

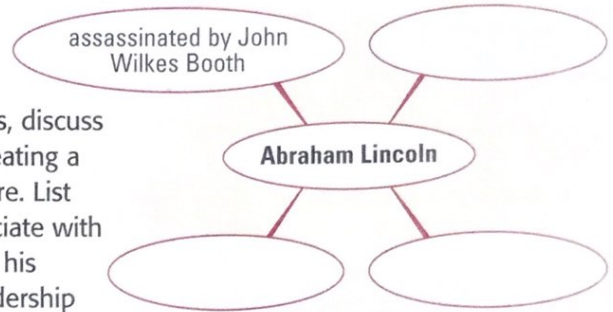
“... that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.”

The Gettysburg Address

Speech by ABRAHAM LINCOLN

Connect to Your Life

President Lincoln What words come to mind when you think of Abraham Lincoln? With classmates, discuss what you know about Lincoln, creating a word web like the one started here. List words and phrases that you associate with Lincoln’s early life, his presidency, his appearance, his character, his leadership during the Civil War, and his death.



Build Background

Gettysburg The Battle of Gettysburg, the turning point of the Civil War, began over shoes. The advancing Confederate army needed shoes; to get them, some Confederate soldiers were sent to nearby Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, where they accidentally encountered Union soldiers. Soon, two huge forces began to maneuver for battle—the 75,000 Confederate troops of General Robert E. Lee and the 90,000 Union army troops under General George Meade. For three days—July 1–3, 1863—the two sides fought a horrendous battle. In the end, the Union won, but the losses on both sides were staggering—28,000 Confederate soldiers and 23,000 Union soldiers killed or wounded. On November 19, 1863, President Lincoln spoke at the dedication of the National Soldiers’ Cemetery at the Gettysburg battlefield. Though Lincoln spoke for little more than two minutes, his words still echo through the ages.

WORDS TO KNOW Vocabulary Preview

conceive devotion
consecrate resolve
detract

Focus Your Reading

LITERARY ANALYSIS **STYLE** As you recall, the distinctive way in which a work of literature is written is its **style**. One technique of style is **repetition**, or the recurrence of words, phrases, or lines. For example, Patrick Henry used repetition for emphasis in his speech on pages 263–266:

The war is inevitable—and let it come! I repeat it, sir, let it come!

Notice repetition and other features of Lincoln’s style in the address.

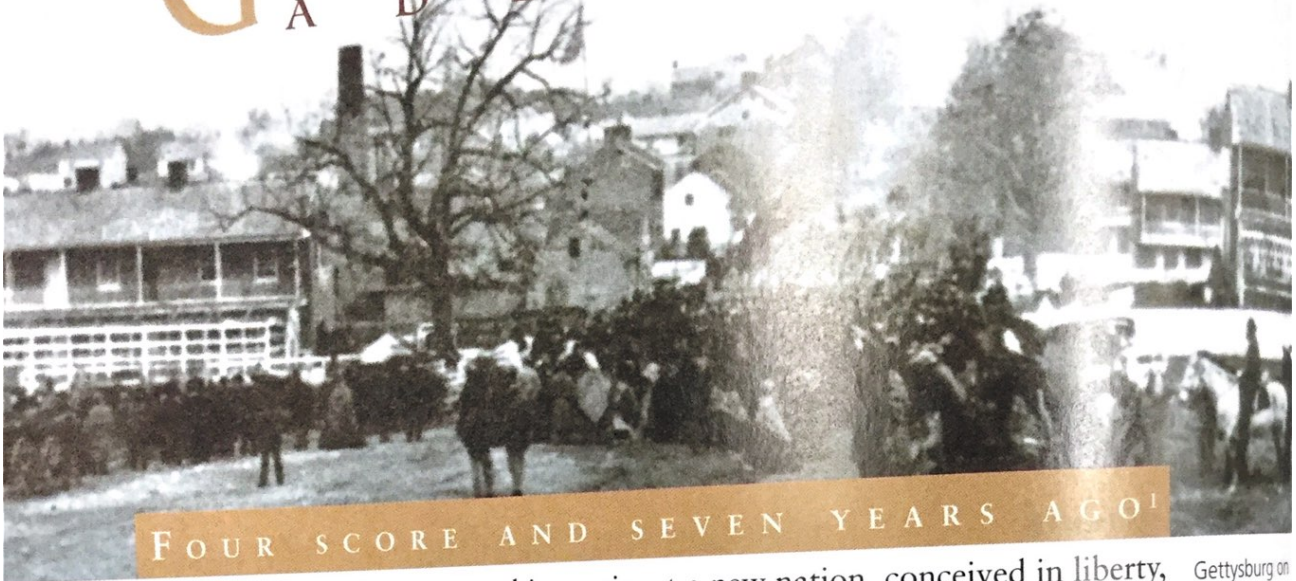
ACTIVE READING INTERPRETING HISTORICAL CONTEXT

When you read a speech, keep in mind the **historical context**—the occasion, the audience, and the purpose of the speech. Lincoln delivered this speech shortly after the Battle of Gettysburg. At a solemn dedication ceremony held at the battle site, a crowd of some 15,000 mourners listened to the eloquent main speaker, Edward Everett, deliver a two-hour speech. Then Lincoln, barely glancing at his handwritten address, spoke for roughly two minutes.

Try to imagine yourself in the audience as you read this speech. Lincoln does not explain things that he assumes his listeners already know. For example, “Four score and seven years ago” means 87 years before, in 1776, when the Declaration of Independence was signed.

READER’S NOTEBOOK As you go through each paragraph, fill in the blanks, so to speak. What has occurred recently? What is happening as Lincoln speaks? Define any terms or references that a person unfamiliar with American history would not understand.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN THE GETTYSBURG ADDRESS



FOUR SCORE AND SEVEN YEARS AGO¹

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 hallow²—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.

Gettysburg on the day that Lincoln spoke.

1. **four score and seven years ago:** 87 years ago—that is, in 1776. (Score means “a group of twenty.”)

2. **hallow:** set apart as holy.

WORDS
TO
KNOW

conceived (kən-sēvd') *adj.* originated **conceive** *v.*
consecrate (kŏn'sĭ-krāt') *v.* to declare sacred
detract (dĭ-trăkt') *v.* to take away; diminish
devotion (dĭ-vŏ'shən) *n.* earnest dedication
resolve (rĭ-zŏlv') *v.* to make a firm decision

Literary Analysis

STYLE **Style** is the distinctive way in which a work of literature is written. Several elements contribute to style, such as word choice, sentence length, tone, and imagery, as well as particular techniques such as **repetition**. In the Gettysburg Address, Lincoln repeats words such as *dedicate*, *consecrate*, *devotion*, and *people* to emphasize key ideas. Sometimes he combines this technique with **parallelism**—the use of the same grammatical form to express ideas of equal importance—as in this sentence:

But, in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate—we cannot consecrate—we cannot hallow—this ground.

The parallel phrases “we cannot dedicate,” “we cannot consecrate,” “we cannot hallow” give the sentence a rhythmic cadence and drive home the point.

Cooperative Learning Activity In a small group, reread Lincoln’s speech, looking for more examples of repetition and parallelism. Discuss the effect that these techniques create. To appreciate the effect, try rewriting a sentence without using the technique, and then compare your version with Lincoln’s. For example, what happens to the last sentence if you remove the parallel structure?