

“House Divided” (June 16, 1858)

Background: Abraham Lincoln gave this speech at the Republican State Convention in Springfield Illinois. In this meeting, Lincoln is named the Republican nominee for the United States Senate. Lincoln would lose this race to Senator Douglas. Keep in mind that this speech was done before the Civil War began.

Guided Question: What is Lincoln’s stance on engaging in a Civil War?

A house divided against itself cannot stand." I believe this government cannot **endure**, permanently, half slave and half free. I do not expect the **Union** to be **dissolved**; I do not expect the house to fall; but I do expect it will **cease** to be divided. It will become all one thing, or all the other. Either the opponents of slavery will arrest the further spread of it and place it where the public mind shall rest in the belief that it is in the course of ultimate **extinction**, or its **advocates** will push it forward till it shall become alike **lawful** in all the states, old as well as new, North as well as South.

Endure- survive

Union- country

Dissolved- break up

Cease- come to an end

Extinction- eliminate

Advocates- supporters

Lawful- allowed

Supplementary Questions:

1. What is Lincoln arguing in this excerpt? What prediction does he make?

2. Does this speech relate to the Declaration of Independence? If so, how?

Guided Question Re-Visited:

What is Lincoln’s stance on engaging in a Civil War? (Does Lincoln have any intentions of going to war? What evidence can you draw from this document?)

First Inaugural Address (March 4, 1861)

Background: Abraham Lincoln became the 16th President of the United States. He won 60% of the electoral vote yet only 40% of the popular vote. It is important to note that some Southern states did not put his name on the ballot. An inaugural address is made when a president is sworn into office. After this speech, some of the Southern states had already seceded.

Guided Question: What is Lincoln's stance on engaging in a Civil War?

I have no purpose, directly or indirectly, to interfere with the **institution** of slavery in the States where it exists. I believe I have no **lawful** right to do so, and I have no **inclination** to do so. ... In your hands, my dissatisfied fellow-countrymen, and not in mine, is the **momentous** issue of civil war. The Government will not **assail** you. You can have no conflict without being yourselves the **aggressors**. You have no oath registered in heaven to destroy the Government, while I shall have the most **solemn** one to "preserve, protect, and defend it. I am **loath** to close. We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained it must not break our bonds of affection. The **mystic chords** of memory, stretching from every battlefield and patriot grave to every living heart and **hearthstone** all over this broad land, will yet swell the chorus of the **Union** (country), when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature.

Institution- practice

Lawful- allowed

Inclination- wish

Momentous- important

Assail- attack

Aggressors- attacker

Solemn- honest/genuine

Loath- unwilling

Mystic Chords-

Hearthstone-

Supplementary Questions:

1. What oath is Lincoln making? Why doesn't the seceded states have an oath? What is he arguing?

2. Does this speech relate to the Declaration of Independence? If so, how?

Guided Question Re-Visited:

What is Lincoln's stance on engaging in a Civil War? (What are his reasons to going into war?)

Emancipation Proclamation (January 1, 1863)

Background: President Lincoln decided to free the slaves in the Southern Confederacy. The first version of this announcement took place in September of 1862 and would take effect on January 1, 1863.

Guided Question: What is Lincoln's stance on engaging in a Civil War?

"... all persons held as slaves within any State or **designated** part of a State, the people whereof shall then be in rebellion against the United States, shall be then, **thenceforward**, and forever free; and the **Executive** Government of the United States, including the military and naval authority thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of such persons, and will do no act or acts to **repress** such persons, or any of them, in any efforts they may make for their actual freedom...

And I further declare and make known, that such persons of **suitable** condition, will be received into the armed service of the United States to **garrison forts**, positions, stations, and other places, and to man **vessels** of all sorts in said service..."

Designated- labeled

Thenceforward- from now on

Executive- lawmaking

Repress- keep under control

Suitable- appropriate

Garrison forts- soldier camps

Vessels- ship

Supplementary Questions:

1. Who are the "persons" Lincoln is referring to and where do they live?

2. How will this proclamation affect the Union army?

3. What is Lincoln arguing in this excerpt?

4. Does this speech relate to the Declaration of Independence? If so, how?

Guided Question Re-Visited:

What is Lincoln's stance on engaging in a Civil War? (What are his reasons for fighting the war?)

Gettysburg Address (November 19, 1863)

Background: Six months after the Union's (the North) victory in the Battle of Gettysburg, Lincoln gave this speech as a part of a dedication of the Gettysburg cemetery. In this battle, 23,000 Union and 28,000 Confederacy soldiers died.

Guided Question: What is Lincoln's stance on engaging in a Civil War?

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 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.

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."

Four score & seven years ago-107 years ago

Conceived- created

Proposition- idea

Endure- last

Consecrate- make sacred

Hallow- honor

Detract- take away from

Vain- pointless

Perish- die

Supplementary Questions:

1. What is the unfinished task Lincoln is referring to?
2. How did Lincoln think people could honor those who died?
3. What does "a new birth of freedom" mean?

4. Why does Lincoln think people of the Union should continue fighting the war?

5. What is Lincoln arguing in this excerpt?

6. Does this speech relate to the Declaration of Independence? If so, how?

Guided Question Re-Visited:

What is Lincoln's stance on engaging in a Civil War? (What are his reasons for fighting the war?)

Second Inaugural Address (March 4, 1865)

Background: Four years into the war, the Union re-elected Lincoln as president. In this inaugural address, Lincoln discusses the need to reunite and rebuild the South.

Guided Question: What is Lincoln's stance on engaging in a Civil War?

...One-eighth of the whole population were colored slaves, not **distributed** generally over the **Union** (the North), but **localized** in the southern part of it. These slaves constituted a **peculiar** and powerful interest. All knew that this interest was somehow the cause of the war. To strengthen, **perpetuate**, and extend this interest was the object for which the **insurgents** would **rend** the Union even by war, while the Government claimed no right to do more than to restrict the territorial enlargement of it. Neither party expected for the war the **magnitude** or the **duration** which it has already attained. Neither anticipated that the cause of the conflict might cease with or even before the conflict itself should **cease**...

Distributed- spread
Localized- contained
Peculiar- strange/unusual
Perpetuate- carry on
Insurgents- rebels
Rend- tear apart
Magnitude- importance
Duration- time span
Cease- come to an end

Supplementary Questions:

1. What is the peculiar and powerful interest and what did it have to do with the start of the war?
2. What is Lincoln arguing in this excerpt?
3. Does this speech relate to the Declaration of Independence? If so, how?

Guided Question Re-Visited:

What is Lincoln's stance on engaging in a Civil War? (What are his reasons for fighting the war?)