE ACTIVITY 1

NEWSPAPERS REPORT LINCOLN'S VICTORY

Newspapers at the time of Lincoln's election often took a specific political point of view. In fact, newspapers like the "Freeport Wide Awake" or "The Rail Splitter" were published with the specific goal of electing Abraham Lincoln and other Republican candidates. Meanwhile, other papers across the country advocated for other candidates and political parties.

Find out more about the Election of 1860: <https://www.history.com/topics/american-civil-war/election-of-1860>

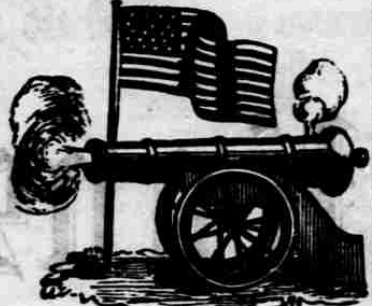
Discussion Questions:

1. After reading this newspaper's coverage of the 1860 election results, which political party do you think the newspaper supported? Which presidential candidate do you think they supported?
2. What evidence from the newspaper supports your conclusion?
3. How do you think this newspaper's election result coverage differs from today's media coverage? In what ways is it similar?

Related Activity: Headline Writing

Ask students to think about different ways newspapers might have covered the news of Lincoln's election and discuss them as a class. Then, discuss together what makes a good headline. Finally, ask students to write three newspaper headlines announcing Lincoln's election: one from the perspective of a Lincoln supporter; one from the perspective of supporters of another candidate; and one from a neutral perspective. Students may then share their headlines with each other and discuss which are the most powerful, and why.

WHOO-EE!



**PRESIDENT,
ABRAHAM LINCOLN.**
**VICE PRESIDENT,
HANNIBAL HAMLIN.**

THE MILLENNIUM COME!
DEMOCRACY UP A SPOUT!
DONIPHAN COUNTY REDEEMED!
**WHISKEY AND RUFFIANISM COL-
LAPSED A FLUE!**

We have the glorious tidings to pro-
claim, that Lincoln and Hamlin are our
next President and Vice President, by
overwhelming majorities. They have
carried every Free State this side of the
Rocky Mountains, except, perhaps, New
Jersey, where the vote is close. Douglas
will probably carry "nary one!" From
the returns received, the majorities will
stand about thus:

MAINE,	25,000!
NEW HAMPSHIRE,	10,000!
VERMONT,	30,000!
MASSACHUSETTS,	70,000!
RHODE ISLAND,	5,000!
CONNECTICUT,	10,000!
NEW YORK,	50,000!
PENNSYLVANIA,	75,000!
OHIO,	40,000!
MICHIGAN,	25,000!
INDIANA,	20,000!
ILLINOIS,	10,000!
WISCONSIN,	15,000!
IOWA,	10,000!
MINNESOTA,	10,000!
NEW JERSEY,	Doubtful.

The returns render it probable that
Bell has carried Missouri, Virginia, Ken-
tucky and Tennessee. Maryland is close
between Bell and Breckinridge. Dela-
ware is close between Lincoln and Breck-
inridge—the latter doubtless carrying the
State. The balance of the Southern
States have, from appearances, gone for
Breckinridge. We shall be able to give
a more correct statement of the result,
next week.

"White Cloud Kansas Chief", November 8, 1860

Source: Library of Congress

<https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn82015486/1860-11-08/ed-1/seq-2/>

PRIMARY SOURCE ACTIVITY 2: POLITICAL CARTOON: LINCOLN'S PASSAGE THROUGH BALTIMORE

The newly elected President Lincoln's clandestine voyage through Baltimore to Washington, D.C. is depicted in Part Two of *Abraham Lincoln*. This political cartoon pokes fun at the steps he took to protect himself from what became known as the "Baltimore plot" on this journey. You can find out more the Baltimore plot and security concerns around Lincoln's trip in this article from History.com: <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/lincoln-arrives-in-washington>

Political Cartoon Analysis

1. Who do you think is featured in this image? Why do you think that? What words would you use to describe this person? What emotions or feelings are being depicted?
2. What do you think is the message of this cartoon? What might the cartoonist have been trying to say or point out? List evidence from the image to support your conclusion.




Passage through Baltimore by Adalbert John Volck.

Source: Library of Congress.

<https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/lincoln/arrival-in-washington.html>

PART TWO



After the fall of Fort Sumter, the Civil War quickly builds and is at the doorstep of Washington D.C. itself. Abraham Lincoln raises an army and begins to assert his presidential war powers. Initial hopes for a quick war give way as a series of early battles prove to be more tightly contested than expected. Lincoln selects George McClellan to be the general who will lead the Union military, but he grows frustrated with a lack of progress. Amid some of the bloodiest battles of the war, Lincoln sees the need for a move that will transform its character. Recognizing the importance of slavery to the southern military, he pushes for the Emancipation Proclamation to free the South's slaves.

TERMS TO DEFINE

- Cabinet
- Secession
- Confederacy
- Democracy
- Blockade
- Emancipation
- Self-emancipation
- Commander-in-chief

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What role did Lincoln's cabinet play in his decision-making process?
2. What did Frederick Douglass believe about the Civil War, and why did he initially disagree with Abraham Lincoln?
3. Why did Abraham Lincoln believe it was important to think about the war as a fight to save the Union?
4. Why was Washington, D.C. in such a vulnerable position during the Civil War?
5. How would you describe Abraham Lincoln as a commander-in-chief?
6. What are some of the challenges Lincoln faces in the first years of the Civil War?
7. What are some of the reasons Lincoln decides to issue the Emancipation Proclamation? Why was the timing of the proclamation important?
8. What were some of the effects of Lincoln's issuing of the Emancipation Proclamation?

DID YOU KNOW?

One of the White House's most famous rooms is known as the Lincoln Bedroom, and several presidents, including Theodore Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson, and Calvin Coolidge slept there. Lincoln himself, however, never did. Instead he used the room now called the Lincoln Bedroom as his personal office, and it was the site of the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation.

PRIMARY SOURCE ACTIVITY 1

IMAGES FROM ANTIETAM

At the Battle of Antietam in September 1862, nearly 23,000 American soldiers—both Union and Confederate—were killed, wounded, declared missing, or captured. It was the bloodiest day in American history, and it was also the first time the human toll of the battle was captured in photographs. Thanks to graphic images taken in the hours after the battle, the violence of war was brought home to the American people in a powerful and intense new way. You can find out more about photography at Antietam in this article from History.com: <https://www.history.com/news/battle-antietam-photography-civil-war>

These are several photographs taken at Antietam from the Library of Congress collection. You can find more here: <https://www.loc.gov/collections/civil-war-glass-negatives/?fa=location:antietam>



Caption from Library of Congress: Ditch on right wing, where a large number of rebels were killed at the Battle of Antietam / Source: Library of Congress
<https://www.loc.gov/pictures/resource/ds.05168/>



Caption from Library of Congress: Killed at the Battle of Antietam
Source: Library of Congress
<https://www.loc.gov/pictures/resource/ds.05174/>



Caption from Library of Congress: Gathered together for burial after the Battle of Antietam / Source: Library of Congress
<https://www.loc.gov/pictures/resource/stereo.1s02944/>

Discussion Questions:

1. Where does it look like this photograph was taken? How would you describe the setting?
2. What people or objects do you see in the photograph? What does their placement or positioning tell you about who they are and what might have happened prior to the taking of this picture?
3. If this photograph were to be taken today, how might it be the same? How might it be different?

Related Activity: History-Making Images

During Lincoln's presidency and the Civil War, photography was just beginning to be an important medium for communicating information. Even in the digital age we now live in, photography remains a powerful way to tell stories. Ask students to choose an important historical event from their lifetime and do research to find associated photography. Each student can present a photograph from their research to the class and answer some questions about it: What is documented in the photograph? What story is it telling? How might it help to sway public opinion about the event in question?



PRIMARY SOURCE ACTIVITY 2:

LETTER TO HORACE GREELEY, AUGUST 22, 1862

In August 1862, New York Tribune editor Horace Greeley published an editorial, referred to as The Prayer of Twenty Millions, that passionately urged Lincoln to grant emancipation for all enslaved people in Union territory. On August 22, Lincoln responded in what has become one of the most famous "letters to the editor" in American history. Unbeknownst to Greeley, Lincoln had already decided to issue the Emancipation Proclamation, but was waiting for a Union victory in order to announce his decision.

Find out more about Greeley and his editorial in this article from History.com: <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/horace-greeleys-the-prayer-of-twenty-millions-is-published>

You can read the full text of Greeley's editorial here: <https://www.americanantiquarian.org/Freedmen/Manuscripts/greeley.html>

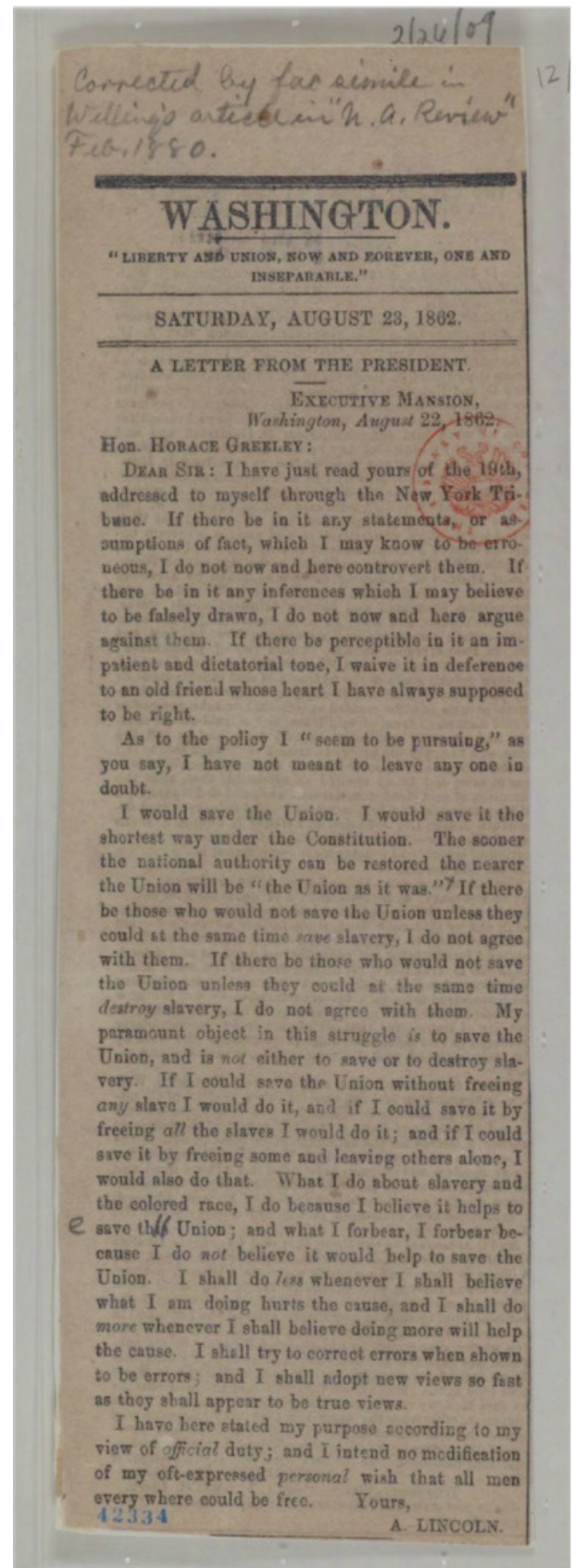
You can read a transcript of Lincoln's letter side by side with the original here: <https://www.loc.gov/resource/mal.4233400/?st=text&r=-0.7670,2.535,2.818,0>

Discussion Questions:

1. What do you think is the main point Lincoln is trying to make in this letter?
2. Why do you think he chose not to include the fact that he was planning to issue the Emancipation Proclamation in his letter?
3. Based on what you have learned about Lincoln, do you think he truly meant what he wrote in this letter?

Related Activity: In My Own Words

Lincoln was known as a powerful, poetic, and persuasive writer, but his style is very different from the way people write and speak today. Working in groups or individually, ask students to try to "translate" the main points of this letter into contemporary language. Each student or group can then share their interpretation with the class, and compare and contrast the results.



Source: Library of Congress
<https://www.loc.gov/resource/mal.4233400/?st=text&r=-0.7670,2.535,2.818,0>

PART THREE

In the wake of the Battle of Gettysburg, the end of the Civil War seems to be in sight. When the army fails to capitalize on its position, Abraham Lincoln once again sees the need for more aggressive leadership. This time he turns to Ulysses S. Grant to win the war. The 1864 presidential election looms as the war drags on and casualties continue to rise. Buoyed by a string of victories, Lincoln wins reelection and begins thinking about the future. He advocates for the 13th Amendment to put a permanent end to slavery. In April 1865 the Confederacy surrenders, and the war is finished. Days later, Lincoln's presidency comes to a sudden end.

TERMS TO DEFINE

- Casualty
- Retaliation
- Amendment
- Inauguration
- Terms of Surrender
- Reconstruction
- Assassination



DID YOU KNOW?

On April 14, 1865, Lincoln signed legislation creating the U.S. Secret Service. That evening, he was shot at Ford's Theatre. Even if the Secret Service had been established earlier, it wouldn't have saved Lincoln: The original mission of the law enforcement agency was to combat widespread currency counterfeiting.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

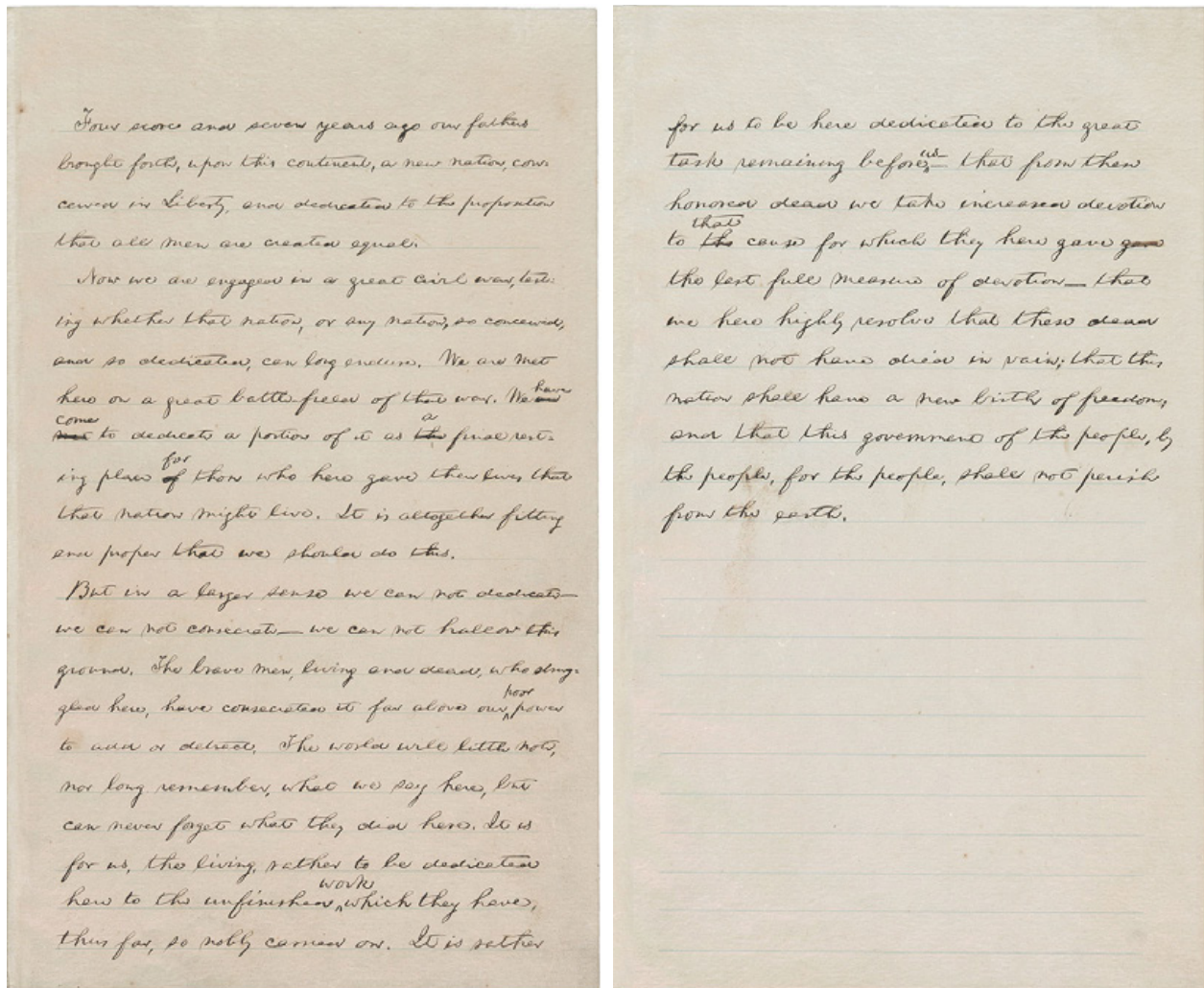
1. What do you think are some of Lincoln's best qualities or traits? How did these traits benefit him during his presidency?
2. Lincoln's son Robert joined the Union Army just as the war was coming to an end. Do you think the Lincolns should have permitted or encouraged him to join earlier? Why or why not?
3. Describe Lincoln's relationship with Frederick Douglass. Why do you think this relationship was important to Lincoln?
4. How do you think American history might have been different if Lincoln had not been re-elected?
5. In *Abraham Lincoln*, historian Doris Kearns Goodwin talks about the importance of "public sentiment" or public opinion. What are some of the events that shaped public sentiment toward Lincoln over the course of his presidency? How much do you think a president should weigh public opinion when making a decision?
6. How did Lincoln's thinking about slavery and abolition change over time?
7. What are some of the reasons Lincoln didn't want to punish those who had led and fought for the Confederate Army? Would you have made the same decision? Why or why not?
8. Why do you think there was such an outpouring of grief after Lincoln's death?



PRIMARY SOURCE ACTIVITY 2

GETTYSBURG ADDRESS

On November 19, 1863, Abraham Lincoln gave the speech now known as the Gettysburg Address. Although it was short, just over 270 words, and took only a couple of minutes to deliver, it has become one of the most famous speeches in American history. Read more about the Gettysburg Address here: <https://www.history.com/topics/american-civil-war/gettysburg-address>



This is the "Hay draft" of the Gettysburg Address, believed to have been made by Lincoln shortly after his return to Washington from Gettysburg and given to his secretary John Hay. There are five known copies of the Gettysburg Address written in his own handwriting; each varies slightly from the others and historians are unsure which, if any, contains the exact words Lincoln used. Source: Library of Congress

<https://www.loc.gov/item/mal4356600/>

Discussion Questions:

1. Why were people gathered at Gettysburg? Why do you think Lincoln decided to speak there?
2. What are some of the main ideas Lincoln is trying to communicate in the Gettysburg Address?
3. What historical event or events does Lincoln reference in the speech?
4. What are some words you would use to describe the Gettysburg Address?
5. Lincoln says in this speech, "The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here..." Yet people are still studying this speech many years later. Why do you think that is?
6. What do you think Lincoln meant by "unfinished work"?
7. Are there pieces of the speech that still feel meaningful today?

Related Activity: Picture It

Give each student a transcript of the Gettysburg Address. Read it as a class and ask students to take a few minutes to underline the 3-5 words or phrases they feel are the most powerful or mean the most to them. Then, as a class or individually, jot down a list of some of the visual images the speech brings to mind. Finally, ask students to prepare an artistic interpretation of the speech in the medium of their choice, based on the words or phrases and images they chose. Options might include a painting, comic strip, poem, or song.

Transcript:

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 battlefield of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of it, 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 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 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 shall have a new birth of freedom; and that this government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.

Related Content from History.com

Article: Abraham Lincoln, by History.com Editors

<https://www.history.com/topics/us-presidents/abraham-lincoln>

Article: 5 Things You May Not Know About Lincoln, Slavery and Emancipation, by Sarah Pruitt

<https://www.history.com/news/5-things-you-may-not-know-about-lincoln-slavery-and-emancipation>

Article: Abraham Lincoln's Assassination, by History.com Editors

<https://www.history.com/topics/american-civil-war/abraham-lincoln-assassination>

Article: Abraham Lincoln's Funeral Train, by History.com Editors

<https://www.history.com/topics/american-civil-war/president-lincolns-funeral-train>

Article: Mary Todd Lincoln, by History.com Editors

<https://www.history.com/topics/first-ladies/mary-todd-lincoln>

Article: Why Frederick Douglass Matters, by Yohuru Williams

<https://www.history.com/news/frederick-douglass-bicentennial>

More Related Content

Abraham Lincoln Papers at the Library of Congress

<https://www.loc.gov/collections/abraham-lincoln-papers/about-this-collection/>

Abraham Lincoln Resource Guide from the Library of Congress

<https://guides.loc.gov/abraham-lincoln-guide>

Abraham Lincoln Resources, University of Virginia Miller Center

<https://millercenter.org/president/lincoln>

Abraham Lincoln Teaching Guides, State of Illinois

<https://presidentlincoln.illinois.gov/learn/educators/educator-resources/teaching-guides/>

National Public Radio Broadcast: Lincoln's Evolving Thoughts on Slavery, and Freedom

<https://www.npr.org/2010/10/11/130489804/lincolns-evolving-thoughts-on-slavery-and-freedom>

The Lincoln Family Line: A Tragic Legacy, Ford's Theatre

<https://www.fords.org/blog/post/the-lincoln-family-line-a-tragic-legacy/>