

Lesson Plan

Examining the Gettysburg Address

Book: The Battle of Gettysburg

Series: Major Battles in US History

Level: Navigator

Objective

To help students practice examining the meaning of a speech, including how the speaker's language and organization of information contribute to that meaning.

Supplies

- *The Battle of Gettysburg*
- Interactive Gettysburg Address: http://logs2.smithsonian.museum/FlashBrowser/viewfa.html?path=kioskinteractives/GA_final/Document_gallery2.cis&ratio=1.77
- Examining the Gettysburg Address worksheet

Before the Activity

Read through *The Battle of Gettysburg*, or assign it to the students to read on their own. Print a copy of the Examining the Gettysburg Address worksheet for each student.

Activity

Choose a volunteer to read the first two paragraphs on page 28 of *The Battle of Gettysburg*. These paragraphs tell about what happened after the Battle of Gettysburg and give a very brief summary of Lincoln's famous speech called the Gettysburg Address.

Use the Interactive Gettysburg Address web page to have the students listen to an actor reading the Gettysburg Address out loud. Then give each student a copy of the Examining the Gettysburg Address worksheet. They should use the text of the Gettysburg Address to answer the questions on the worksheet.

Evaluation

Give each student up to 5 points for answering each question, for a total of up to 25 points. An answer key with sample answers is included (see below), but students' answer will likely vary.

Standards

This lesson may be used to address the Common Core State Standards' reading informational texts standards, grade 4 (RI 4.5), speaking and listening standards, grade 4 (SL 4.2; SL 4.3) and language standards, grade 4 (L 4.5).

Examining the Gettysburg Address

1. Lincoln began his speech by saying, “Fourscore and seven years ago . . .” What is Lincoln alluding to? Why do you think he chose to begin his speech this way?
2. What do you think Lincoln meant when he talked about “the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far nobly advanced”?
3. What do the words *dedicate*, *consecrate*, and *hallow* mean? Why do you think Lincoln chose to use all three of these words when he said, “We cannot dedicate—we cannot consecrate—we cannot hallow this ground”?
4. What do you think Lincoln meant by “we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain”?
5. Near the end of his speech, Lincoln says that the nation “shall have a new birth of freedom.” In what other part of the speech does Lincoln mention the word *new* and the concept of birth? Why do you think he chose to refer to them again here?

Examining the Gettysburg Address (ANSWER KEY)

1. Lincoln began his speech by saying, “Fourscore and seven years ago...” What is Lincoln alluding to? Why do you think he chose to begin his speech this way?

Sample answer: Lincoln is referring to the American Revolution and the Founding Fathers’ decision to start a new nation that was independent of the British monarchy. By beginning the speech this way, Lincoln is drawing a parallel between the Union’s fight to keep the country together with the American colonists’ fight for independence.

2. What do you think Lincoln meant when he talked about “the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far nobly advanced”?

Sample answer: Lincoln likely meant that since the men who died at Gettysburg gave their lives to help support the cause of keeping the United States together, the soldiers who are still living should be determined to also fight hard to support this cause.

3. What do the words *dedicate*, *consecrate*, and *hallow* mean? Why do you think Lincoln chose to use all three of these words when he said, “We cannot dedicate—we cannot consecrate—we cannot hallow this ground”?

Sample answer: According to Merriam-Webster’s online dictionary, dedicate means “to officially make something a place for honoring or remembering a person or event.” Consecrate means “to make something sacred or to set it apart for a special purpose.” Hallow means “to make something holy, to set it apart as holy, or to greatly respect it.” By repeating this similar concept, Lincoln gave this point added emphasis.

4. What do you think Lincoln meant by “we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain”?

Sample answer: Lincoln likely meant that he and the rest of the soldiers would work very hard to support the cause that these men died for so that their deaths would not be for a losing cause. He was trying to motivate his listeners to be committed to action.

5. Near the end of his speech, Lincoln says that the nation “shall have a new birth of freedom.” In what other part of the speech does Lincoln mention the word *new* and the concept of birth? Why do you think he chose to refer to them again here?

Sample answer: Lincoln used similar words at the beginning of his speech when he described “a new nation, conceived in Liberty.” By bringing similar words back at the end of his speech, Lincoln is reminding his listeners again that he feels that the fight to preserve the Union is just as worthwhile and patriotic as the original fight for independence from Britain.