



PRIMARY SOURCE



Four months after the battle, a cemetery for the Union soldiers who died at Gettysburg was dedicated on November 19, 1863. The main speaker talked for about two hours. Then President Lincoln spoke for about two minutes, in fewer than 300 words. Here is the whole speech, in five parts.

The Gettysburg Address

Lincoln's words

In plain English

Part 1	<i>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.</i>	87 years ago, in 1776, the year of the Declaration of Independence, the people who came before us started a new country here. It began with the idea of freedom and was built on the belief that all people are created equal.
Part 2	<i>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 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.</i>	Now we are fighting a civil war, which is a test of whether a country built on those ideas can last. We are standing on a battlefield of that war. We came to set aside part of it as a cemetery for the men who died so that the country could live. It is right that we do this.
Part 3	<i>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.</i>	But really, we cannot make this ground holy. The brave soldiers who fought here, living and dead, already made it holy, far more than anything we could add or take away.
Part 4	<i>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.</i>	People will not pay much attention to our speeches or remember them long, but they will never forget what the soldiers did here. We who are still alive should give ourselves to the work the soldiers started and have not yet finished.
Part 5	<i>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.</i>	We must take on the big job still ahead. These soldiers gave their lives for their cause, so we should work even harder for it. We promise that they did not die for nothing: that our country will have a new start of freedom, and that government by the people and for the people will not disappear from the world.

Abraham Lincoln, Address at the dedication of the Soldiers' National Cemetery, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, November 19, 1863. The Bliss copy (written out by Lincoln in 1864; the only copy he signed and dated), as transcribed by Abraham Lincoln Online (<https://www.abrahamlincolnonline.org/lincoln/speeches/gettysburg.htm>). Public domain. Complete text; Lincoln's double hyphens are printed as dashes.