

Lincoln's Gettysburg Address: A Dedication, A Consecration And
A Challenge

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Introduction

There was a time when our Nation was on the verge of being rent in two. There was a time when skin color and fear tore Americans apart, brother from brother, or even father from son. This was the greatest war our country has endured, the Civil War. With Americans fighting each other, the unity of the Nation hung by a thread. However, the president who led the country back to unity was a man to be reckoned with. He would do anything possible to keep the country together, without allowing slavery to continue or allowing secession of the states. This essay asks whether or not Lincoln was the skilled orator many see him to be. He caused a dramatic change in the American culture through one sentence, but did he simply draw from the right sources? Regardless of this, in a time of great turmoil, the political speeches of Abraham Lincoln held the Nation together with his carefully chosen words, determination, and strength.

The elements from which Lincoln derived his ability to write the Gettysburg Address are varied. He had grown up in a time of debate regarding slavery, and had developed a strong anti-slavery opinion. While some historical texts present Lincoln as racist, his actions have all shown him to be for equality among all. Although he grew up as a farm boy, Lincoln read voraciously. He had strong leadership skills, was self-taught in law, and was known as a lazy worker. This man then grew to become one of the strongest presidents of our Nation's young life. The Gettysburg Address, made in a time of hardship for both him personally and the country as a whole, is a speech with rippling effects far more extensive than the effects of far more verbose speeches, exemplifying the strength of its short length.

Lincoln is remembered as a skilled rhetor, but this was not the case during his political lifetime. He took time to formulate his speeches, and actually delivered very few memorable speeches of importance. However, those he delivered showcased his skills in speech structure,

figurative language, poetic rhythm, delivery, and word choice. He knew what he was doing, and though some doubt all presidents' roles in their speech writing, Lincoln is one whose speeches would never have carried the same resonance, strength, subtlety and versatility if he had not had a part in the writing process.

This essay analyzes The Gettysburg Address, one of the best political speeches of all time. It has had a huge impact as an artifact of rhetorical study and also as a source for future political speeches. Lincoln delivered this speech on November 19, 1863 at the dedication ceremony of the Gettysburg, Pennsylvania military burial grounds. Four months prior, the bloody Battle of Gettysburg had taken place there, resulting in a Union win but around forty six thousand fatalities. Lincoln, in a two minute span of time, dedicated the grounds and the soldiers, consecrated a new cemetery, and challenged the public.

Historical Context

Abraham Lincoln was a great man in stature and leadership, who came from simple beginnings. He was born in a log cabin near Hodgenville, Kentucky on February 12, 1809, and was raised a farmer's son. He moved around as a child, spending time in Kentucky, Illinois and Indiana. Due to the frequent moves, Lincoln went to school for short stints at a time. However, he had a desire to learn, and began to educate himself. He was devoted to regular readings of the Bible and any other works he could access. He became known for his poetic references, stemming from his interest in the plays of Shakespeare. He excelled in school when he could attend, but continuously taught himself about poetry, plays, and literature. He seemingly broke the mold when it came to emulating the traits of a farm boy. He did not have early role models who specialized in intellect, yet he had a hunger for knowledge. As he grew, he became known for his gangly looks, conversation, jokes, and stories. He worked a variety of jobs and ran for various political positions. In 1834, he won a spot on the Illinois State Legislature, and began to teach himself law: his political life had begun. He held various positions, and became quite well-known for being a logical, kind, well-educated leader.

The late 1860s were a period of stress, tension and anger due to conflicting political and economical viewpoints. The South wanted to retain slavery and rule by state law, and the abolition of slavery came to be seen as an imminent threat. Southerners struggled with this not only due to economical reasons, but also due to cultural norms. To end slavery would transform slaves from property, to potential property owners. The South's economy was based on agriculture, specifically cotton. The profitability from growing cotton had skyrocketed in 1793 when Eli Whitney invented the cotton gin, which allowed ten hours of labor to be done by his gin in one hour ("Inventor of the Week"). This industry was on the rise, but still required

significant amounts of cheap or free labor to succeed. The states argued for nullification, which would allow states to declare federal acts unconstitutional and essentially neutralize the power of the Federal Government to enforce uniform policies on all states. However, the federal government did not allow this. Therefore, with the support of illegalization of slavery growing, southern states began to see a great threat to their economic ability and no benefit to remaining within the Union. When Lincoln was elected to the presidency on November 6, 1860 seven southern states had already seceded from the Union, and four soon followed suit. This fragmented country is the America Lincoln inherited.

Lincoln took his first oath to office on March 4, 1861. He was now the head of a Nation that seemed to be on a slow death march. Soon after his inauguration, on April 12, 1861, war was declared. Lincoln would not accept nullification, secession, or slavery, and war became the only option. He would never even use the word “secession,” as he considered this act non-existent. He was also not a proponent of slavery. On August 1, 1858 Lincoln stated his most famous and succinct words regarding his view of slavery: “As I would not be a slave, so I would not be a master. This expresses my idea of democracy. Whatever differs from this, to the extent of the difference, is not democracy”.

Lincoln did once state that if he could allow slavery in the southern states to retain a peaceful Nation, he would. He was pragmatic as well as idealistic. However, this was impossible and slavery became the hinge that tore the Nation apart. The Civil War lasted from 1861 to 1865, leaving destruction in its wake. The civilians despaired, slaves ran from their masters to the free North, and soldiers languished. In 1863, the Battle at Gettysburg was finally a turning point.

Confederate General Lee was pushing his way north when Union General Meade met him in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania on July 1, 1863. Lasting three days, the battle was violent. Though the Confederates held the upper hand initially, Pickett’s charge led to their downfall. At

the end of the third day, the Confederates retreated south over the Potomac, leaving behind a field of bodies. It is estimated that the total number of casualties for both sides was around 46,277 souls. Due to the magnitude of the battle and the high heat, the town of Gettysburg seemed to be in ruins and the stench of the bodies was quickly extending past the battlefield. Immediate clean-up of the bodies was sorely needed, and it was decided that the field would be established as a national cemetery. David Wills became the man in charge of the task, and he had to separate and bury the bodies as well as plan a dedication for the cemetery. Wills invited Edward Everett of Massachusetts to be the official orator for the ceremony, planned for October 23rd, 1863. A renowned orator, Everett welcomed the task, but said he would not be prepared until November 19th. This date was then set. In late October, Wills invited Lincoln to speak “a few appropriate remarks” prior to Everett’s speech (Gramm 22). While a late invitation, it is unlikely that Lincoln was offended, and he agreed.

Lincoln’s speeches thus far had been few, but monumental. He was a skilled rhetorician, as he had always held interest in rhetoric, philology, and classical writings such as Shakespeare and Webster. While the rumor persists that Lincoln wrote The Gettysburg Address on a scrap of paper on the way to Pennsylvania, this is highly unlikely. His knowledge, reverence for words, and the structure of the address indicate he planned ahead of time. Various witnesses also testified to him reviewing the speech with others (Pomfret 127).

On the morning of November 19, 1863 the ceremony began. Around 20,000 people gathered on the field to listen to the ceremony. Everett spoke first. His speech was long and eloquent, lasting a little over two hours. He detailed the three day battle, telling stories of courage and carnage. Lincoln then rose and spoke for a little over two minutes. His high-pitched voice carried his Kentucky accent to the edges of the crowd, and his mood was somber and

reverent. Though the shorter of the two by far, Lincoln's direct, inspiring speech is respectfully admired to this day, and created a necessary challenge to Americans then.

It is said that Lincoln's address was "a speech waiting to be made." He was officially there that day for a dedication of the cemetery. Wills wrote that Lincoln's purpose was to derive "a new, a transcendental significance from this bloody episode" (*Lincoln at Gettysburg* 37).

However, there are three types of dedication: allegiance, consecration, and ordination. While all three types involve dedicating to a cause, they each differ. Allegiance involves "dedicating yourself (intellectually or emotionally) to a course of action" (*sensagent*). Getting larger of the scale, consecration is "sanctification of something by setting it apart as dedicated to God" (*sangent*). Ordination is the consecration of a person is for eternity. Lincoln employs all three types. In his address, he ordains the dead, consecrates the cemetery, and creates allegiance within the audience to the war cause. He also had two other motives to increase the public's dedication to the war effort: 1) he had just ordered the first non-volunteer draft, and 2) the 13th amendment was going to go to the House of Representatives early the next year. Through his address, Lincoln was able to redefine the aims of the war, alter the ideological perception of "equality" and give the people drive and hope for a better future.

Five copies of the speech exist today, but there are some that were lost. Of the existing manuscripts, first, there is the Nicolay text. This is considered to be the first draft, as it largely differs from the others. Next, there is the Hay text. John Hay, one of Lincoln's personal secretaries, was supposedly given the draft by Lincoln, which is surmised to be the second draft. Both of these drafts now reside in the Library of Congress. The most debated text is the Wills text. David Wills, the planner of the ceremony, requested a copy of the speech, but it is unknown whether or not he received it. The Springfield text was a copy published by Edward Everett, and it is assumed that he got this manuscript from Wills, which is why a copy was never found in

Wills' belongings. This copy resides in the Treasures Gallery of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum. The last two manuscripts were written for the Baltimore Fair a year after the address was given. The first was sent to George Bancroft, but was double sided and could not be used. It remained in his family for years and is now at Cornell University. Lincoln then re-wrote the speech and sent it to Bancroft's relative Alexander Bliss, who published Bancroft's book. This copy is in the Lincoln room of the White House, and it is inscribed on the Lincoln Memorial. The Bliss copy is the most well-known draft, and this is the manuscript this essay will henceforth analyze.

Lincoln's Developing Communication

As Lincoln grew, the culture of writing and speaking was changing. This was the era in which writers such as Dickens, Tolstoy, and Dostoevski were gaining popularity abroad, and Whitman Dickinson, Emerson, Twain and Thoreau were changing the literary community in the United States and the world (Freedman 15). Writing was becoming a marketable job choice, publishing abounded, and literature was published on far more topics than in the past. Writing focused on realism for the first time, novels became widely published, and female writers were respected. As a young boy, Lincoln constantly read everything of this that he could get his hands on, but he was restricted by the available literature in his small home town in Kentucky. In his early years, he did attend school, but the available literature was still limited. In class, they read the Bible most often, but also had the *Kentucky Preceptor*, a book full of speeches and oratory lessons. At home, he continued his readings, and often practiced public speaking. He started in front of his siblings on Sundays, mimicking a preacher and giving sermons. He also began to tell stories, a trait he was well known for in later years. Berry states that Lincoln's father even had to "forbid (Lincoln's) speaking during working hours" because all the farm hands would stop to listen to him speak (841). Lincoln's fascination for the written and spoken word would continue to grow throughout his life.

Lincoln had "logic, reason, and a disregard for the rules" (Kunhardt 53) and slowly began to come into his own. It is said by his past employers that he was very lazy when it came to labor, and he was constantly found hidden away somewhere with a book. This is probably a large part of the reason he went into politics, as he strongly disliked the farm life that he had led as a child. While a lazy worker, he was still well-liked. "Abe was a good talker, a good reasoner, and a kind of newsboy" (Berry 832). He read multitudes, analyzed everything, and was very critical

of both himself and his writings. Two of his most common reading materials were the Bible and poetry, especially that of Scottish poet, William Knox. In the summer of 1830, while he was working on a farm outside Decatur, Illinois, he began to give “stump speeches” in the town square. These were his first public speeches, and he was not impressive. One who heard him stated “(In truth he) played the combination of awkwardness, sensitiveness and diffidence” (Berry 850). He had no facial expression, and clasped his hands behind his back. He was unskilled, but he had to start somewhere.

When Lincoln moved to New Salem, Illinois he received his first adult lessons in elocution. He was taught by Master Graham, and he began to garner more knowledge on speech delivery. His lessons here and his reading of the *Kentucky Preceptor* and Weems’s *Life of George Washington* taught him all the basic lessons of elocution. However, he still had to alter many of his natural traits. “He had few of the obvious natural graces of an orator” (Berry 828). He had a gangly body and hands, and a high-pitched, nasal voice. His face was naturally very serious, and he did not understand proper gesture techniques. Once he learned he needed to improve these traits, he went slightly overboard. Some of his speeches were delivered with flailing arm movements, and constantly changing facial expressions. He mimicked those he spoke about, and moved around the room. After attending the Whig rallies in New England in 1848, he developed an appreciation for the sophisticated speech giving of the politicians, and he began to tone down his facial expressions and gestures to a respectable level. Lincoln’s various phases of his techniques brought him to a point where he was no longer as awkward as he once appeared to be.

Lincoln’s audiences during his political life often criticized various traits he held, but they were often mistaken in their criticisms. His voice was often seen as a point of contention, but he was one of the few speakers of his day who could make himself heard even at the far

fringes of the crowd. His tenor voice carried far. He was also often critiqued for speaking too slowly. However, as he learned from the *Kentucky Preceptor*: “Learn to speak slow, all other graces will follow in their place.” His slow speaking helped to make his enunciation clear, and his pronunciation correct, and his words were then heard clearly by those at the edge of the crowd. While those in the audience may have felt annoyance at the slow pace, they were also at the edge of their seat, hanging on every word. The traits he was most often criticized for at the height of his career are two of the traits that allowed him to come across as the steadfast leader that he was to the greatest amount of people.

When he was invited to give remarks at Gettysburg, he was only given two weeks. There has since been a constant rumor that he did not prepare beforehand, but this is untrue. He had multiple meetings regarding the speech while still at the capital, and even showed a manuscript to John Hay, his secretary. However, he did propagate the rumor by telling people that the speech was not finished and badly written. Even as president, he still experienced the insecurity and stage fright that he had experienced his entire life.

With his exceptional memory and large mental library, Lincoln’s speeches are spoken allusions to various sources. His love for poetry influenced him in that his speeches have a clear rhythm, sounding slightly melodic. He also drew phrases from various sources. In the Gettysburg Address, he draws directly from the Bible, the Declaration of Independence, and abolitionist preacher Theodore Parker. Parker was the inspiration behind Lincoln’s concluding anaphora, as he said, “Democracy is self-government, over all the people, for all the people, by all the people” (Kunhardt 61). He had a true appreciation for written works, and while he was an exceptional writer himself, he once stated, “For the genius to write these things, I would gladly give up my office” (Kunhardt 63).

Berry said it best: “Aided by the knowledge he had gained from his textbooks on elocution and from general reading and by his constant practice in speaking and writing, (Lincoln) rose in rare moments to unparalleled heights of simple eloquence.” Lincoln was awkward, gangly, and nervous for his entire speaking career, but his great knowledge of oratory allowed him to deliver some of the best speeches in America’s political history. He was eloquent and skilled in his ability to fulfill *kairos* and say the right thing at just the right time. Lincoln’s drive and his slow development of his communication skills delivered to America one of the best rhetors of all time.

Close Textual Analysis

The three part structure of Lincoln's address can be described in two ways. One way he structures the speech can be seen as chronological. He begins with his shortest section, the proem, which is on the past. His next section speaks in the present. His use of the word "now" to begin this section reminds the audience of the immediacy of the war. The last section, the longest, focuses on the future and the unfinished task before them. According to Edwin Black, the structure of the address is also seen as an hourglass design. He references the birth of our Nation, then its present death, then the potential rebirth. The entire speech can also be seen as an enthymeme. "Human discourse. . . always proceeds either by deduction or by induction" (Cooper xxxv). Lincoln introduces the premise that the country is worth fighting for, and leads the audience to deduce the resolution that "it is both fitting and proper that we should do this." The structure leads the audience toward the ultimate conclusion that the future is all that is left, and the audience must fight to defend it.

Lincoln begins his speech with the well-known words "fourscore and seven years ago," referencing the day the Declaration of Independence was signed. This is an eloquent way of reminding the audience of the young age of America, and the necessity for them to protect it and its development. It is also an analogy to the Bible, as in Psalm 90 verse 10 a man's lifespan is described as "threescore and ten." This terminology was also used in 1861 by Galusha Grow in the House of Representatives. Lincoln then continues with "our fathers brought forth on this continent a new Nation, conceived in liberty." This terminology relates the young Nation to a being that was born of our forefathers from their desire for freedom from tyranny. He continues this metaphor of conception throughout the speech, through words such as "dedicated." Cooper mentions that this metaphor is violent, but most readers do not interpret it as such (xxxiii).

However, I disagree. Lincoln's multiple references to birth as an analogy of the Nation as a live being was a very intelligent rhetorical strategy that caused the listener to correlate the protection a child needs with the protection their Nation needs, increasing their dedication to their Nation and drive to help it continue forth and mature. This also ties the concept to a biblical base, grounded in Christian re-birth, and to cosmology. "It is the Great Chain of Being: the majestic cosmology of medieval Christendom that links time with timelessness, the past with the future, history with destiny, life with death and both with immortality" (Black 28). Lincoln's recurrent biblical and cosmological references relate more to his audience of the time, but are still understood today. His use of the word "fathers" instead of forefathers is also a major point that is largely overlooked. This choice is surprising, as the audience is not even related to our country's founders, but this word choice creates a metaphor of the Nation as not simply a country, but a body of people, all growing from the men who took that first step and began a country that went against all political norms of the age.

Lincoln's next line is known to be one that redefined the Nation. He states "all men are created equal" and, in context of the cultural surroundings, he relates it to race. This is the first time that Lincoln indicates a belief in the equality of Blacks, even though he had been anti-slavery from the beginning of his term. This term from the Declaration of Independence had before solely been applied to men of Caucasian ethnicity, and most were content with this definition of the phrase. Lincoln's application of the term to those of African-American descent created dissent among some Americans, as they felt that Lincoln had twisted the historical words of the Declaration of Independence, which he had taken an oath to protect. He altered the cultural ideograph of "equality" and challenged the status quo, making Americans one people. His redefining of the words was a vital step in changing the minds of Americans all over about the equality of all blacks as well as all whites.

The second part of the address begins with “Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that Nation or any Nation so conceived and so dedicated can long endure.” This reminds the audience that the war is now, and that the Nation’s very existence is under attack. Further, he is imposing the question of whether or not the model that the Nation was conceived on is one that “can long endure.” With his parallelism “so conceived and so dedicated,” he once again references the analogy of birth, and reminds the audience of the individualism of the United States.

Lincoln then begins the dedicatory part of his speech. This second section focuses on the now, and the recent deaths of their fathers and brothers due to the war. The event itself was meant to dedicate the field as a national cemetery, and to remember those that had given their lives there. He states, “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,” reminding the audience why they are there. By stating that the soldiers had sacrificed their lives for the life of the Nation, Lincoln reiterates the idea of the Nation as a living being, one that must take life to be sustained. He then states, “But, in a larger sense.” This is the first turning point in the speech, and it is placed a little over one third of the way in. He shifts from a historical viewpoint to talking about the present dedication. However, he turns the dedication around and remarks that the ground is already hallowed by those that fought and died there. He states, “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 first part is both an anaphora and an asyndeton, as it involves repetition of a phrase while leaving out the connectives. He also has two examples of antithesis in this one sentence: “living-dead” and “add-detract.” Lincoln understood that a ceremonial speech needs to commemorate the event, but at the same time does not need to *prove* the magnitude of the event. The magnitude is clear, and he

then attempts to give justification for the deaths. He again uses antithesis and states, “The world will little note (nor long remember)” what was said on that field that day, but that the world would remember what had occurred there. Although this is untrue, due the popularity of his speech for years to come and the fact that the speech itself is remembered far more than the men that died there, his statement does focus the event on the soldiers themselves.

The third section of the address focuses on dedicating the audience to the goal of achieving the rebirth of the Nation. It brings the hourglass structure back out, focusing on rebirth and the future. It is one third of the speech, but also composed of only two sentences, the second of which has 82 words. It states: “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.” Black wrote that “rather” is the second turning point of the speech, bringing the focus to the future (38). He then states “we here highly resolve” to take up the cause themselves, and to fight for what their sons and brothers died for so that “these dead shall not have died in vain.” The challenge to the public to continue the soldier’s work is far more important than a lengthy recollection of each shot fired during the battle.

He talks of the Nation’s rebirth and then he ends by once again relating the Nation to the people, indicating the integral tie between this country, its government, and its people. This increases the challenge to the public. He states: “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.” He once again uses anaphora here for impact. Wills stated that this anaphora indicated the definition of America as *a* people (145). Lincoln’s use of “under God” has been widely talked about, as he seems to have added it in only in later drafts, and it was a skillful move. Lincoln’s choice to use negatives and say “shall not perish” is a reminder of what

could be. This last phrase of the Gettysburg Address is known by almost every American, and if they do not know of it, they have heard it.

The content of Lincoln's speech showcases his skill at rhetorical strategy. His words are chosen very carefully, and are repeated often with different meanings. Instead of saying that the soldiers lost their lives, he uses the word "gave." He uses "us," "people," "our," and "we" to focus on the Nation as a whole, to convey a sense of unity and pride, and to indicate that he is with the people in their fight. He never talks in the first person, but only includes himself as one with the people. He also does not reference the Union or the Confederates. He honors the dead on both sides by not differentiating between them. He defines them not as Yankees and Confederates, but as fathers and brothers, and all as Americans, sons of the fathers who founded the Nation. He uses "that" five times, and "this" four times, putting an emphasis on immediacy. "Here" is used six times throughout the speech, and works on two levels. While emphasizing that the war is upon them, it also creates a metaphorical "there" in the minds' of the audience. They can then see alternate futures "there" and can realize how their future actions may be able to change the future "there" of the country. Lincoln continues his analogy of birth throughout the speech. He uses a word in each section to reference the land: "continent," "ground," "earth." This shows the connection of Americans to the land we came to in an avoidance of tyranny, and the home we have established on that land out of the earth. In contrast to this various words regarding geographical location, he never changes his word for the country, "Nation," which he uses five times. In doing so, he creates an idea of the Nation as one with "duration and viability" (Black 25). Lincoln's repetition becomes a "constantly self-referential system" or a "hook-and-eye method for joining the parts of his address" (Wills 172). Examples are "that Nation"—"that field," "civil war"—"that war," "who struggled here"—"who fought here." Looking at the locations of each of these phrases indicates a clear pattern.

Some of Lincoln's word choice has been heavily critiqued. For one, he never inherently mentions slavery, or references the fact that in the 1789 Constitution, slavery was recognized with the "three-fifths compromise." This issue rests at the core of the Civil War, but Lincoln still draws the focus to the preservation of the Nation. Some say that by not mentioning these issues, and also seeming to twist the words of our Founders in his favor, Lincoln is extremely misleading. Lincoln's use of the phrase "all men are created equal" from the Declaration of Independence in a way that also relates to those of color is not what the Founders meant, and since the later Constitution recognizes slavery, he is skewing the words of one of the Nation's most valued works. However, the act of redefining is an important aspect of a new country that is attempting to modernize. With changing times come changes in culture, beliefs, and law so the cultural definition of ideographs must change as well. The Founding Fathers, after the war, created the Bill of Rights with this in mind. Lincoln seemingly categorized himself as a non-Constitutionalist when he said, "The political ideas of the Nation are transcendent, not empirical" (Jaffa 110). However, he is simply progressive and supporting relativistic truth.

Another reason for Lincoln's choice of words and choice of topics was the setting. If examined through Narrative criticism, it can be seen that the setting had a huge impact on accomplishing the objective. Not only because Lincoln was standing in front of the families of many that had fought and died at Gettysburg, but also because he was standing on a field on which many Americans had died, leading to a decrease in war support. Lincoln was there in the soldier's honor. He chooses to state that the soldiers had died for what they believed in, instead of saying they had died for slavery. Lincoln's topic choices and his avoidance of discussing the causes of the war allow him to convey the message that needed to be said to that audience while also addressing the entire American public, and moving the issue of the war beyond the immediate.

The text of the speech overflows with a very poetic feel. Lincoln uses anaphora, asyndeton, metaphor, antithesis, biblical terminology and parallelism. Cooper states that his speech is “characterized by compactness, balance, and metaphor” (xxxiii). His attendance to detail and skill at rhetoric is astounding, placing him in the realm of being deemed a poet. His speech follows a purposeful structure, and every detail within it is carefully chosen to give the intended meaning and imagery.

More often than not, dedicatory speeches focus on the event or person, and speak positively about it. However, Lincoln took a different approach. Not only did he focus on the work that was being done now and in the future, but he also used a large amount of negatives. He says “shall not,” “will not,” and “cannot,” and even states “cannot” three times consecutively. Surprising in a dedicatory speech, the set of these negative terms fits with Lincoln’s challenge, and the determination he conveys increases the call to action.

With a call to action, there is an appeal being made to the audience. In Lincoln’s case, he employs all three types: ethos, pathos and logos. His ethos was already well established, as the audience saw him as a strong leader. However, “the absence of any condemnation of the enemy” (Cooper xxxv) in his speech increased the level of respect his people held for him. An appeal to pathos is an appeal to emotion, and this is easily seen. The speech implores the listener to partake in protecting their country, and not to let the soldiers die in vain. He also appeals to the audience on the emotional level of their faith. On the other hand, an appeal to logos is an appeal to logic. This is especially used in the concluding words, as Lincoln convinces the listener that if the people do not step up, then the government that was made for the people will perish. Clearly, they must act. Lincoln’s use of both pathos and logos add to the persuasiveness of his words.

With any persuasive speech, there is an argument being made. There are five types of arguments: those from principle/definition, those from analogy/similitude, those from

consequence, those from circumstance, and those from authority. Lincoln uses two of these argument types to convey his message. He employs arguments from definition and from circumstance. Burke promulgated the idea that Lincoln argued from definition. He states that by using terms such as “Nation,” he is arguing that the concept of a Nation is a whole, and can not be broken. His use of “task” also presents the conservation of that Nation as something that *must* be done. Lincoln’s argument from circumstance is similar and also persuasive. The words “now we are engaged in a great civil war” remind the audience that regardless of the reasoning, the war is upon them. He then goes on to indicate that since others have died fighting for the cause, it is now the people’s job to pick up that torch, otherwise they would lose the government and all it is based upon. Lincoln’s short address argues for one goal in a multitude of ways.

Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address is one of the most concise yet most eloquent political speeches of all time. Reporter White of the *Chicago Tribune* wrote: “The successful speaker was he who could make himself best understood by the common people and in turn best understand them” (Braden 259). His vernacular terminology and the short length of the speech related him to the people in a way that a lengthy, literary oratory simply cannot. Although his speech is only a little over two minutes in length, it is multidimensional in its content.

All Men

When the Declaration of Independence was drafted by Thomas Jefferson in 1776, a new Nation was conceived. That document enabled Americans to feel they had the right to band together and fight to become a new Nation, separate from the tyranny of England and based on novel ideas of individual freedom. The most famous line states: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.”

The Declaration lost its immediate value after the Constitution was written in 1787, but this one line has transcended this and transformed into a moral concept of America. Lincoln himself viewed the Declaration as a lens through which to examine the Constitution. This could be seen as devaluing the Constitution, but the Declaration was written before the Revolution, and states the desires of the Founding Fathers for a new Nation. The phrase “all men are created equal” in the Constitution has been invoked by various individuals and marginalized groups, and Lincoln was the first to broaden the inherent belief that it simply applied to the white men.

Many criticized that Lincoln did not address the issue of slavery in his Gettysburg Address, the core reason that they were even there on that field that day. However, I argue that he did address the issue. Instead of spouting his opinion, insulting the South, or causing a debate, he simply uses this phrase from our Nation’s Constitution, and allows the people to discuss the application. He allowed subtlety to make his argument for him. He challenges the ideograph of “equality” and states “all men” in a context that made the audience automatically align it with slaves as well as white men.

Not all were thrilled with Lincoln’s statement. The *Chicago Times* wrote: “The cheek of every American must tingle with shame as he reads the silly flat and dishwattery [sic] remarks of

the man who has to be pointed out as the President of the United States. ... Is Mr. Lincoln less refined than a savage? ... It was a perversion of history so flagrant that the most extended charity cannot view it as otherwise than willful” (Warren). If Lincoln had not had a role in the writing of this speech, such a “willful” challenge of the status quo would not have been written into history.

Lincoln was the first American elected leader to challenge this status quo, created by the culture of slavery known worldwide for generations. Even so, this culture continues to exist in separate forms. Women and minorities are consistently dehumanized in various contexts and countries. The Civil Rights Movement and the feminist movements in the United States are largely based off this re-defined idea of equality. Martin Luther King Jr. begins his “I Have A Dream” speech with an allusion to Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address’ biblical terminology. Feminists held protests, holding signs with the Constitutions’ words.

Antislavery and feminist movements were inherently tied from the beginning due to women abolitionists, and Lincoln’s words, in the minds of many, addressed *all* those who felt discrimination. In 1837, Angelina Grimke stated: “Since I engaged in the investigation of the rights of the slave, I have necessarily been led to a better understanding of my own” (Stansell 29). The summer after Gettysburg, the Women’s National Loyal League wrote a petition with 400,000 signatures, which was largely responsible for the passing of the Thirteenth Amendment. Three years later, the American Equal Rights Association was founded, stating in their mission, “As women, we can no longer *seem* to claim for ourselves what we do not for others – nor can we work in two separate movements to get the ballot for the two disfranchised classes – the negro and woman – since to do so must be at double cost of time, energy, and money” (Stansell 85). Lincoln then ground both these united movements in the Constitution, promoting full equality. The Constitution was meant to define a country, and Lincoln is responsible for then redefining this definition.

Effect and Value

Historians, orators, and writers have analyzed this speech thousands and thousands of times over the years. They analyze every aspect, trying to discover how this speech was able to expertly convey exactly what needed to be said while also commemorating the soldiers and challenging the public. Cicero wrote in *De Oratore*: “But in an orator we must demand the subtlety of the logician, the thoughts of a philosopher, a diction almost poetic, a lawyer’s memory, a tragedian’s voice and the bearing almost of the consummate actor” (91). Lincoln reaches all of these criteria, which had been set down decades before in a country far from America. He conceives a speech which fit the moment, himself, the audience, the setting, and the criteria of a good speech, all in two minutes. This speech is eternal because it seems to be alive, is short and relatable and touches all Americans on a personal level.

Lincoln’s speech was hugely successful, and appreciated by all who heard it. When he delivered it, he was interrupted by applause five times. His assistant John Hay wrote that he spoke “in a fine, free way, with more grace than is his wont” (Wills 36). Not only was the Battle at Gettysburg a turning point in the war, but Lincoln’s address lit a fresh fire under the downtrodden citizens of a country ravaged by war. He does not talk on the major issues of the war, but simply on the war itself, and the threat of an America torn apart. As mentioned earlier, this was a speech waiting to be made, and it fulfilled its purpose. Ethically, the speech is also sound. There is no deception involved, and the communication is honest. The audience picked up on this honesty as well, as is indicated by the public’s view of Lincoln as “Honest Abe.”

Lincoln had a large hand in the creation of his speeches, and although presidents have the best speech writers at their disposal, the ending product is an expression of Lincoln himself, without becoming a continually self-referent monologue. He created an enthymatic structure

following a historical timeline and the cycle of life, with various biblical, historical, and cosmological references. He wrote as a poet writes, with particular attention to word choice, and figurative language. He makes an argument, presents a challenge, dedicates the grounds and redefines cultural ideologies. Lincoln said exactly what needed to be said in so short of time that the audience had hardly thought it had begun, and both he and the audience did not recognize the immediate value at the time.

After Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, the Civil War lasted for another year and a half, but the Confederates were in shambles. Lincoln was elected for his second term in November 1864, and the Thirteenth Amendment passed as a law on January 31, 1865. The war officially ended on April 9, 1865 at the Appomattox Courthouse in Virginia, where General Lee surrendered to General Grant. Five days later, on April 14, Abraham Lincoln was shot in the head by John Wilkes Booth. Booth was a Southern sympathizer and was furious at the war loss, the abolition of slavery, and Lincoln's future plans to grant Blacks some voting rights. He shot Lincoln in the back of the head while Lincoln was watching a play at the Ford Theater, and he passed away the following morning. The great president, orator, and man was gone.

The impact of Lincoln's speech stretches far beyond the effect it had on those who heard or read it in that time. The fact that his words are carved into the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C. prove this fact. Jaffa stated: "Lincoln's words...have proved more powerful than tyranny and despotism" (78). The redefining of American equality to include Blacks was an idea that had never before been presented, and it expanded the concept of humanity as well. Even the Emancipation Proclamation, and Lincoln himself in earlier times, did not argue for equality but simply for the abolition of slavery. After the war, when slaves were now free, Lincoln's words still resounded in the hearts of African Americans across the country. These words planted seeds of hope in their hearts, and later down the road, inspired the civil rights movement. In

Martin Luther King Jr's speech "I Have a Dream," he starts off by immediately alluding to the Gettysburg Address with his words "five score years ago." He then continues with his speech, advocating equality for all. Though the war was not fought for full equality, Lincoln's address at Gettysburg seems to be the beginning of the civil rights movement.

In my opinion, this speech is the most magnificent that I have studied. In the repetitive reading of its text, I am reminded over and over of its perfect complexity. Though short, it incorporates everything Lincoln needed to get across at the time, and it is beautifully written by Lincoln himself. The analogy of the Nation as a child and the anaphoras are the most intriguing aspects, and the most intelligent. At a time when our Nation was fighting within itself, a strong leader was needed, and Lincoln easily rose to the challenge. He was able stand tall in the mess of war, and his tenor voice carried the words that inspired Americans to fight for the America we have today. Its short length increases its position as easily referential and makes it even more memorable in the minds and hearts of so many Americans. Abraham Lincoln was the cornerstone of America, and his words at Gettysburg reinforce this view.

Gettysburg Bliss Manuscript

"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 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."

Abraham Lincoln
Nov 19, 1863
Bliss manuscript



Lincoln at Gettysburg

Executive Mansion,

Washington, _____, 186

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 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.

It is rather for us, the living, ^{we here be sworn} to stand here,

ted to the great task remaining before us—
that, from these honored dead we take an
increased devotion to that cause for which
they here, gave the last full measure of our
selves.— that we here highly resolve that
these dead shall not have died in vain; that
the nation, shall have a new birth of free-
dom, and that government of the people by
the people for the people, shall not per-
ish from the earth.

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