

## Slavery, the Civil War & Reconstruction Gettysburg and the Gettysburg Address

In the summer of 1863, Southern and Northern troops clashed in one of the bloodiest battles of the Civil War. After the Confederate, or Southern, Army won a battle in northern Virginia, it invaded the North and headed into Pennsylvania. It hoped to collect more supplies and weaken the North. Meanwhile, the Union Army of the North was pursuing the Confederate troops. The two sides met and fought near the town of Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. The Battle of Gettysburg has been called “the most **crucial**<sup>1</sup> battle in American history.”

Before the Battle of Gettysburg, the Confederacy had been doing very well in the Civil War. But at Gettysburg, the North defeated the South. The battle was bloody. The Union Army suffered 23,000 casualties, while the Confederate Army suffered 28,000. A casualty is someone who is killed, wounded, or captured in battle. The Battle of Gettysburg turned the tide of the war and marked the beginning of the success of the North in defeating the South.

In the fall of 1863, President Lincoln visited the battlefield at Gettysburg for a ceremony dedicating the field to all the soldiers who had died. He reminded people why Americans must stand up for their values. His speech, the Gettysburg Address, has become one of the most famous speeches of American history. Lincoln said:

“Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, **conceived**<sup>2</sup> in Liberty, and dedicated to the [idea] 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

---

<sup>1</sup> **crucial** – extremely important

<sup>2</sup> **conceived** – formed in the mind or thought up

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 **consecrate**<sup>1</sup>—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**.<sup>2</sup> 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**<sup>3</sup> 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, and for the people, shall not **perish**<sup>4</sup> from the earth.”

Lincoln’s words were never forgotten. The government of the people, by the people, and for the people remains.

---

<sup>1</sup> **consecrate** – to make holy

<sup>2</sup> **detract** – to take away from

<sup>3</sup> **dedicated** – devoted or committed to

<sup>4</sup> **perish** – to come to an end

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

1. The Battle of Gettysburg has been called “the most crucial battle in American history” because

- a. it was a turning point in the Civil War.
- b. it was the first time the North was invaded.
- c. it took place in Pennsylvania.
- d. Lincoln gave a famous speech at Gettysburg.

2. The purpose of the paragraphs before the text of the Gettysburg Address is to

- a. explain how the South defeated the North.
- b. provide historical context for the Address.
- c. examine the dedication of the battlefield.
- d. criticize Lincoln’s speech.

3. Which statement best describes the Gettysburg Address?

- a. It shows Lincoln’s loss of hope for winning the war.
- b. It shows Lincoln’s determination to have a unified country once more.
- c. It shows Lincoln’s main priority was to punish the South for starting the war.
- d. It shows Lincoln’s lack of leadership and focus during such a difficult time for America.

4. What government was President Lincoln referring to as a “government of the people, by the people, and for the people”?

- a. the Confederacy
- b. the Northern Army
- c. the United States of America
- d. Britain

5. The passage “Gettysburg and the Gettysburg Address” is mostly about

- a. how a town in Pennsylvania recovered after the Civil War.
- b. an important battle and a speech that was given about it.
- c. the locations of important battles in the Civil War.
- d. how Lincoln was involved in the Battle of Gettysburg.

6. What is the “great task” described in the Gettysburg Address?

---

---

---

7. What does Lincoln’s description of the “great task” show about his attitude toward the war?

---

---

---

8. The question below is an incomplete sentence. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence.

In the summer of 1863, the Confederate Army of the South invaded the North \_\_\_\_\_ it hoped to collect more supplies and weaken the North.

- a. sometimes
- b. however
- c. because
- d. although

9. Read the following sentence.

In the fall of 1863, President Lincoln visited the battlefield at Gettysburg in order to dedicate the field to all the soldiers who had died.

Answer the following questions based on the information provided in the sentence you just read. One of the questions has already been answered for you.

1. Who is the main subject of the sentence? \_\_\_\_\_

2. What did he do? visited the battlefield at Gettysburg

3. Why? \_\_\_\_\_

4. When? \_\_\_\_\_

10. **Vocabulary Word:** crucial: extremely important.

Use the vocabulary word in a sentence: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Teacher Guide and Answers

**Passage Reading Level:** Lexile 1060

**Featured Text Structure:** Descriptive – the writer explains, defines, or illustrates a concept or topic

**Passage Summary:** The passage provides information about the “most crucial battle in American history,” the Battle of Gettysburg. In this battle Union forces defeated the Confederate Army in the town of Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. The passage also describes the historical context behind President Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address and provides the text of the speech.

1. The Battle of Gettysburg has been called “the most crucial battle in American history” because
  - a. **it was a turning point in the Civil War.**
  - b. it was the first time the North was invaded.
  - c. it took place in Pennsylvania.
  - d. Lincoln gave a famous speech at Gettysburg.
  
2. The purpose of the paragraphs before the text of the Gettysburg Address is to
  - a. explain how the South defeated the North.
  - b. **provide historical context for the Address.**
  - c. examine the dedication of the battlefield.
  - d. criticize Lincoln’s speech.
  
3. Which statement best describes the Gettysburg Address?
  - a. It shows Lincoln’s loss of hope for winning the war.
  - b. **It shows Lincoln’s determination to have a unified country once more.**
  - c. It shows Lincoln’s main priority was to punish the South for starting the war.
  - d. It shows Lincoln’s lack of leadership and focus during such a difficult time for America.
  
4. What government was President Lincoln referring to as a “government of the people, by the people, and for the people”?
  - a. the Confederacy
  - b. the Northern Army
  - c. **the United States of America**
  - d. Britain

5. The passage “Gettysburg and the Gettysburg Address” is mostly about

- a. how a town in Pennsylvania recovered after the Civil War.
- b. an important battle and a speech that was given about it.**
- c. the locations of important battles in the Civil War.
- d. how Lincoln was involved in the Battle of Gettysburg.

6. What is the “great task” described in the Gettysburg Address?

**Suggested answer:** The “great task” is to make sure that the soldiers who fought at Gettysburg did not die for nothing and that the democratic government of the United States lives on.

7. What does Lincoln’s description of the “great task” show about his attitude toward the war?

**Suggested answer:** Lincoln’s words show that he was very determined to win the war. They also show that he cared a lot about the country he led and the soldiers who died for it.

8. The question below is an incomplete sentence. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence.

In the summer of 1863, the Confederate Army of the South invaded the North \_\_\_\_\_ it hoped to collect more supplies and weaken the North.

- a. sometimes
- b. however
- c. because**
- d. although

9. Read the following sentence.

In the fall of 1863, President Lincoln visited the battlefield at Gettysburg in order to dedicate the field to all the soldiers who had died.

Answer the following questions based on the information provided in the sentence you just read. One of the questions has already been answered for you.

1. Who is the main subject of the sentence? **President Lincoln**
2. What did he do? visited the battlefield at Gettysburg
3. Why? **in order to dedicate the field to all the soldiers who had died**
4. When? **in the fall of 1863**

10. **Vocabulary Word:** crucial: extremely important.

Use the vocabulary word in a sentence: answers may vary.