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The Gettysburg Address
November 19, 1863

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 battlefield of that war.

We have come to dedicate a portion of that field as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

But, in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate. . . we cannot consecrate. . . we cannot 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.

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Understanding The Gettysburg Address
November 19, 1863

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.

Eighty seven years ago the United States declared its independence from Great Britain. The people who wrote the Declaration of Independence believed 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.

The Civil War is a test to see whether or not the United States will survive as a nation.

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.

A part of the Gettysburg battlefield is going to be used as a cemetery for the soldiers who died during the battle. Lincoln felt that this was a tribute to those who died trying to preserve the Union.

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Lincoln felt that people would not remember his speech nor remember those who were at the ceremony. He strongly thought the soldiers who died at Gettysburg will be remembered for their sacrifices.

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Lincoln is telling his audience that the war must continue. The southern states which left the Union must be brought back in. He reminds the audience that the soldiers' sacrifices have to mean something. The Civil War is being fought for freedom and preserve a system of government "of the people..."