

# LESSON 6: THE GETTYSBURG ADDRESS

GRADES 5-8

WWW.PRESIDENTLINCOLN.ORG

Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum

## Objectives

- Identify Lincoln as the author of the Gettysburg Address.
- Identify the Gettysburg address as one of the most important speeches given in American history.
- Conduct a “Civil conversation” while discussing historical documents.
- Name at least two important points Lincoln made in the Gettysburg Address.



## INTRODUCTION

In July 1863, Union and Confederate forces met in battle outside the small market town of Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. For three days, under the hot summer sun, the bloodiest fight of the war raged on. In the end, 51,000 men died on the battlefield. On November 19, 1863, President Lincoln was invited to make a few remarks at the dedication of the battlefield as a national cemetery. The main speaker, Edward Everett, spoke for two hours before Lincoln took the stage. His speech lasted less than two minutes. In it, he reminded the audience of the sacrifices made by America’s forefathers, he honored the men who had

died on the battle field at Gettysburg and he challenged America to continue to fight for unity and equality as put forth in the Declaration of Independence.

Our pluralistic democracy is based on a set of common principles such as justice, equality, and liberty—ideals set forth in Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address. Individuals often interpret these general principles quite differently given specific situations. Controversial legal and policy issues, as they are discussed in the public arena, often lead to polarization, not understanding. In this activity, students will engage in a “Civil Con-

versation” about the Gettysburg Address, a document still debated by scholars today. This civil conversation activity offers an alternative to the contentious debate formats we see today. In this structured discussion method, under the guidance of a facilitator, participants are encouraged to engage intellectually with challenging materials, gain insight about their own point of view and strive for a shared understanding of issues. In addition, students develop their speaking, listening and analytical skills. The Civil Conversation was developed by the Constitutional Rights Foundation. Visit them at [www.crfc.org](http://www.crfc.org).

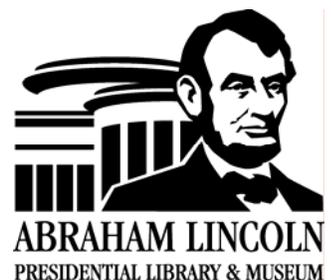
## Materials

- *Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address (in this lesson)*
- *“Civil Conversation Worksheet” (in this lesson)*

## PROCEDURE

### PART I: CONDUCTING A CIVIL CONVERSATION

1. Distribute the “Civil Conversation Worksheet” to each student and go over the rules of a Civil Conversation with your students.
2. The group will sit in a circle. If the group is too large, pair the students so that there is an inner and outer circle with students able to move back and forth into the inner circle if they have something to add.
3. Hand out copies of the Gettysburg Address to each student. Ask students to read the address and underline the words or phrases that they feel are most powerful or meaningful.
4. Ask students to respond



in writing to questions 1-5 on their worksheet.

5. Begin the conversation, by asking every member of the group to respond to questions 2 and 4. Members should not just repeat what others say.
6. Then ask the entire group to respond to question 5 and jot down the issues raised.
7. Continue the conversation by discussing the questions raised.
8. The conversation will have a time limit of 15 to 45 minutes with an additional five minutes to reflect upon the effectiveness of the conversations.

9. Debrief the activity by having the class reflect on the effectiveness of the conversation. Begin by asking students to return to the worksheet and answer questions 6 and 7. Then ask:
  - What did you learn from the Civil Conversation?
  - What common ground did you find with other members of the group?
10. Then ask students who were not active in the conversation to comment on the things they learned or observed.
11. Conclude the debriefing by asking all participants to suggest ways in which the conversation could

be improved. If appropriate, have students add the suggestions to their list of conversation rules.

## PART II: GROUP READING

1. Begin reading the Gettysburg Address out loud to the class.
2. When you come to words or phrases the students have underlined at the beginning of the lesson, ask them to join you by reading those underlined words or phrases out loud with you. All students who underlined those words should join in.

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 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 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 here 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.

## LESSON 6: THE GETTYSBURG ADDRESS

# CIVIL CONVERSATION WORKSHEET

## RULES FOR CIVIL CONVERSATIONS

- Read the text as if it were written by someone you really respected.
- Everyone in the conversation group should participate in the conversation.
- Listen carefully to what others are saying.
- Ask clarifying questions if you do not understand a point raised.
- Be respectful of what others are saying.
- Refer to the text to support your ideas.
- Focus on ideas, not personalities.

## CIVIL CONVERSATION READING GUIDE

Reading:

Read through the entire selection without stopping to think about any particular section. Pay attention to your first impression as to what the reading is about. Look for the main points, and then go back and re-read it. Briefly answer the following questions.

1. This selection is about:
2. The main points are:
  - a)
  - b)
  - c)
3. In the reading, I agree with:
4. I disagree with:
5. What are two questions about this reading that you think need to be discussed? (The best questions are ones that have no simple answers and ones that can use materials in the text as evidence.)

The next two questions should be answered after you hold your civil conversation.

- 6) What did you learn from the civil conversation?
- 7) What common ground did you find with other members of the group?

---

## Address delivered at the dedication of the cemetery at Gettysburg

1           Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a  
2 new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are  
3 created equal.

4           Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any  
5 nation so conceived, and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great  
6 battle-field of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field, as a final  
7 resting place for those who here gave their lives so that that nation might live. It is  
8 altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

9           But, in a larger sense, we can not dedicate -we can not consecrate-- we can  
10 not hallow-this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have  
11 consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little  
12 note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did  
13 here. It is for us, the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work  
14 which they who fought here have thus far *sp* nobly advanced. It is rather for us to  
15 be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us--that from these honored  
16 dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full  
17 measure of devotion--that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have  
18 died in vain-that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom-and  
19 that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from  
20 the earth.

*November 19, 1863.*

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

\* "Bliss Copy," as it appears in Gary Wills, *Lincoln at Gettysburg: The Words that Remade America*. (1992: New York. Simon & Schuster). Appendix III. D. 2 .• "Final Text," p. 263.