

Slavery, the Civil War & Reconstruction: Gettysburg and the Gettysburg Address

by ReadWorks



Abraham Lincoln at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania

In the summer of 1863, Southern and Northern troops clashed in one of the bloodiest battles of the Civil War. After the Confederate, or Southern, Army won a battle in northern Virginia, it invaded the North and headed into Pennsylvania. It hoped to collect more supplies and weaken the North. Meanwhile, the Union Army of the North was pursuing the Confederate troops. The two sides met and fought near the town of Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. The battle at Gettysburg has been called "the most crucial battle in American history."

Before the Battle of Gettysburg, the Confederacy had been doing very well in the Civil War. But at Gettysburg, the North defeated the South. The battle was bloody. The Union Army suffered 23,000 casualties, while the Confederate Army suffered 28,000. A casualty is someone who is killed, wounded, or captured in battle. The Battle of Gettysburg turned the tide of the war and marked the beginning of the success of the North in defeating the South.

In the fall of 1863, President Lincoln visited the battlefield at Gettysburg for a ceremony dedicating the field to all the soldiers who had died. He reminded people why Americans must stand up for their values. His speech, the Gettysburg Address, has become one of the most famous speeches of American history. Lincoln said:

"Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the [idea] 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 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 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, and for the people, shall not perish from the earth."

Lincoln's words were never forgotten. The government of the people, by the people, and for the people remains.

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. Why has the Battle of Gettysburg been called "the most crucial battle in American history"?

- A. It was a turning point in the Civil War.
- B. It was the first time the North was invaded.
- C. It was the bloodiest battle in American history.
- D. It was won by the Confederate Army.

2. The passage sequences the events that led up to the Gettysburg Address. Which of the following events happened first?

- A. The Union and Confederate Armies met near Gettysburg, Pennsylvania.
- B. The Confederate Army invaded the North and headed into Pennsylvania.
- C. President Lincoln delivered the Gettysburg Address.
- D. The Confederate Army won a battle in northern Virginia.

3. The Gettysburg Address shows Lincoln's determination to have a unified country once more. What sentence from the speech best supports this conclusion?

- A. "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."
- B. "It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us...and that government of the people, by the people, and for the people, shall not perish from the earth."
- C. "Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure."
- D. "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."

4. Based on Lincoln's speech, how can the men who fought in the Battle of Gettysburg best be honored?

- A. by giving a powerful speech that reminds people of their values
- B. by creating a whole new government that includes the North and the South
- C. by consecrating the battlefield on which the soldiers fought
- D. by working to unite the American nation once more

5. What is the passage, "Gettysburg and the Gettysburg Address" mostly about?

- A. the casualties suffered by the Union and Confederate Armies
- B. an important Civil War battle and Lincoln's address
- C. how the Battle of Gettysburg impacted the tide of the Civil War
- D. how Lincoln was involved in the Battle of Gettysburg

6. What is the purpose of the paragraphs provided before the text of the Gettysburg Address?

- A. to explain how the South defeated the North
- B. to examine the dedication of the battlefield
- C. to criticize Lincoln's speech
- D. to provide historical context for the Address

7. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence below.

In the summer of 1863, the Confederate Army of the South invaded the North _____ it hoped to collect more supplies and weaken the North.

- A. sometimes
- B. however
- C. because
- D. although

8. How did the Battle of Gettysburg impact the outcome of the Civil War?

9. What is the "great task" described in the Gettysburg Address?

10. What does Lincoln's description of the "great task" show about his attitude toward the war? Use information from the passage to support your answer.

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- C. "Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure."
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8. How did the Battle of Gettysburg impact the outcome of the Civil War?

The Battle of Gettysburg turned the tide of the war and marked the beginning of the success of the North in defeating the South.

9. What is the "great task" described in the Gettysburg Address?

The "great task" is to make sure that the soldiers who fought at Gettysburg did not die in vain and that the democratic government of the United States lives on.

10. What does Lincoln's description of the "great task" show about his attitude toward the war? Use information from the passage to support your answer.

Answers may vary and should be supported by the passage. For example, students may explain that Lincoln's words show that he was very determined to win the war for the sake of uniting the American nation once more. He urges the people that they "highly resolve" that men lost on the battlefield "shall not have died in vain" and devote themselves to the cause for which the soldiers died. The gravity and passion of his words show that Lincoln cared a lot about the country he led and the soldiers who died for it. Lincoln wanted the war and its casualties to become an impetus for the country uniting and the nation experiencing a "new birth of freedom."