

Lincoln's Gettysburg Address

ELA lesson using close reading

UNIT SUMMARY

This unit has been developed to guide students 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.

Common Core Standards met: 10.4 Word Meaning 10.3 Analysis, 10.9 Analyze documents of historical significance, 10.3 Writing narratives, 10.3 Evaluate speakers point of view, 10.1 use of grammar and when speaking or writing.

Objectives:

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

- Students silently read, then the teacher reads aloud the text of the Gettysburg Address while students follow along
- Students translate into their own words the first and second paragraphs
- Students answer guiding questions regarding the first two paragraphs

SECTION 2 From funeral to new birth

- Students are re-acquainted with the first two paragraphs of the speech
- Students translate the third and final paragraph into their own words
- Students answer guiding questions regarding the third paragraph of the Gettysburg Address

SECTION 3 Dedication as national identity and personal devotion

- Students trace the accumulated meaning of the word "dedicate" through the text
- Students write a brief essay on the structure of Lincoln's argument

President Abraham Lincoln's Speech

The Gettysburg Address, 1863

Four score¹ 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 war², 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 consecrate³—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 vain⁴—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.

¹ score: twenty

² civil war: a war between citizens of the same country

³ consecrate: declare a place sacred

⁴ in vain: without accomplishing anything

What's at stake: a nation as a place and an idea

Section 1 Activities

1. Students first read Lincoln's Gettysburg Address silently.
2. The teacher then reads the text out loud to the class and students follow along in the text.
3. After listening, students re-read the first paragraph of the Gettysburg Address and translate it into their own words.
4. The teacher asks the class a small set of guiding questions about the first paragraph of Lincoln's speech.
5. After the discussion, students rewrite their translation of Lincoln's paragraph.
6. The teacher guides discussion of first line of second paragraph.
7. Wrap up.

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| 1. Teacher introduces the text and students read independently | The idea here is to plunge students into an independent encounter with this short text. Refrain from giving background context or substantial instructional guidance at the outset. 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. 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 address. |
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| 2. Teacher reads the text out loud as students follow along | Listening to the Gettysburg Address is another excellent way to initially acquaint students 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. 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. |
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| 3. Students translate the text of the first paragraph into their own words in one or more sentences | This is the second independent activity, in which students 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. |
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4. Teacher guides discussion of the first sentence/paragraph.

Central Concern #1 for guided discussion:

In the first sentence, what does Lincoln tell us about this new nation?

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 *when* the country was founded, *where* (on this continent), by *whom* (*our fathers*), and offers something about *how* it was founded (conceived in liberty), as well as a phrase that describes both *what* the nation is about and *why* it was founded (dedicated to a proposition about liberty).

Guiding questions and academic vocabulary:

Text Under Discussion	Guiding Questions	Instructional Commentary
"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."	A <i>What does Lincoln mean by "four score and seven years ago"? Who are "our fathers"?</i>	Lincoln tells us <i>when</i> and by <i>whom</i> the country was founded. Let students know that these details will be addressed later more thoroughly. For now, though keep it simple – that "our fathers" founded the country some time ago. Point out to students that one important thing about reading carefully is that it helps to get a basic gist of a sentence before looking to understand every detail.
	B <i>What does conceived mean?</i>	Have students do as much work as they can from the context to determine what is meant by <i>conceived</i> here. The sentence defines one key meaning of <i>conceive</i> : <i>to bring forth something new</i> . This is one way in which the nation is new; it did not exist before. [That's enough to do with <i>conceive</i> for now. Lincoln uses this word in at least two ways and its meanings will be discussed later in much greater detail.
	C <i>What does proposition mean?</i>	Once again, work with students to gain as much as they can about the meaning of <i>proposition</i> from the text itself – that is, Lincoln gives us an example of a <i>proposition</i> – "the <i>proposition</i> that all men are created equal." Ask students: <i>what kind of statement is "all men are created equal"?</i> — It is a claim.

Text Under Discussion	Guiding Questions	Instructional Commentary
<p>"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."</p>	<p><i>D What is he saying is significant about America? Is he saying that no one has been free or equal before? So what is new?</i></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" and "dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal." Students need to grasp the structure of the sentence: these two phrases modify and describe the "new nation."</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. "conceived <i>in</i> liberty": Lincoln says the country was "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. They were able to think freely. During the making of the country our fathers were free to structure it however they wanted and they chose to dedicate it to what? 2. "dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal": what does it mean to be dedicated to a claim? 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?
	<p><i>E Sum up and gather what students have learned so far: have students summarize the three ways in which the nation is new.</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The nation did not exist before, 2. The nation was made through free choice, and 3. The nation is dedicated to a specific idea – "all men are created equal."

Central Concern #2 for guided discussion:

What happened four score and seven years ago?

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.

Guiding questions and academic vocabulary:

Text Under Discussion	Guiding Questions	Instructional Commentary
“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.”	A. <i>When was “four score and seven years ago”?</i>	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. $1863-87=1776$
	B. <i>What important thing happened in 1776?</i>	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.
	C. <i>(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?</i>	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>
	D. <i>Who are “our fathers”?</i> <i>What can we know about “our fathers” from this sentence?</i>	All we know about these “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.”
	E. <i>What is the impact of Lincoln referring to</i>	This is a hard question to answer without moving on to the rest of Lincoln’s speech. It is enough for students, at this point, to recognize that Lincoln frames his remarks within a very

Text Under Discussion	Guiding Questions	Instructional Commentary
	<i>such a famous date?</i>	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.

5. **Students rewrite their translation of Lincoln's first paragraph** Based on what they have learned, students rewrite their translation of the first line.

6. Teacher guides discussion of first line of second paragraph.

Central Concern #3 for guided discussion:

What is being tested by this war?

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.

Guiding questions and academic vocabulary:

Text Under Discussion	Guiding Questions	Instructional Commentary
<p>"Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure."</p>	<p>A. <i>What impact does starting the sentence with "now" have on its meaning?</i></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>B. <i>When Lincoln says the nation was "so conceived and so dedicated" what is he referring to?</i></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.</p>
	<p>C. <i>What is the point including the phrase "or any nation so conceived and so dedicated" – what would the sentence mean without it?</i></p>	<p>Simplify Lincoln's sentence, looking at it with and without those words:</p> <p>Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation can long endure. (simplified sentence)</p> <p>"Now we are engaged in a great civil war testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure." (original sentence)</p> <p>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 – "or any nation so conceived or</p>

dedicated” 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 you 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.

D. *The impact of a word choice: What if Lincoln had used the verb “start” instead of “conceive?”*

Conceive means not only to start something, or to give birth, but also to think of or imagine something. They may know this connection from past reading, or may recall it as they think about America as both a place and an idea. 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 or conception of the country was at once the beginning of a place and a big idea – that “all men are created equal.” Students begin to see the power of Lincoln’s language by looking at this word choice with care.

7. **Wrap up:** How does Lincoln’s argument that the war is about more than a place make his speech more compelling?

In summarizing their conversation of the first day, consider reviewing several techniques that have been helpful in understanding these complex two sentences:

1. Paying attention to the meaning of certain key *academic* words – like *conceive*, *dedicate*, *proposition*.
2. Taking apart Lincoln’s long sentences part by part, often *simplifying* them, by removing the clause.
3. “How does an author establish why what they are saying is important?” is often a very useful first question to ask. It addresses whether a speech or text puts forward a point of view. Students have therefore begun to learn a useful kind of question with which to read in the future.
4. *One of the most important choices any author makes is where and how to begin.* 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.

SECTION 2
(1–2 days)

From funeral to new birth

Section Two Activities

1. The teacher sets the scene for Lincoln’s speech: conducts brief discussion of the remainder of the second paragraph.
2. Students read independently the third paragraph of the address.
3. The teacher reads the text of the third paragraph out loud to the class and students follow along.
4. Students translate the third paragraph into their own words.
5. Next, the teacher asks the class a small set of guiding questions about paragraph three.
6. Students revise their translation of the third paragraph.
7. Wrap up.

1. Teacher sets the scene for Lincoln’s speech: conducts brief discussion of the remainder of the second paragraph

Central Concern #1 for guided discussion:

What are the people who are assembled at Gettysburg there to do?

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.

Guiding questions and academic vocabulary:

Text Under Discussion	Guiding Questions	Instructional Commentary
“Now we are engaged in a great civil war ⁵ , testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long	A <i>Divide the sentence into simpler parts to make the context of the speech clear and ask students to ponder what each part means.</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. “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.2. “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.”

⁵ A war between citizens of the same country

Text Under Discussion	Guiding Questions	Instructional Commentary
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."	B <i>What larger war is this battle a part of?</i>	The context is given by the first sentence in the paragraph: this battle is part of the civil war. Many students will likely be familiar with the phrase civil war. Note that Lincoln calls it a "great civil war," no small battle, in which citizens of America are fighting each other. The definition of "civil war" is given because it cannot be inferred by the context of the speech alone.
1. Students read the third paragraph independently	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.	
2. Teacher reads the text of the third paragraph out loud	After students have an opportunity to silently read the third paragraph, read aloud the speech slowly and methodically, while students follow along in their written copy 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. Listening to the Gettysburg Address is another excellent way to initially acquaint students with Lincoln's powerful and stirring words.	
3. Students translate the text of the third paragraph into their own words in one or more sentences	This is the second independent activity, in which students attempt to understand on their own the third 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 few 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.	

4. Teacher guides discussion of the third paragraph

Central Concern #2 for guided discussion:

What did those who fought at Gettysburg do that those who have gathered cannot?

Guiding questions and academic vocabulary

Text Under Discussion	Guiding Questions	Instructional Commentary
"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."	A <i>What is the impact of starting the paragraph with "but"?</i>	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."
	B <i>What does Lincoln describe as the impact of those who fought at Gettysburg?</i>	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.)

Central Concern # 3 for guided discussion:

What is the unfinished work that those listening to the speech are asked to achieve?

Guiding questions and academic vocabulary

Text Under Discussion	Guiding Questions	Instructional Commentary
<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 vain⁶—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>	A <i>What does the word "rather" mean in this sentence?</i>	"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."
	B <i>What four specific ideas does Lincoln ask his listeners to commit themselves to at the end of his speech?</i>	<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 win the war and 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.

⁶ in vain: without accomplishing anything

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| 4. Students write independently | Based on what they have learned, students rewrite their paraphrase of the third paragraph. |
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| 5. Wrap up
<i>How does Lincoln use the idea of “unfinished work” to assign responsibility to his listeners?</i> | 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. |
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SECTION 3
(1–2 days)

Dedication as national identity and personal devotion

Section Three Activities

1. The teacher traces the development of the meaning of the word “dedicate” throughout the text.
2. Wrap up of dedication conversation.
3. Students write a brief essay based on their reading and understanding to date.

1. Teacher traces the development of the meaning of the word “dedicate” throughout the text

Central Concern #1 for guided discussion:

How does the meaning of “dedicate” change over the course of the text, and what does this reveal about the Gettysburg address?

Guiding questions and academic vocabulary

Text Under Discussion	Guiding Questions	Instructional Commentary
[Review entire speech]	A <i>Look carefully at Lincoln’s speech; which verb does he use the most (sometime he uses it in the past tense)? Circle the verb each time it appears in the text.</i>	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. They should see that a careful study of a crucial word as it develops across a piece is a way into the understanding the entire piece. In a speech of only three short paragraphs, Lincoln uses a form of the word “dedicate” six times.
“Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new	B <i>What does the word “dedicate,” mean the first two times Lincoln uses it, and what other verb is closely linked to</i>	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.

Text Under Discussion	Guiding Questions	Instructional Commentary
<p>nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.</p> <p>Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure.”</p>	<p><i>it the first two times it appears?</i></p>	
<p>“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</p>	<p>C <i>How is “dedicate” used the next two times, and how does it relate to the word consecrate? Who is now doing the dedicating?</i></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.</p> <p>Additionally, the subject doing the action, performing the dedication, shifts from the nation to the assembled crowd.</p>

Text Under Discussion	Guiding Questions	Instructional Commentary
consecrate—we can not hallow—this ground.”		
<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—.”</p>	<p><i>D How does Lincoln use “dedicate” the final two times, and how does it relate to devotion?</i></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>

2. Wrap up

Summarize how the meanings of “dedicate” accumulate from the beginning of the speech to the end, and the impact of the meaning that has built up over the course of the speech.

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.

3. Students write an independent essay

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:

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 *reasons* 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. (Approximately a page).

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.

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.

Non-Text Dependent Questions	Erroneous Guiding Questions	Commentary on why these are misguided questions
	Have you ever been to a funeral?	The overarching problem with these 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 one inch 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?	

Additional ELA activities/tasks

1. Additional ELA Task #1: Comparison of the drafts of the speech

	Instructional Commentary	Instructional Resources
Introduction to Different Versions	<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>

Comparing Different Versions of Lincoln's Gettysburg Address	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.

Initial Comparison Activity	Guiding Question	Examples of Changes	First Draft or “Nicolay” version	Final Draft or “Bliss” version
	(1) 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.		“to dedicate a portion of it”	“dedicate a portion <i>of 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”

Written Analysis of Both Versions	Guiding Questions	Instructional Commentary
	(2) 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.
	(3) 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.
	(4) 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.

Recitation of Gettysburg address.

- The teacher shares with students different examples of the Gettysburg Address being delivered
- Students then practice reciting the address, alternating and refining their delivery

Introduction to Day Four	Instructional Commentary	Instructional Resources
	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>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 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*