

A Close Reading of Lincoln's Gettysburg Address

UNIT SUMMARY

This unit has been developed to guide students and instructors in a close reading of Lincoln's "Gettysburg Address." The activities and actions described below follow a carefully developed set of steps that assist students in increasing their familiarity and understanding of Lincoln's speech through a series of text dependent tasks and questions that ultimately develop college and career ready skills identified in the Common Core State Standards.

Reading Tasks: *Students will silently read the passage, first independently, and then following along with the text as the teacher and/or students read aloud. The teacher will then lead students through a set of concise, text-dependent questions that compel students to reread specific passages and discover the structure and meaning of Lincoln's Gettysburg Address.*

Vocabulary Tasks: *Most of the meanings of words in this selection can be discovered from careful reading of the context in which they appear. This practice is both called for by the standards and is vital. Teachers must be prepared to reinforce it constantly by modeling and holding students accountable for looking in the context for meaning as well.*

Discussion Tasks: *Students will discuss the passage in depth with their teacher and their classmates, performing activities that result in a close reading of Lincoln's text. The goal is to foster student confidence when encountering complex text and to reinforce the skills they have acquired regarding how to build and extend their understanding of a text.*

Writing Tasks: *Students will paraphrase different sentences and paragraphs of Lincoln's speech and then write an analytical essay on their understanding of Lincoln's Gettysburg Address. Students will be afforded the opportunity to rewrite their explanation or revise their in-class paraphrases after participating in classroom discussion, allowing them to refashion both their understanding of the text and their expression of that understanding.*

Text Selection: Lincoln's speech is arguably one of the most important speeches within the historical canon, and yet is equally regarded as one of the most eloquent speeches ever made. Its brevity does not rob the speech of its rhetorical power, but rather confers a poetic resonance to Lincoln's words. Nor does its length compromise the sophistication of Lincoln's argument, which is tautly constructed within the framework of remarks meant to dedicate a graveyard. In short, the speech is a perfect example of the kind of text whose clear exegesis and compelling examples offer vivid and concrete avenues for close reading.

Outline of Unit: This unit can be broken down into three sections of instruction and reflection on the part of students and their teachers, followed by additional activities, some designed for history/social studies and some for ELA classrooms.

SECTION 1 What’s at stake: a nation as a place and as an idea

1. Students silently read Lincoln’s “Gettysburg Address”
2. Then teacher reads the Gettysburg Address out loud to the class while students follow along in the text.
3. Students translate the first paragraph of the Gettysburg Address into their own words.
4. Students respond to guiding questions and tasks about the first paragraph, focusing on the following CCS standards: RI.9-10.1; RI.9-10.2, 4 & 5; W.9-10.9; SL.9-10.1; and L.9-10.4-6.
5. After the discussion, students rewrite their translation of Lincoln’s paragraph.
6. Teacher concludes with a discussion of the first line of second paragraph.

SECTION 2 From funeral to new birth

1. Students are re-acquainted with the first two paragraphs of the speech
2. Students read independently the third paragraph of the Address.
3. Teacher reads the text of the third paragraph out loud to the class while students follow along in the text.
4. Students translate the third paragraph into their own words.
5. Students respond to guiding questions regarding the third paragraph of the Gettysburg Address, focusing on the following CCS standards: RI.9-10.1; RI.9-10.3, 5 & 8; W.9-10.9; and SL.9-10.1.
6. The class concludes with students revising their translation of the third paragraph.

SECTION 3 Dedication as national identity and personal devotion

1. Students trace the accumulated meaning of the word “dedicate” throughout the text, focusing on the following CCS standards: RI.9-10.1; RI.9-10.4, SL.9-10.1; and L.9-10.4-6.
2. Teacher wraps up of “dedication” conversation.
3. Students write a page length essay based on the on the structure of Lincoln’s argument, focusing on the following CCS standards: RI.9-10.1, RI.9-10.6 & 8; and W.9-10.1, 4 & 9.

Appendices

- Appendix I: Samples of non-text dependent questions
- Appendix II: Additional ELA activities/tasks
- Appendix III: Additional History/Social Studies activities
- Appendix IV: Vocabulary

President Abraham Lincoln's Speech

The Gettysburg Address, 1863

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. 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, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.

twenty

*a war
between
citizens of
the same
country*

*declare a
place sacred*

*without
accomplishing
anything*

Section 1: A nation as a place and an idea

Section 1 Activities focus on CCSS Standards RI.9-10.1; RI.9-10.2, 4 & 5; W.9-10.9; SL.9-10.1; and L.9-10.4-6.

1. Students silently read Lincoln’s “Gettysburg Address”
2. Then teacher reads the Gettysburg Address out loud to the class while students follow along in the text.
3. Students translate the first paragraph of the Gettysburg Address into their own words.
4. Students respond to guiding questions and tasks about the first paragraph.
5. After the discussion, students rewrite their translation of Lincoln’s paragraph.
6. Teacher concludes with a discussion of the first line of second paragraph.

| Text under Discussion | | Directions for Teachers/Guiding Questions For Students |
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| <p>Four <u>score</u> 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.</p> <p>Now we are engaged in a great <u>civil war</u>, 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.</p> <p>But, in a larger sense, we can not dedicate—we can not <u>consecrate</u>—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 <u>vain</u>—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.</p> | <p><i>twenty</i></p> <p><i>a war between citizens of the same country</i></p> <p><i>declare a place sacred</i></p> <p><i>without accomplishing anything</i></p> | <p>1. Introduce the text and ask students to read independently. Other than giving an initial gloss to words students would likely not be able to define from context (underlined in the text), teachers should avoid giving any background context or instructional guidance at the outset of the lesson while students are reading the text silently. This close reading approach forces students to rely exclusively on the text instead of privileging background knowledge, and levels the playing field for all students as they seek to comprehend Lincoln’s words. It may make sense to notify students that the short text is thought to be difficult and they are not expected to understand it fully on a first reading—that they can expect to struggle. Some students may be frustrated, but all students need practice in doing their best to stay with something they do not initially understand.</p> <p>2. Read the passage out loud as students follow along in the text. Listening to the Gettysburg Address is another excellent way to acquaint students a second time with Lincoln’s powerful and stirring words. After students have an opportunity to silently read the text, read aloud the speech slowly and methodically, allowing students to follow the twists and turns in Lincoln’s argument. Do not attempt to “deliver” Lincoln’s text as if giving the speech yourself but rather carefully speak Lincoln’s words clearly to the class, being sure to follow his punctuation and rhetorical clues. Speaking clearly and carefully will allow students to follow Lincoln’s argument and reading out loud with students following along improves fluency while offering all students access to this complex text. Accurate and skillful modeling of the reading provides students who may be dysfluent with accurate pronunciations and syntactic patterns of English.</p> |

| Central Concern #1 | Directions for Teachers/Guiding Questions For Students | |
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| <p>In the first sentence, what does Lincoln tell us about this new nation?</p> <p>This first central concern aims to guide students to recognize that Lincoln tells us quite a bit, including something about who, what, when, where, and why. He outlines <i>when</i> the country was founded, <i>where</i> (on this continent), by <i>whom</i> (<i>our fathers</i>), and offers something about <i>how</i> it was founded (conceived in liberty), as well as a phrase that describes both <i>what</i> the nation is about and <i>why</i> it was founded (dedicated to a proposition about liberty).</p> | <p>3. Ask students to translate the text of the first paragraph into their own words in one or more sentences.</p> <p>This activity challenges students to attempt to understand on their own the first paragraph. The aim here for students is not to summarize, but to paraphrase—to put it in their own words. Students should write no more than a couple of sentences. In order for students to accomplish a task like this successfully, they will need practice in focusing and writing independently. The aim is not to have them ask questions but do what they can on their own.</p> <p>4. Guide discussion of the first paragraph with a series of specific text-dependent questions and tasks.</p> <p>As students move through these questions, be sure to check for and reinforce their understanding of academic vocabulary in the corresponding text (which will be boldfaced the first time it appears in the text). At times the questions may focus on academic vocabulary.</p> <p>(Q1) What does Lincoln mean by “four score and seven years ago”? Who are “our fathers”?</p> <p>Lincoln tells his listeners <i>when</i> and by <i>whom</i> the country was founded. (Students have the clues they need to calculate the year. They have been told that score means twenty years, and they have been given the date of Lincoln’s speech as 1863. $1863 - 87 = 1776$.) Let students know that these details will be addressed later more thoroughly. For now, though keep it simple – that all we know about “our fathers” from this sentence is that they started something new. Some students may recall the phrase “founding fathers” which is a nice inference here, since Lincoln identifies these people as “those who brought forth a new nation” some time ago. Point out to students that one important thing about reading carefully is that it helps to get a basic comprehension of a sentence before looking to understand every detail.</p> <p>(Q2) What is he saying is significant about America? Is he saying that no one has been free or equal before? So what is new?</p> <p>Answering this question will force students to pay attention to two things that Lincoln says – that this nation is “conceived <i>in</i> Liberty” (that is, the people who founded it freely chose to dedicate themselves to a claim – it was not forced upon them) and “dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.” (One way to help students grasp the force of Lincoln’s words is to ask them to consider what would be different if the proposition changed – what if the nation were dedicated to the opposite, i.e., that some people are better than others?) Students need to grasp the structure of the sentence: these two phrases modify and describe the “new nation.”</p> <p>(Q3) Sum up and gather what students have learned so far: have students summarize the three ways in which the nation is new.</p> <p>The nation (1) did not exist before, (2) was made through free choice, and (3) is dedicated to a specific idea – “all men are created equal.”</p> | |
| <p>Text Under Discussion</p> <p>Four <u>score</u> 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.</p> | | <p><i>twenty</i></p> |

| Central Concern #2 | Directions for Teachers/Guiding Questions For Students |
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| <p>What happened four score and seven years ago?</p> <p>The second central concern deepens the examination of what is at stake in the Gettysburg Address by further examining how Lincoln places his words in context. For now, the emphasis continues to be on what students can draw from the text itself to figure out an answer to this question—not to the historical context.</p> | <p>(Q4) What important thing happened in 1776?</p> <p>This question, of course, goes beyond the text to explore students’ prior knowledge and associations. Students may or may not know that the Declaration of Independence was issued in 1776, but they will likely know it is a very important date – one that they themselves have heard before. <i>Something very important happened on that date.</i> It’s OK to mention the Declaration, but the next step is to discover what students can infer about 1776 from Lincoln’s own words now in front of them.</p> <p>(Q5) Beyond what students may or may not know about the Declaration of Independence, what does Lincoln tell us in this first sentence about what happened 87 years ago? What is the impact of Lincoln referring to such a famous date?</p> <p>Students should now be able to draw on the knowledge that they have gained from reading the second part of Lincoln’s sentence. They should be able to infer: <i>Lincoln says that in 1776 “our fathers” freely chose to begin a new nation dedicated to the principle that all men are created equal.</i> It is enough for students, at this point, to recognize that Lincoln frames his remarks within a very important context, the beginning of the country, and an idea on which the country was based. Students should learn to pay close attention to how any author chooses to begin.</p> |
| <p>Text Under Discussion</p> <p>Four <u>score</u> 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.</p> | <p><i>twenty</i></p> <p>5. Ask students to rewrite their translation of Lincoln’s first paragraph.</p> <p>Based on what they have learned, students rewrite their translation of the first line.</p> |

| Central Concern #3 | Directions for Teachers/Guiding Questions For Students |
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| <p>What is being tested by this war?</p> <p>This question furthers the conversation of how Lincoln establishes what is at stake. At issue is not only the survival of the nation, but the survival of the principles on which it is based.</p> | <p>6. Conclude with a discussion of the first line of the second paragraph.</p> <p>(Q9) What impact does starting the second paragraph with “now” have on its meaning?</p> <p>Probe students to clarify their understanding of the shift in time created by beginning the paragraph with “now”—that Lincoln is no longer speaking about 1776 but 1863.</p> <p>(Q10) When Lincoln says the nation was “so conceived and so dedicated” what is he referring to? What is the point including the phrase “or any nation so conceived and so dedicated” – what would the sentence</p> |
| <p>Text Under Discussion</p> | |

| Central Concern #3 | Directions for Teachers/Guiding Questions For Students |
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| <p>Now we are engaged in a great <u>civil war</u>, 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.</p> <p><i>a war between citizens of the same country</i></p> | <p>mean without it?</p> <p>Students need to draw on what they have learned from the first sentence; that is, this country was conceived in liberty and dedicated to the principle that all men are created equal. Without the phrase, Lincoln would only be talking about the survival of a specific place, the nation founded in 1776 (“that nation”). With the phrase, he says the question is not just the survival of that nation – but any nation built on the same principles. Lincoln says that what is at stake in this war is not just the freedom and quality in this country, but the possibility that one could build a country on these ideals. What is being tested is not just a specific place, but the viability of a set of ideals.</p> <p>(Q11) What if Lincoln had used the verb “start” instead of “conceive?”</p> <p>Conceive means not only to start something, or to give birth, but also to think of or imagine something (it may be necessary to give students the second meaning of “conceive” as thinking since it is difficult to infer). The impact of Lincoln choosing “conceive” is significant, since in one word it captures the idea that the founding of the country was the beginning of a place and a big idea – that “all men are created equal.”</p> <p>In summarizing the conversation of the first day, consider reviewing several techniques used to understand these two complex sentences:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Paying attention to the meaning of certain key <i>academic</i> words (like <i>conceive, dedicate, proposition</i>). 2. Taking apart Lincoln’s long sentences part by part, often <i>simplifying</i> them, by removing the clause. 3. Asking “<i>How does an author establish why what they are saying is important?</i>” to discover the point of view. <p><i>One of the most important choices any author makes is where and how to begin.</i> Rich, complex texts deserve a lot of attention, particularly at their beginnings. Students are also learning from the deliberate slow attention given to just these first two sentences in this first class that it is not only OK, but wise to invest a lot of time up front with text that is challenging.</p> |

Section 2: From funeral to new birth

Section Two Activities focus on CCSS Standards RI.9-10.1; RI.9-10.3, 5 & 8; W.9-10.9; and SL.9-10.1.

1. Students are re-acquainted with the first two paragraphs of the speech.
2. Students read independently the third paragraph of the Address.
3. Teacher reads the text of the third paragraph out loud to the class while students follow along in the text.

4. Students translate the third paragraph into their own words.
5. Students respond to guiding questions regarding the third paragraph of the Gettysburg Address.
6. The class concludes with students revising their translation of the third paragraph.

| Central Concern #1 | Directions for Teachers/Guiding Questions For Students |
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| <p>What are the people who are assembled at Gettysburg there to do?</p> <p>The aim of this discussion is to clarify the situation and context for the speech, specifically, that it is the dedication of a graveyard to soldiers who lost their lives in the civil war.</p> | <p>1. Re-acquaint students with the first two paragraphs of the speech.</p> <p>As students move through these questions, be sure to check for and reinforce their understanding of academic vocabulary in the corresponding text (which will be boldfaced the first time it appears in the text). At times the questions may focus on academic vocabulary.</p> <p>(Q1) Divide the third sentence (of the second paragraph) into simpler parts to make the context of the speech clear and ask students to ponder what each part means.</p> <p>“We have come to dedicate a portion of that field, as a final resting place.” This portion of the sentence makes clear that they are designating part of the field of battle as a graveyard.</p> <p>“For those who here gave their lives that that nation might live.” This phrase refers to the soldiers that fought on this very field. Note that Lincoln picks up on the idea from the first two sentences, that is, they are fighting for the survival of the country – “so that that nation might live.”</p> |
| <p>Text Under Discussion</p> | <p>2. Introduce the third paragraph and ask students to read independently.</p> <p>Other than giving an initial gloss to words students would likely not be able to define from context (underlined in the text), teachers should avoid giving any background context or instructional guidance at the outset of the lesson while students are reading the text silently. The idea here is to plunge students into an independent encounter with the last section of this short text. Once again, it may make sense to remind students that the short text is thought to be difficult and they are not expected to understand it fully on a first reading--which they can expect to struggle. Some students may be frustrated, but all students need practice in doing their best to stay with something they do not initially understand.</p> |
| <p>Now we are engaged in a great <u>civil war</u>, 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.</p> | <p><i>a war between citizens of the same country</i></p> |

| Central Concern #2 | Directions for Teachers/Guiding Questions For Students | |
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| <p>What did those who fought at Gettysburg do that those who have gathered cannot?</p> <p>The target here is to have students recognize that while the assembled masses were called upon to dedicate the cemetery, Lincoln believes that (a) it is beyond their power to do so and (b) that those who died have already consecrated it.</p> | <p>5. Guide discussion of the third paragraph with a series of specific text-dependent questions and tasks.</p> <p>As students move through these questions, be sure to check for and reinforce their understanding of academic vocabulary in the corresponding text (which will be boldfaced the first time it appears in the text). At times the questions may focus on academic vocabulary.</p> <p>(Q2) What is the impact of starting the paragraph with “but”?</p> <p>It is important for students to recognize that Lincoln is referring to the previous sentence and is effectively negating his earlier claim that the primary function of those who have gathered on this day is to dedicate a graveyard. It is clear in his words “we cannot dedicate.”</p> | |
| <p>Text Under Discussion</p> | <p>(Q3) What does Lincoln describe as the impact of those who fought at Gettysburg?</p> | |
| <p>But, in a larger sense, we can not dedicate—we can not <u>consecrate</u> —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.</p> | <p><i>declare a place sacred</i></p> | <p>Students should comprehend the literal meaning of Lincoln’s words—that those who fought have sanctified the graveyard more than speeches ever could. He says the world will not forget their actions, and that the words people say today are less important. (Students might notice that the fact is, everyone now remembers Lincoln’s words at Gettysburg, and that is something worth discussing later.)</p> <p>(Q4) What does the word “rather” mean in this sentence?</p> <p>“Rather” is an important word to make sure students recognize and grasp, as Lincoln’s speech pivots at this point to make the positive case for what those who are listening <i>can do</i> in comparison to what he just said his speech cannot do. Rather than being focused on dedicating the field, which they “cannot do” they should be dedicated to “the great task remaining.”</p> |

| Central Concern #3 | Directions for Teachers/Guiding Questions For Students | |
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| <p>What is the unfinished work that those listening to the speech are asked to achieve?</p> <p>Students should come away from the discussion understanding that Lincoln charges the assembled crowd to carry on the work that those who died at Gettysburg were fighting for: the preservation of self-government.</p> | <p>(Q5) How does Lincoln use the idea of “unfinished work” to assign responsibility to his listeners?</p> <p>Lincoln accomplishes this in part by refocusing the audience from the <i>work</i> of honoring the dead to the “unfinished work” of fighting for the nation’s survival. The word “unfinished” is important; it suggests that the people who died were working on a project that remains undone. It further suggests that while they are finished, or dead, their work is not. The final challenge to the listeners is that they can’t consider their work done with a funeral—the listener now has bigger work to do. Lincoln traces the possibility of a new birth arising out of the funeral, but only if the listeners complete the unfinished work.</p> <p>(Q6) What four specific ideas does Lincoln ask his listeners to commit themselves to at the end of his speech?</p> | |
| <p>Text Under Discussion</p> <p>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 <u>vain</u>—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.</p> | <p><i>without accomplishing anything</i></p> | <p>It is worth going through each point with some care.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. “Increased devotion to that cause” <i>What cause is this?</i> The cause is to preserve the nation. 2. “to resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain” <i>What would it take to ensure that those who died accomplished something?</i> Lincoln implies that the living need to ensure that they <i>win</i> the fight, so that those who have already died did not die having accomplishing nothing. The unfinished work includes the fact that the struggle continues for a new birth of freedom. 3. “that this nation should have a new birth of freedom” <i>According to the address, when was this nation’s first birth of freedom?</i> In the first line of the address, Lincoln describes the birth of freedom in this country in 1776. 4. “That government... shall not perish from the earth” <i>What if Lincoln ended before this last phrase, and ended with a “new birth of freedom?”</i> Lincoln ends his speech generalizing his defense of self-government to apply across the globe (“the earth”). This returns to the theme of day one, the speech is not only about the survival of a place, but an idea. <p>6. Conclude class by asking students to rewrite their translation of Lincoln’s third paragraph.</p> <p>Based on what they have learned, students rewrite their translation of Lincoln’s closing paragraph.</p> |

Section 3: A nation as a place and an idea

Section 3 Activities focus on CCSS Standards RI.9-10.1; RI.9-10.4, 6 & 8; W.9-10.1, 4 & 9; SL.9-10.1; and L.9-10.4-6.

1. Students trace the accumulated meaning of the word “dedicate” throughout the text.
2. Teacher wraps up of “dedication” conversation.
3. Students write a page length essay based on the on the structure of Lincoln’s argument.

| Central Concern #1 | Directions for Teachers/Guiding Questions For Students |
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| <p>How does the meaning of “dedicate” change over the course of the text, and what does this reveal about the Gettysburg address?</p> <p>By analyzing the different ways Lincoln uses the verb, students encounter the deep argument embedded in Lincoln’s text.</p> | <p>1. Students trace the accumulated meaning of the word “dedicate” throughout the text.</p> <p>(Q1) Look carefully at Lincoln’s speech, how many times does he use the word “dedicate”? Circle the verb each time it appears in the text.</p> <p>One instructional aim is to get students to reflect on how lingering on a key word can help to unlock the meaning of a piece. In a speech of only three short paragraphs, Lincoln uses a form of the word “dedicate” six times.</p> <p>(Q2) What does the word “dedicate,” mean the first two times Lincoln uses it, and what other verb is closely linked to it the first two times it appears?</p> <p>Point out that the first two instances of “dedicated” are closely linked to “conceived,” and discuss how the latter shades the meaning of “dedicated” when applied to the proposition being defended (“all men are created equal”). So, here “dedicated” expresses how the country is founded, or based on an idea or ideal.</p> |
| <p>Text Under Discussion</p> <p>Four <u>score</u> 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...</p> <p>[read entire text]</p> <p>... 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.</p> | <p>(Q3) How is “dedicate” used the next two times, and how does it relate to the word consecrate? Who is now doing the dedicating?</p> <p>Students should then identify how the meaning of “dedicate” shifts the next two times it is used and linked now to the word consecrate rather than conceive. The meaning of “dedicate” shifts to a very specific kind of religious action – consecrating the ground of the fallen dead by dedicating the field to their memory. This meaning gives dedicate a specifically religious connotation – to consecrate ground is to render it sacred. Additionally, the subject doing the action, performing the dedication, shifts from the nation to the assembled crowd.</p> <p>(Q4) How does Lincoln use “dedicate” the final two times, and how does it relate to devotion?</p> <p>Lincoln finally links dedication to “devotion to the cause for which they gave their life.” The last meaning of the word “dedicate” relates to the intensity of personal commitment, the notion of “dedicate” as exclusive, full devotion. Students should see how the last two instances of “dedicated” link together the way Lincoln used the word in the first paragraph—connecting the action of the listeners on that day to the greater ideal of preserving the principle of self-government. This analysis lays the foundation for students successfully negotiating the culminating essay.</p> |

| Text Under Discussion | Directions for Teachers/Guiding Questions For Students |
|---|--|
| <p>Four <u>score</u> 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...</p> <p>[read entire text]</p> <p>... 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.</p> | <p>2. Summarize how the meanings of “dedicate” accumulate from the beginning of the speech to the end, and explain the impact of the meaning that has built up over the course of the speech.</p> <p>The key discussion for students to have is how “dedicate” accumulates power, beginning with being linked to conception and ending by being tied to devotion. It is important that along the way dedication is linked to the religious meaning of consecration (and hallowing). The final word Lincoln uses, “devotion” retains the spiritual sense of consecrate. Students should see how dedicate moves from something you believe in to something you fight for. That it moves from being a principle on which our country was built to a spiritual thing that requires our devotion and defense. They should see how the word accumulates meaning and power across the text. A great deal of this work is done through the changing meaning of the word dedicate – to understand the development of this word is to glimpse what Lincoln has done in this short speech.</p> <p>3. Ask students to write a page length essay based on their understanding of Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address.</p> <p>The aim of the following prompt is to have students reflect on the particular genius of Lincoln’s brief speech—thereby acknowledging that Lincoln’s words cannot perform the task set before him and the assembled crowd, so he transforms the occasion into one that challenges his listeners to rededicate themselves to the task of preserving self-government and a new birth of freedom.</p> <p>Essay Prompt: In the last paragraph of the “Gettysburg Address,” Lincoln shifts the focus of his speech away from what he says is its purpose at the end of the second paragraph. What <i>reasons</i> does he give for the shift in focus? What does Lincoln think is the task left to those listening to his speech? Use evidence from the text to support your analysis. Formulate an answer to these questions in a thoughtful brief essay.</p> <p>Remind students of the work they already completed and encourage them to review their notes and access the information they gathered to craft their response to this prompt. Emphasize that the essay should be well organized and effectively support the point being made with carefully selected evidence.</p> |

Appendix I: Samples of non-text dependent questions

To highlight how a close reading of Lincoln’s speech critically relies on text-dependent questions, examples of **non** text-dependent questions are offered below with commentary on why they do not help students understand the text they are reading and take students’ attention away from that text which can be misleading and rob precious class time for students and teachers.

| Erroneous Guiding Questions | Commentary on why these are misguided questions |
|---|---|
| Have you ever been to a funeral? | The overarching problem with these two questions is that they require no familiarity at all with Lincoln’s speech in order to answer them. Both seek to elicit a personal response that relies on individual experience and opinion, and answering them will not move students closer to understanding the “Gettysburg Address.” |
| Lincoln says that the nation is dedicated to the proposition that “all men are created equal.” Why is equality an important value to promote? | |
| Why did the North fight the civil war? | Answering these sorts of questions require students to go outside the text, and indeed in this particular instance asking them these questions actually undermine what Lincoln is trying to say. Lincoln nowhere in the Gettysburg Address distinguishes between the North and South (or northern versus southern soldiers for that matter). Answering such questions take the student away from the actual point Lincoln is making in the text of the speech regarding equality and self-government. |
| Did Lincoln think that the North was going to “pass the test” that the civil war posed? | |

Appendix II: Additional ELA activities/tasks

1. Comparison of two drafts of Lincoln’s speech

| Instructional Commentary | Instructional Resources |
|---|--|
| <p>As it turns out, Lincoln wrote five different versions of the Gettysburg Address. While they are all similar, there are significant and discernable differences when comparing his first draft with the final “Bliss” draft. By analyzing the textual differences between those two versions students can see what changes Lincoln made and how those changes affected the meaning and tone of the Gettysburg Address.</p> <p>After explaining the existence of multiple drafts of the texts (perhaps by utilizing one or more of the web pages listed to the right), the teacher should direct students to compare and contrast the two versions provided below, encouraging them to take notes on the differences that they see between them in order to answer the initial comparison activity below.</p> | <p>An exhibition at the Library of Congress on the Gettysburg Address: http://www.myloc.gov/Exhibitions/gettysburgaddress/Pages/default.aspx</p> <p>Images at the Library of Congress of the very first draft (“Nicolay Copy”) in Lincoln’s own handwriting: http://www.myloc.gov/Exhibitions/gettysburgaddress/exhibitionitems/ExhibitObjects/NicolayCopy.aspx</p> <p>A brief three minute video on why the “Nicolay” version is thought to be the version Lincoln actually read at the ceremony: http://www.myloc.gov/Multimedia/Gettysburg.aspx</p> <p>The only known photograph of Lincoln at Gettysburg on the day of the address: http://www.myloc.gov/Exhibitions/gettysburgaddress/exhibitionitems/ExhibitObjects/LincolnOnPlatform.aspx</p> |

| First Draft or “Nicolay” version | | Final Draft or “Bliss” version |
|----------------------------------|---|---|
| First Paragraph | 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." | 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. |
| Second Paragraph | 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 it, as a final resting place for those who died here, that the nation might live. This we may, in all propriety do. 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 hallowed it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here; while it can never forget what they did here. | 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 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. |
| Third Paragraph | It is rather for us, the living, we here be dedicated to the great task remaining before us —that, from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they here, gave the last full measure of devotion—that we here highly resolve these dead shall not have died in vain; that the nation, 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. | 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, for the people, shall not perish from the earth. |

Directions for Teachers/Guiding Questions For Students

(Q1) Find three small (but not trivial) changes that Lincoln made between the two versions and explain what the impact of the change was on the meaning and/or tone of the Gettysburg Address.

| First Draft or “Nicolay” version | Final Draft or “Bliss” version |
|---|---|
| “to dedicate a portion of it” | “dedicate a portion of <i>that field</i> ” |
| “This we may, in all propriety do.” | <i>“It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.”</i> |
| “have hallowed it” | “have <i>consecrated</i> it” |
| “while it can never forget what they did here” | <i>“but</i> it can never forget what they did here” |
| “It is rather for us, the living, we here be dedicated” | <i>“It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated”</i> |
| “that the nation, shall have a new birth of freedom” | “that <i>this</i> nation, <i>under God</i> , shall have a new birth of freedom” |

| Guiding Questions for Students | Instructional Commentary for Teachers |
|---|---|
| (Q2) Lincoln made several small but significant changes to the first draft of the Gettysburg Address. For example, he changed the phrase “those who died here” to read in the final draft as “those who here gave their lives.” What is the effect of moving “here” from the end of the phrase to the middle? Of changing “died” to “gave their lives”? | After examining the two different versions and identifying several changes on their own, students will be attuned to the subtle differences between the texts and should be poised to discuss how changes such as this add solemnity and the notion of sacrifice to the final version. |
| (Q3) In the final draft Lincoln inserts the following phrase into the body of the third paragraph: “[It is for us the living] ... to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced.” What do those words mean, and what do they add both substantively and rhetorically to the final draft “Bliss” version of the Address? | On the one hand this sentence effectively prepares the ground for the sentence that follows it, highlighting the “unfinished work” to be done. But it also adds a sense of singling out the northern soldiers in particular for special praise, as it was them who fought for and “nobly advanced” the defense of self-government. |
| (Q4) Both versions of the Gettysburg Address are three paragraphs long, but Lincoln changed his mind regarding where to locate the break between the second and third paragraphs, creating different opening or topic sentences for the third and final paragraph. Explain how the different topic sentences create different emphases and tone for how one might interpret the meaning of that all-important final paragraph. | The location of the break in the “Nicolay” version emphasizes those that died from those that lived by partitioning them into different paragraphs (the second versus the third). The final “Bliss” version links the living and the dead together, instead emphasizing the ineffectualness of Lincoln’s words and the actions of the living to dedicate the graveyard, and creating dramatic tension regarding what then is left for those gathered to do. |

2. Recitation of Gettysburg address.

| Instructional Commentary for Teachers | Instructional Resources |
|---|--|
| <p>The teacher should introduce different versions of the text of the Gettysburg Address being read to illustrate the numerous different ways it can be delivered. After discussing the versions that were shared with the class, students then can work in pairs or small groups reciting and refining their delivery, with perhaps the day culminating in a performance by selected students.</p> | <p>The earliest recorded version of Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address being read (W.F. Hooley in 1898): http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/berl:@field(NUMBER+@band(berl+136012))</p> <p>Charles Laughton (in <i>Ruggles of Red Gap</i> in 1935): http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0czJEX9Zlwo</p> <p>Sam Waterson: http://www.cnn.com/video/data/2.0/video/us/2009/02/12/sot.waterson.lincoln.gettysburg.cnn.html Ken Burns documentary, <i>The Civil War</i>, Episode 5, “The Universe of Battle,” 1:29.08 – 1:31:18</p> <p>Johnny Cash: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5_hYZFUsOuw&feature=player_embedded</p> <p>Mashup by Citizens of Central Illinois: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=74Kljobf47E&feature=related</p> |

Appendix III: Additional History/Social Studies activities

1. Drawing on the context to illuminate word or idea choice in the speech

| Guiding Questions | Instructional Commentary for Teachers |
|--|--|
| (Q1) Lincoln never mentions the word “union” over the course of his speech, instead repeatedly referring to the “nation” instead. What is the effect of selecting this one word instead of the other? | Teachers should elicit from students the difference between a union of states versus a unified nation and then use that knowledge to further interpret and augment their understanding of Lincoln’s argument in defense of self-government. |
| (Q2) What is another word one might expect Lincoln to use in a speech during the Civil War that does not appear in the speech? What is the effect of it not being mentioned? | While a variety of words might be offered by students, some particularly intriguing ones worth pursuing during discussion include “Slavery” or “slave”; “North” or “South”; “Gettysburg” or “the battle of Gettysburg”; “soldier”; and “blood” |
| (Q3) What do you make of Lincoln’s choice to name the Declaration of Independence as the moment of the founding of America. | Lincoln makes a very significant choice to tie the founding so closely to the declaration of equality. One could argue the country was instead founded when the constitution was adopted. |

| Guiding Questions for Students / Instructional Commentary for Teachers |
|---|
| (Q4) After students have thoroughly analyzed Lincoln’s words in the “Gettysburg Address,” teachers might want to consider allowing students to examine the debate regarding Lincoln’s reading of the Declaration of Independence into the Constitution by examining two very different sources: a <i>Chicago Times</i> editorial written shortly after Lincoln delivered his speech, and a historical study of Lincoln’s speech written some one hundred and thirty years after. After having read both excerpts, students can discuss the charges leveled against Lincoln in the <i>Chicago Times</i> editorial and compare those remarks to the pro-Lincoln thesis advanced by Garry Wills in the second excerpt. They can examine and weigh the evidence each source produces as well as look closely at the text of Lincoln’s speech for additional evidence in support of one or the other interpretation—the day perhaps ending with an impromptu debate with students assuming one or the other side of the argument. |

| | |
|--|---|
| Source #1: Editorial, <i>Chicago Times</i> (November 23, 1863) | Source #2: Garry Wills, <i>Lincoln at Gettysburg: The Words that Remade America</i> |
|--|---|

... [T]he President's exhibition ... was an insult at least to the memories of a part of the dead, whom he was there professedly to honor,—in its misstatement of the cause for which they died, it was a perversion of history so flagrant that the most extended charity cannot regard it as otherwise than willful... As a refutation... we copy certain clauses in the Federal constitution:

"Representatives and direct taxes shall be apportioned among the several States which may be included in this Union, according to their respective numbers, which shall be determined by adding to the whole number of free persons, including those bound to service for a term of years, and excluding Indians not taxed, three-fifths of all other persons."

"The migration or importation of such persons as any of the States now existing shall think proper to admit shall not be prohibited by the Congress prior to the year 1808, but a tax or duty may be imposed on such importation, not exceeding ten dollars for each person... No amendment to the constitution, made prior to 1808, shall affect the preceding clause."

"No person held to service or labor in one State under the laws thereof, escaping into another, shall, in consequence of any law or regulation therein, be discharged from such service or labor, but shall be delivered up on claim of the party to whom such service or labor may be due."

Do these provisions in the constitution dedicate the nation to "the proposition that all men are created equal"? Mr. Lincoln occupies his present position by virtue of this constitution, and is sworn to the maintenance and enforcement of these provisions. It was to uphold this constitution, and the Union created by it, that our officers and soldiers gave their lives at Gettysburg. How dared he, then, standing on their graves, misstate the cause for which they died, and libel the statesmen who founded the government? They were men possessing too much self-respect to declare that negroes were their equals, or were entitled to equal privileges.

The tragedy of macerated bodies ... are transfigured in Lincoln's rhetoric, where the physical residue of battle is volatilized as the product of an experiment *testing* whether a government can maintain the *proposition* of equality. The stakes of the three days' butchery are made intellectual, with abstract truths being vindicated. Despite verbal gestures to "that" battle and the men who died "here," there are no particulars mentioned by Lincoln--no names of men or sites or units, or even of sides (the Southerners are part of the "experiment," not foes mentioned in anger or rebuke)... His speech hovers far above the carnage. He lifts the battle to a level of abstraction that purges it of grosser matter--even "earth" is mentioned as the thing from which the tested form of government shall not perish... The nightmare realities have been etherialized in the crucible of his language...

But that was just the beginning of this complex transformation. Lincoln did for the whole Civil War what he accomplished for the single battlefield. He has prescinded from messy squabbles over constitutionality, sectionalism, property, states. Slavery is not mentioned, any more than Gettysburg is. The discussion is driven back and back, beyond the historical particulars, to great ideals that are made to grapple naked in an airy battle of the mind. Lincoln derives a new, a transcendental, significance from this bloody episode...

[H]e not only put the Declaration in a new light as a matter of founding law, but put its central proposition, equality, in a newly favored position as a principle of the Constitution (which, as the *Chicago Times* noticed, never uses the word). What had been a mere theory...--that the nation preceded the states, in time and importance--now became a lived reality of the American tradition. The results of this were seen almost at once. Up to the Civil War, "the United States" was invariably a plural noun: "The United States are a free government." After Gettysburg, it became a singular: "The United States is a free government." This was a result of the whole mode of thinking Lincoln expressed in his acts as well as his words, making *union* not a mystical hope but a constitutional reality... (37, 145).

Appendix IV: Vocabulary

While several words are defined within the context of the questions posed above (e.g. **dedicated**, **conceived**, and **proposition**), students may still struggle with one or more of the vocabulary words below. If a word is preceded by an (*) students should be encouraged to initially use context to acquire the word independently instead of the instructor immediately providing its definition. Standards covered include RI.9-10.4 & L.9-10.4-6.

Advanced means *progress*

Civil war means *a war among citizens of the same country*

***Consecrate** means *to declare a place sacred*

Continent means *a large global land mass*

***Devotion** means *loving with loyalty*

***Endure** means *undergo suffering without giving up*

***Engaged** means *entered into battle with*

***Fitting/Proper** means *appropriate or suitable*

***Hallow** means *make sacred*

***Highly** means *firmly*

***Liberty** means *freedom*

Measure means *amount*

Nobly *to act according to the finest character*

Note means *notice*

***Perish** means *die*

***Resolve** means *make a firm decision*

Score means *twenty years*

Sense means *meaning*

***In Vain** means *accomplishing nothing*

***Liberty** means *freedom*