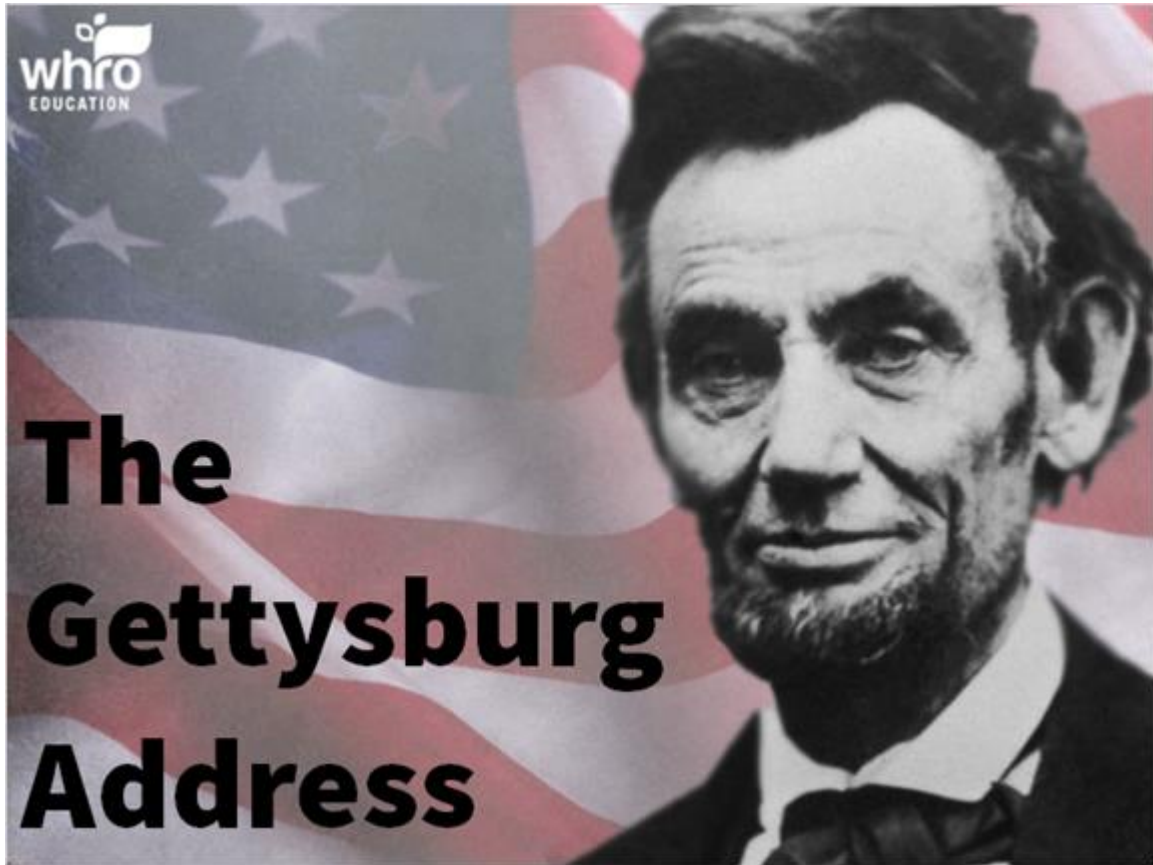


Module 5: The Civil War and Reconstruction - 1860 to 1877

Topic 4 Content: The Gettysburg Address Notes

Introduction

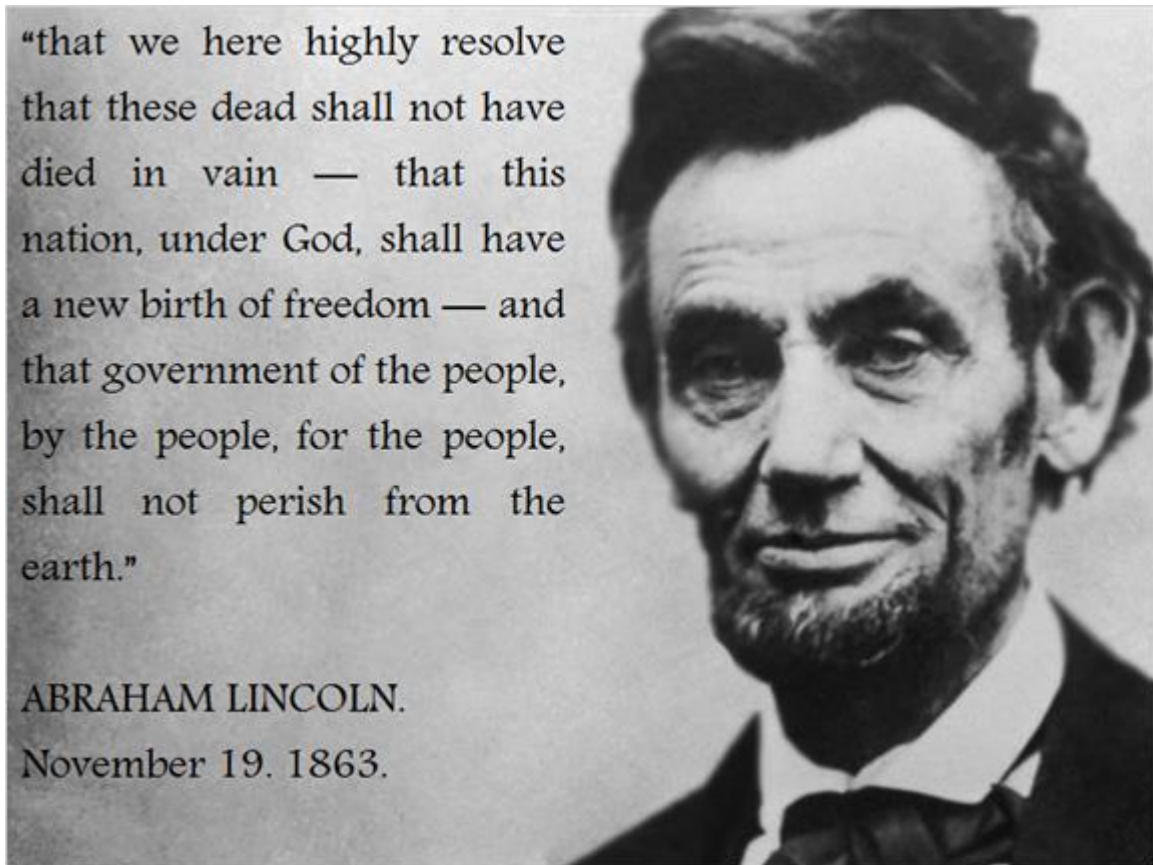


The Gettysburg Address

Module 5: The Civil War and Reconstruction - 1860 to 1877

Topic 4 Content: The Gettysburg Address Notes

Gettysburg Address



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 that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

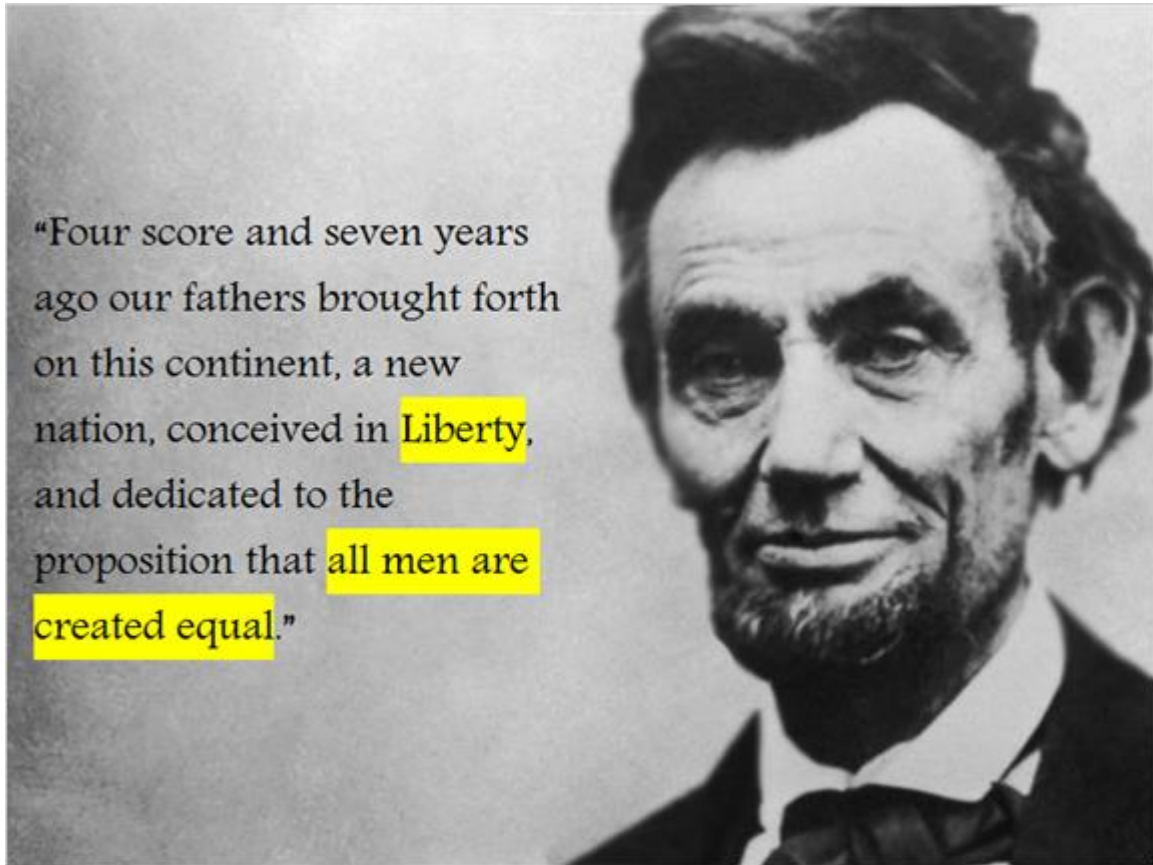
But, in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate— we cannot consecrate—we cannot hallow— this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget 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.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN.
November 19. 1863.

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Analysis



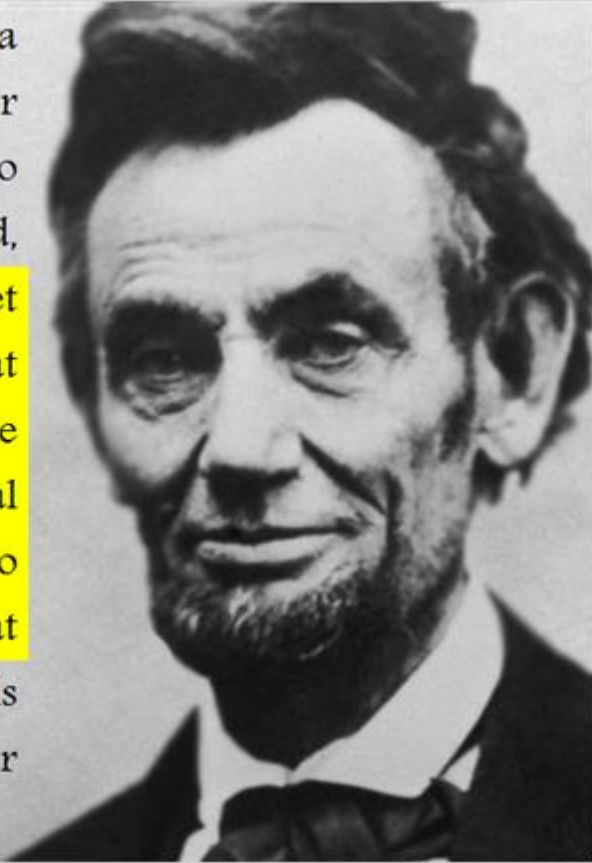
The Gettysburg Address begins with “four score and seven years ago.” The alternative is to say eighty-seven years ago. It was eighty-seven years ago that America gained its independence from Britain. To conclude the opening of the Gettysburg Address, Lincoln reminds the people that the United States was founded upon liberty and the equality of all men.

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Analysis

“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.”

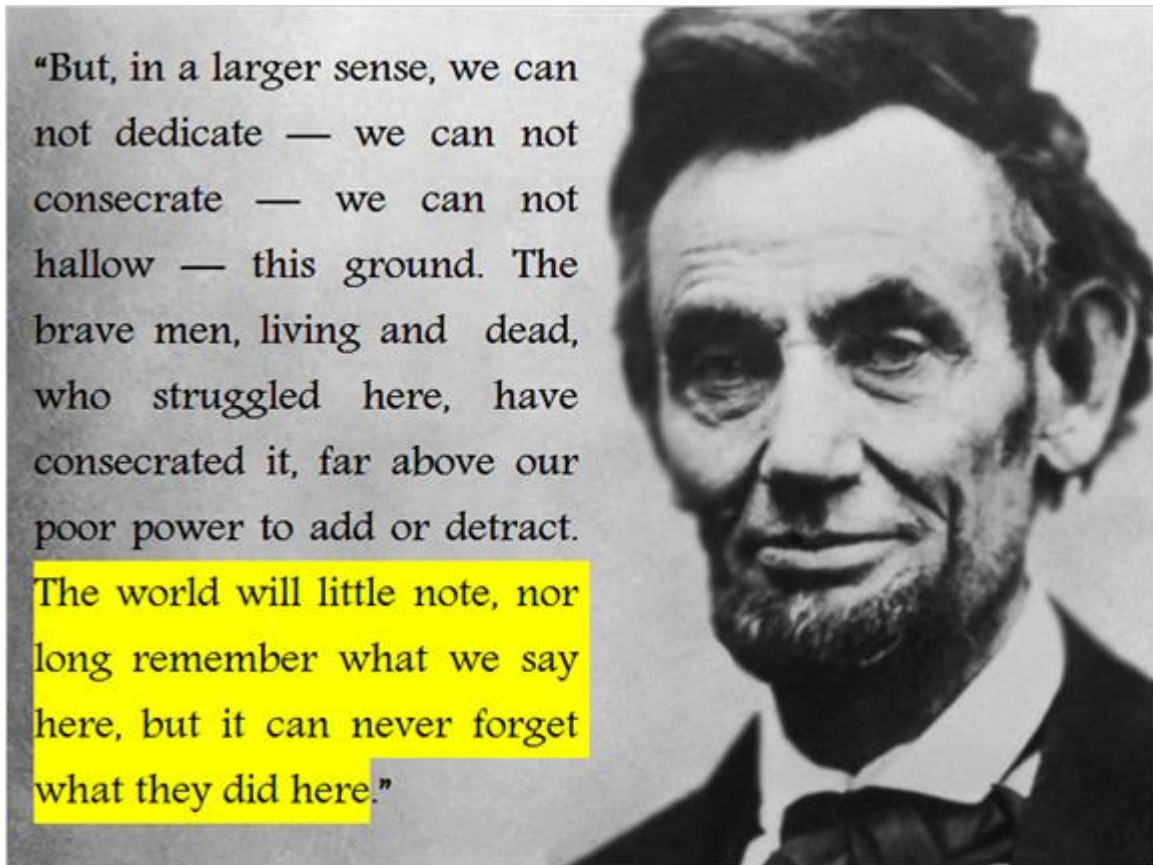


President Lincoln goes on to state that the principles upon which the United States was founded are under attack. Lincoln claims that the democracy itself is being tested. It is not just a question of if America can survive, but a question of whether any nation founded upon the same principles could survive. Lincoln then recognizes the soldiers who fought and died in the war.

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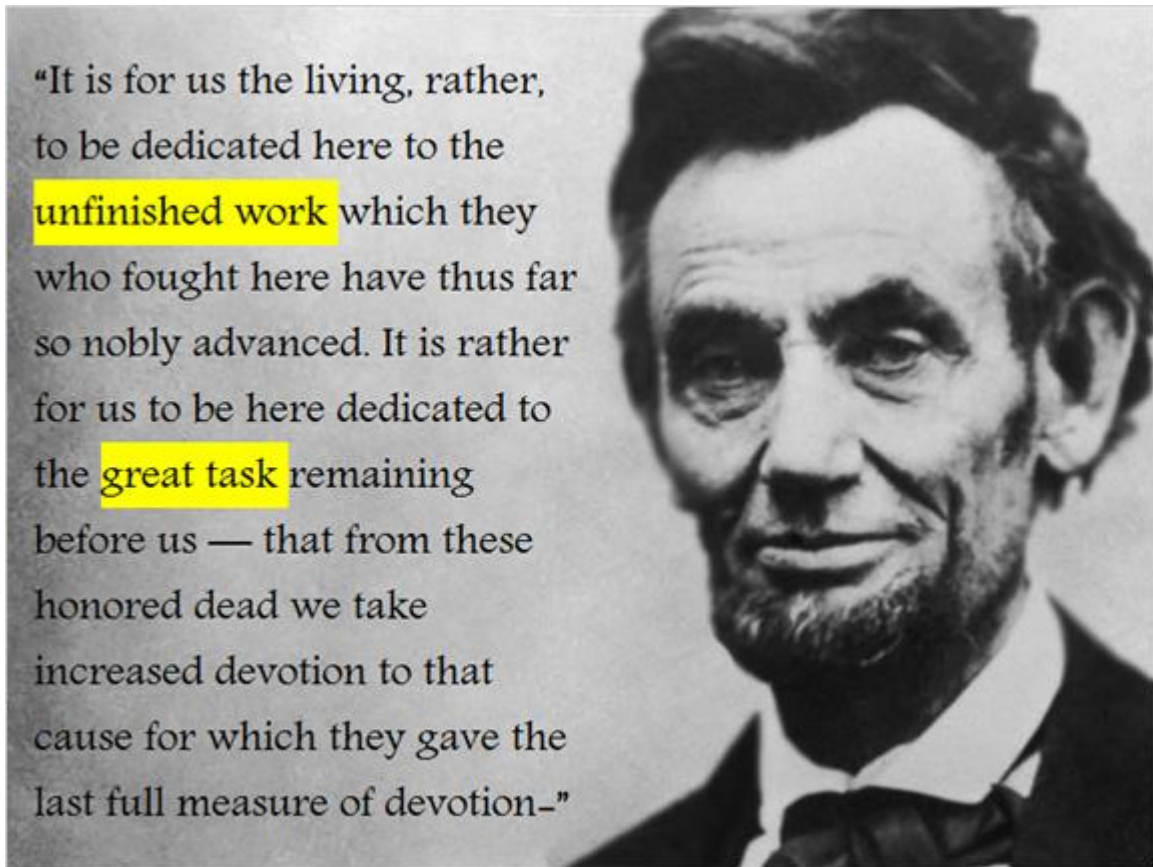


The first sentence in this passage is very powerful, and intended to become memorable. Lincoln is saying that the ground cannot be made sacred. Why would Lincoln say this at a dedication ceremony? He explains that the soldiers who fought at Gettysburg made the ground sacred through their actions. In a way, Lincoln is saying that actions speak louder than words. The final sentence of this passage is ironic. Lincoln said that the world would not remember the words spoken at Gettysburg. However, Lincoln's words have been remembered after one hundred and fifty years, and they will continue to be remembered in the future.

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This passage represents a call to action. Lincoln speaks of “unfinished work,” and a “great task.”

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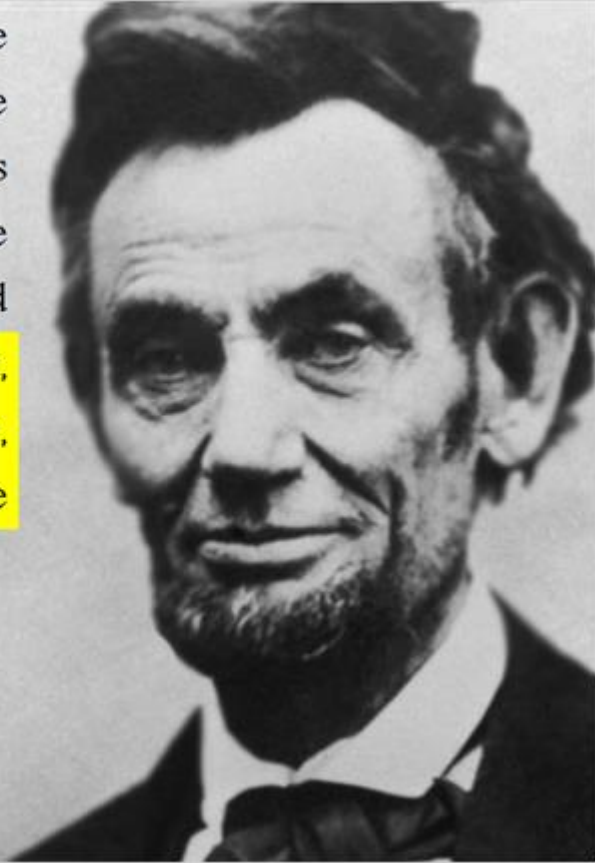
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Analysis

“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.

November 19. 1863.



In the final sentence, Lincoln finishes his call to action. He states that the men will have died in vain if the living people abandon the cause. He goes on to explain that the “government of the people, by the people, and for the people” will be reborn.