



Gettysburg Address

Edited from Wikipedia by Wayne O Evans

The **Gettysburg Address** is a speech by [U.S. President Abraham Lincoln](#), one of the best-known in [American history](#). It was delivered by Lincoln during the [American Civil War](#), on the afternoon of Thursday, November 19, 1863, at the dedication of the [Soldiers' National Cemetery](#) in [Gettysburg, Pennsylvania](#), four and a half months after the [Union](#) armies defeated those of the [Confederacy](#) at the [Battle of Gettysburg](#).

Beginning with the now-iconic phrase "Four [score](#) and seven years ago"—referring to the [United States Declaration of Independence](#) in 1776—Lincoln examined the founding principles of the United States as stated in the Declaration of Independence. In the context of the [Civil War](#), Lincoln also memorialized the sacrifices of those who gave their lives at Gettysburg and extolled virtues for the listeners (and the nation) to ensure the survival of America's representative democracy: that "government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth."

Despite the speech's prominent place in the history and popular culture of the United States, the exact wording and location of the speech are disputed. The five known [manuscripts](#) of the Gettysburg Address in Lincoln's hand differ in a number of details, and also differ from contemporary newspaper reprints of the speech.

Background

Following the [Battle of Gettysburg](#) on July 1–3, 1863, reburial of Union soldiers from the [Gettysburg Battlefield](#) graves began on October 17. [David Wills](#), of the committee for the November 19 [Consecration of the National Cemetery at Gettysburg](#), invited President Lincoln: "It is the desire that, after the Oration, you, as Chief Executive of the nation, formally set apart these grounds to their sacred use by a few appropriate remarks." Lincoln's address followed the oration by [Edward Everett](#). Edward Everett delivered a two-hour oration before Lincoln's few minutes of dedicatory remarks.

During the train trip from Washington, D.C., to Gettysburg on November 18, Lincoln remarked to [John Hay](#) that he felt weak. On the morning of November 19, Lincoln mentioned to [John Nicolay](#) that he was dizzy. In the railroad car the President rode with his secretary, John G. Nicolay, his assistant secretary, John Hay, the three members of his Cabinet who accompanied him, [William Seward](#), [John Usher](#) and [Montgomery Blair](#), several foreign officials and others. Hay noted that during the speech Lincoln's face had 'a ghastly color' and that he was 'sad, mournful, almost haggard.' After the speech, when Lincoln boarded the 6:30 pm train for Washington, D.C., he was feverish and weak, with a severe headache. A protracted illness followed, which included a vesicular rash and was diagnosed as a mild case of [smallpox](#).

While it is Lincoln's short speech that has gone down in history as one of the finest examples of English public oratory, it was Everett's two-hour oration that was slated to be the "Gettysburg address" that day. Lengthy dedication addresses like Everett's were common at cemeteries in this era.

Text of Gettysburg Address

Shortly after Everett's well-received remarks, Lincoln spoke for only a few minutes. With a "few appropriate remarks", he was able to summarize his view of the war in just ten sentences.

Despite the historical significance of Lincoln's speech, modern scholars disagree as to its exact wording, and contemporary transcriptions published in newspaper accounts of the event and even handwritten copies by Lincoln himself differ in their wording, punctuation, and structure. Of these versions, the Bliss version, written well after the speech as a favor for a friend, is viewed by many as the standard text. Its text differs, however, from the written versions prepared by Lincoln before and after his speech. It is the only version to which Lincoln affixed his signature, and the last he is known to have written.

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 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.