



New Student Reading Project Fall 2008 Student Essay Winners

Alexandar Perez	Kate Orlofsky
Gabriella Bensusur	Miles Ludek
Marc Leh	Gabrielle Yo
Mauricio Vieto	Matthew Christensen
Xiao Wang	Steven Xu

Honorable Mention

Olivia Carman	John Kirk
Benjamin D. Walker	Elsie Shogren
Ragini Sharma	

“All modern political prose descends from the Gettysburg address,” Wills claims, in what he says is only a mild exaggeration (p.148). What features of Lincoln’s address make it “modern,” in Wills’ view, and what does Wills understand by that term?

Alexandar Reinaldo Perez

It is the speech from which “all modern political prose descends” (Wills 148). Spoken by one of America’s most iconic presidents the 272 word Gettysburg Address forever changed the landscape of modern language. It melds brevity with potency and relays a message of conviction with resolution. It marks a turning point in not only Civil War history, as the Union would gain the upper hand after the Battle of Gettysburg, but it also marks a turning point in contemporary prose. It is a revolutionary speech in which “the power of words” was “rarely...given a more compelling demonstration” (Wills 20). The precision and usage of words in critical places allows the speech’s theme to transcend through an audience and engulf a public in its essence. The diction of the Gettysburg Address empowers a message of resolution and commitment to the task at hand: the finishing of the Civil War.

Lincoln’s audience is a grieving one. It mourns the memory of Gettysburg and is uncertain of the path of the war. Morale is weary and the country’s spirit is weak. Three years of civil war have shaken the Union to its core and its resolution to finishing the conflict is crumbling. Lincoln stands before his public with full knowledge of this sentiment. Yet, his message does not falter. He opens his speech immediately connecting the audience to its history. The public become bonded to the “new nation” which was “brought forth on this continent” by “our fathers” and “conceived in liberty and dedicated to the purpose that all men are created equal” (Lincoln). Lincoln illustrates the country as a nation founded on the hopes, dreams, and ideals of his audience’s forefathers. He sets the stage for his main argument. Yet, before he can reveal his speech’s true intent Lincoln must maneuver his public.

Lincoln opens with remarks that leave the inference, that though the ideals of the nation are set forth, they are not fully realized. They are like a “conceived” child: known to be, but abstract and ambiguous in form (Lincoln). These juvenile ideas, however, are at risk of perishing before they can ever mature. The country is “engaged in a great civil war” in which the ideals and principles of the nation or “any nation so conceived and so dedicated” to liberty and equality are tested to see whether they “can long endure” (Lincoln). The war is a holocaust in which the infant nation’s hallmark beliefs of liberty and equality are threatened with eradication. Lincoln corners his public’s pathos and begins to manipulate their perspective for the conflict. An intimacy by proxy arises between Lincoln and his audience as he narrows the scope of his speech from the war in general to a single “battle-field of that war” that they “are met on”, Gettysburg (Lincoln). Lincoln progresses along the expected path of the dedication as he lures his public into attentive expectation for what they believe will be his “fitting and proper” remarks concerning the dedicating of “a portion of (the) field, as a resting place for those who...gave their lives” there (Lincoln). The public readies for the speech’s emphasis. The stage is set.

Lincoln hijacks the expected dedication, instead revealing that he and his audience “cannot dedicate...cannot consecrate...cannot hallow this ground” (Lincoln). It is the action of

“the brave men, living and dead who struggled here” who “have consecrated it” (Lincoln). He emphasizes that the words spoken here “will (be) little noted, nor long remember(ed)” by history, but the deeds of Gettysburg the “world will...never forget” (Lincoln). Lincoln pulls a brilliant slight of hand as he dismisses the expectation for a traditional dedication and instead moves to emphasize an unexpected but potent message. He frames the dedication as something not for the dead but the living “to be dedicated...to”, a dedication to “the unfinished work which” brave men “fought...so nobly (to) advance” (Lincoln: siq). Lincoln appeals to his public’s reverence for the fallen as he declares in the stead of consecrating the land for the dead “it is rather for” them “to be...dedicated to the great task remaining before them”: the finishing of the war (Lincoln).

Lincoln snaps his audience into his perspective as he gives life to the sentiment “that from these honored dead” the living are to “take increased devotion to that cause for which” the fallen “gave their last full measure of devotion” (Lincoln). He connects his public to the battlefield as he merges the devotions of audience and soldier into one. A comradeship erupts between the two as Lincoln instills a commitment in his audience towards the finishing of the war. The honoring of the dead becomes equivalent with the resolution of the living to finish what was fought for at Gettysburg. Lincoln elevates his public’s pathos to an extreme evoking the conviction “that these dead shall not have died in vain” and that indeed “this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom” (Lincoln). Lincoln climaxes illustrating that though the ideals of the United States were “conceived” by “our fathers” and “consecrated” by its soldiers, it is the people of the country and their resolution “that government of the people, by the people, (and) for the people shall not perish from the Earth” that give “a new birth of freedom” to it (Lincoln).

The Gettysburg Address is an inspirational speech whose design is to motivate an audience to remain resolute to the orator’s theme: the Civil War. In its most elemental form it is a propaganda speech and yet it is much more. The truth is “Lincoln...knew the power of his rhetoric to define war aims” and understood the role it had on his audience (Wills 25). He intends “to ‘win’ the whole Civil War in ideological terms as well as military ones” as he melds potency with brevity and relays its convicting message to his public (Wills 37). The Gettysburg Address marks a transformation in modern prose as conciseness and precision conquer the elaborate and superfluous. Writing takes on the resemblance of conversation instead of narrative, and economy of thought and word are considered foremost. The power of words is given a new breath. Modern prose, like our perspective on the Union, is not only shaped by the Gettysburg Address, it’s born from it.

Works Cited:

Wills, Garry. *Lincoln at Gettysburg*. New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 1992.
Lincoln, Abraham. “The Gettysburg Address”. Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. 19th of November 1863.

Alexandar Perez, who comes from Denver, Colorado, is enrolled in the College of Arts and Sciences where he is a prospective Chemistry major.

Wills reminds us that some of Lincoln's critics continue to attack him for "subverting the Constitution" at Gettysburg (p.39). Do these critics make valid points? How, if at all, might Lincoln defend the view of the Constitution informing the Gettysburg Address?

Gabriella Elizabeth Bensus

"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." Every American has a comfortable familiarity with these words. It is ingrained into our very cultural psyche and in a very peculiar way, the ethos of our nation may just have been molded by this line, spoken by Lincoln when he gave the ever famous Gettysburg Address. The "spirit of America" or the paradigms that form our culture are inherently based upon this statement, just as they are based upon the words "We the people" and "Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

This concept is not one that many of us think of often. I certainly had never really considered liberty or equality as anything more than basic American values that I lived by. I never considered that these values, which I undoubtedly take for granted, were never written as they are expressed today in the Constitution, the very soul of our nation. We all know about slavery and the struggle that ensued to free our nation from its perilous grip on our people, but I doubt many of us realize that equality was never explicitly stated in the working law of our nation, that equality was a value that was not necessarily intended from the start, that this basic principle from which many other cultural norms and standards are set might not have been valued so highly by our Founding Fathers. And, in all actuality, that one of the most cherished presidents, Abraham Lincoln, quite possibly, as some of his critics say, was "subverting the Constitution" when he decided to implement equality as a fundamental principle in the American psyche. When I realized this, I understood how the words of this behemoth did in fact remake America, as author Gary Wills claims.

Lincoln reshaped America in ways I cannot fathom. I cannot imagine an America without the equality of opportunity, which all began because of Lincoln's alleged subversion of the Constitution. While critics of Lincoln explain that what Lincoln did was, in short, underhanded and theoretically illegal because he went against the basic principles of the universal and fundamental law of the land, Lincoln did not see the instatement of equality as "subverting the Constitution." He saw this action as a necessity for the well-being of the nation, and he took steps to implement it. If you look at the actual text of the Constitution, you may well believe that Lincoln twisted its concepts and ideals because equality is never expressly stated. Instead, slavery is directly addressed and has laws imposed upon it. However, while equality is not stated, neither is the word "slave" or "slavery." The specific articles that address slavery, Article 1, Section 2; Article 1, Section 9, Clause 1; and Article 4, Section 2, only suggest slavery. The omission of equality is not exactly relevant seeing as slavery was not stated either. However, slavery was heavily implied, which allows critics to draw the conclusion that equality could therefore not be implied—as slavery is its direct contradiction.

So why did Lincoln defy the very heart of his country and throw equality and liberty into the teeth of his enemies? Simply because he found the Declaration of Independence—a

document which explicitly states equality as a right of all people—as philosophically more important than the Constitution. Lincoln would have argued—that is, if anyone had had the audacity to say to his face that he was literally changing the Constitution with no due process of law—with two main principles: first, that the Declaration of Independence as the spirit of law supersedes the written law represented in the Constitution, and that an Executive Order can move outside of the bounds of Constitutional law when it is deemed necessary for the nation and the issue at hand is not compatible to the situations addressed by the Constitution.

The first argument is very clear in Lincoln’s thought and quite neatly erodes all ideas of subversion into nothingness when it is viewed as a founding spirit versus a founding law. The Declaration of Independence was the intended spirit of America—the ideal that the Founding Fathers were striving to achieve when they created their new, radical government. Like philosophy, the Declaration was meant to be timeless—it states basic human rights and asserts the right to be free, but does nothing to back up the statements with law or governmental enforcement. That was the job of the doomed Articles of Confederation and then the Constitution. Lincoln viewed the Constitution as imperfect because we live in an imperfect world—this is why the Founding Fathers implemented the system so that it could be amended. The Constitution in most ways is applicable as timeless laws, however certain aspects of it must be able to change with time or will fail. This was Lincoln’s view on the portions of the Constitution that dealt with slavery. He believed that the Founding Fathers, in alluding to slavery but never directly naming it, were paving the way for the day when America would be able to do away with slavery. Unfortunately, at the time of the Constitution, that was impossible for the Founding Fathers. They left behind the Declaration, the true spirit and definition of the principles behind the law, as the guidelines of how the Constitution should be modified in the future. Because the basic rights detailed in the Declaration are inalienable, they are perfect and timeless. The Constitution, in contrast, is the imperfect interpretation of how those rights should be protected. In this way, Lincoln was not subverting the Constitution, but merely interpreting it using the intent of the Founders so that it could fit into modern times—the modern times in which slavery was obsolete, cruel, and finally acknowledged as one of the foulest of crimes.

Even if this idea of the perfect versus the imperfect as personified by the Declaration and the Constitution respectively is not enough, Lincoln would definitely have defended his right to act under the law in an Executive Order. By making emancipation first and foremost a military decision, it was legal and constitutional. Even if granting equality was not constitutional as disputed by those who still state that the Constitution does not explicitly mention equality as a fundamental American value, an Executive order can be unconstitutional as long as the President is acting with his power to interpret the law as due to the situation. In this situation, even if Lincoln was going against the Constitution, his Executive Order privilege gives him that right because he deemed it for the good of the nation as a whole—and he did. He insisted that the Civil War could not be won and the insurrection eliminated unless the slaves were freed because they were valuable resources to the Southerners. Even if he had ulterior motives of instating equality, this way of skirting that issue and bringing about emancipation was undoubtedly legal under the Constitution.

In short, Lincoln would never have said that he had “subverted” the Constitution. He was a man of towering intellect who believed in progress and innovation. He was born into the transcendentalist era and, as such, was a forward and open-minded thinker. He worked for a value he deemed best for America and best for America’s growth, and in doing so made sure he instated the value of equality in a proper and definitive way. Lincoln stood for the spirit of the American psyche as it should have been and what it is now thankfully today—valuing equality, liberty, justice, and life so that we might live in peace and harmony. Lincoln redefined the ethos of America because he believed in the perfection of the values stated in the Declaration of Independence, the spirit of the law over the imperfect manifestation in the letter of the law, and he glued the Union back together so that his vision of America might endure and thrive, as it has to this day.

Gabriella Bensus is from Erie, Pennsylvania and is enrolled in the College of Engineering as an Electrical and Computer major. She plans to concentrate in Aerospace Engineering with a minor in Philosophy.

In Chapter Three of Lincoln at Gettysburg, Wills discusses Lincoln's many "clever evasions and key silences" on the matter of slavery and the racial prejudices of the 19th Century (p.91). Why do you think Wills refrains from using labels such as "racist" or "prejudiced" to describe Lincoln's beliefs and character?

Marc Leh

Surprisingly, some of the most violent criticism directed at Abraham Lincoln has been on the grounds that he was a racist who did not really care about ending slavery. Both contemporary and modern critics charge that Lincoln did not oppose slavery in principle, only the extension of it; that he made "clever evasions and key silences" regarding 19th century racial prejudice; and that if he could save the union without freeing a single slave, he would do so. Many have rushed to vindicate Lincoln from these attacks by claiming that the president was simply a "man of his time" influenced by the cultural and social norms of the mid-1800's. However, as Wills reveals repeatedly throughout his book, abolitionists who called for the immediate end of slavery such as Theodore Parker and William Herndon were some of Lincoln's closest advisors during his presidency. Lincoln did also claim to abhor slavery in his private life, preaching that "all men are created equal" and all are eligible to the same unalienable rights regardless of skin color. Why then did Lincoln not wholeheartedly attack slavery and call for its immediate abolition while in office?

Wills recognizes that Lincoln was not a racist hypocrite who soft-pedaled emancipation while refusing to put it into practice. Rather, Wills shows that Lincoln fully believed that abolition was a noble goal, but that extreme abolitionist tactics such as violence, subverting the constitution and allowing slaveholding states to secede from the union actually strengthened the "Slave Power's" stranglehold on American race relations. Wills refuses to label Lincoln as a bigot because Lincoln's comprehension of the issue of slavery and his strategy for destroying it were actually superior to that of the abolitionists of his time. As a statesman, Lincoln did not have the luxury of living by the same absolute moralism that Parker, Herndon, John Brown or William Lloyd Garrison did. While the abolitionists were content with vehemently denouncing slavery as a wicked institution, Lincoln knew that he needed to find a practical method to uproot slavery while respecting the constitution and preserving the union. Unlike his moralist contemporaries, Lincoln knew that finding common ground between all parties was, and continues to be, the only way to advance a moral agenda in a democratic society such as the United States.

Lincoln's pragmatism highlights his character as someone who could find a juncture between what he thought to be morally right and what he could actually put into practice. In a perfect situation, Lincoln would have been able to free the slaves and preserve the union without an ounce of blood being shed. This of course was not the case, and Lincoln knew that the state of the union was in crisis, so the more urgent matter was to win the Civil War and preserve the American ideal. It is important to realize that Lincoln saw the United States as a beacon on liberty for the rest of the world to model after. If the Union were to fragment, and therefore fail, Lincoln was convinced that the virtue of free, democratic self-governance would be lost forever. Although this may be an extreme view, as democracy surely would have survived even if the

Union did not, it exposes the urgency and passion that Lincoln put into salvaging his country and the principles the nation embodied.

Lincoln also knew that losing the Civil War would cause for the rapid expansion of slavery throughout North America and solidify its legitimacy as an institution throughout the world. In order to win the Civil War Lincoln realized that the Union would need support from the strategically located Border States. Pro-union slaveholding states such as Missouri, Maryland and Kentucky could have very easily sided with the Confederacy had Lincoln preached immediate abolition. As a result, Lincoln was forced to diplomatically address the widespread opposition to full political and social equality for African-American slaves held by many in both the north and the south. If the president had not made “clever evasions” and “key silences” regarding racial equality while in office he would have surely lost the support of the border states as well as a large portion of northerners who were not fighting to abolish slavery, but to defend their country.

As soon as Lincoln saw the opportunity for enacting emancipation without further threatening the nation he was sworn to protect, he seized it, and for that Lincoln deserves legitimate praise. By successfully advancing a moral agenda that seriously clashed with the cultural norms of the time while fighting one of the most devastating wars in history, Lincoln displayed tact and statesmanship unprecedented in American political history. The president had a comprehensive grasp of the society in which he lived, and because of that understanding he was able to incite lasting social change. Through a realistic and uncompromising commitment to his most cherished goals, Lincoln provided a model for positively affecting one’s cultural landscape; a model that spurred the United States to live up to its noble creed that all men are created equal.

Marc Leh is a freshman in the College of Human Ecology studying Policy Analysis and Management. His other academic interests include government, psychology, religion, and developmental economics. He is a member of the Cornell College Republicans and Cornell’s Lightweight Rowing team. Marc lives in Los Angeles, California where he likes to play guitar, surf, and hang out with friends in his free time.

Wills argues that in the 19th Century, the cemetery came to be viewed as “a school for the living” (p.65) and a means for training the “sensibilities” (p.70). What does he mean by this, and might this view of the function of graveyards be relevant to understanding the Gettysburg Address?

Mauricio Vieto

Although it is often argued that a man’s sense of existence is inherently derived from a subjective appreciation of reality, understanding death has paradoxically led to a constant reassessment of life. Indeed, the contraposition of life and death has remained a recurrent theme in humankind’s exploration of the world, and has led to a series of essential questions that still aim to define the quintessence of our existence. In the analytical work *Lincoln at Gettysburg*, Garry Wills explores how this recurrent contraposition of life and death is not only a result of the mystical nature of “life beyond life”, but is also a key element in the analysis and the pondering of our present existence. By explaining the abstract and metaphorical intertwining of life and death that overtook the scene of Abraham Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address, Wills not only explores the symbolism behind the concept of ‘cemetery’, but ultimately reflects upon how the commemoration of the dead was critical in enhancing Lincoln’s meticulous rhetoric. Thus, the Gettysburg Address constitutes more than a major milestone of political discourse, but a universal statement that ultimately defines death as an opportunity to learn about mankind’s inexorable adherence to nature.

The symbolism behind the concept of ‘cemetery’ and the ritualistic facet of funerary traditions certainly played a critical role in enhancing the power of the Gettysburg Address. Indeed, the mysticism evoked by the setting of this historical speech is in itself a reflection of the cyclical nature of life, and how humankind is invariably attached to a state of mortality. As Wills himself expresses, the cemetery was a place that perpetuated a sense of “liminal” existence that subtly evoked the end of a natural cycle (Wills 64). Perhaps more importantly, the new conception of cemeteries as “places of frequent resort for the living” and not places “set apart from life” allowed for a more thorough reflection of humankind’s purpose on Earth (Wills 65). Embraced by this particular setting, Lincoln’s speech acquired a more universal theme, emphasized by the simplicity of his words and the subtle inclusion of “generalizing articles” (Wills 54). Thus, the conception of cemeteries as places of contemplation and spiritual fulfillment would constantly remind the living about the sense of natural bonding that links every human being; a sense of union that is very often effaced by political and social discrepancies. Thus, Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address not only explores the natural will of every human being to be free and equal, but by doing so he tries to revert this sense of social separation and conflict that was so critical during the American Civil War. Ultimately, not only does his simplistic rhetoric aim to bring union and cohesion, but the setting of the speech is in itself a reminder of how death can deliver essential teachings about the ephemeral nature of life. A symbiosis thus emerges between Lincoln’s speech and its physical setting, for they both allowed the audience to understand that it is in the natural order of mankind to live under rules of equality and social order. Lincoln’s words are thus inexorably tied to the Periclean idea that cemeteries (or ‘places of repose’) essentially constitute “schools for the living” (Wills 65).

Certainly, the Gettysburg Address is more than a major milestone of political discourse. It is, at heart, a truly universal statement that reflects upon the idea of death as an opportunity to learn about mankind's link with nature and will to live under principles of unbiased union and cooperation. The concept of 'cemetery' and the ritualistic aspect of funerary traditions are therefore essential for an appropriate understanding of how death can be a 'school for the living'. It is with death that humankind realizes the ephemeral nature of life, and is lead to ponder upon ways to battle against the injustices engendered by those living in this world. In the same way, death represents the ending of a natural cycle, and cemeteries are therefore perpetual symbols that remind humankind that it is against nature to live under principles of social inequality. In this way, the recurrent contraposition of life and death analyzed in *Lincoln at Gettysburg* is in fact the key element that gives Abraham Lincoln's words a truly universal theme.

Works Cited:

Wills, Garry. *Lincoln at Gettysburg: The Words that Remade America*. New York: Simon and Schuster Paperbacks, 1992.

Mauricio Vieto is an international student from San José, Costa Rica. Currently enrolled in the Architecture program, he says that his "experience in the U.S. has been culturally fascinating and academically challenging." He has always been very interested in history as an area of study, particularly because it is constantly being reassessed in ways that force us to erase our cultural biases and paradigms.

Lincoln believed that the Jeffersonian ideals in the Declaration of Independence amounted to “a pledge” to “all people of all colors everywhere” that America would uphold the equality of their inalienable rights (pp.105, 107). Yet we know that Jefferson owned slaves, and that his periodic assertions of the immorality of slavery conflicted with his nearly life-long practice. Given the reality of Jefferson’s stance on slavery, and the nature of Lincoln’s reading of the Declaration, what would Lincoln say to the idea that we interpret a text by looking for the author’s “original intent”?

Xiao Wang

Historical events often have paramount effects on the decisions of later leaders, none more so than Abraham Lincoln's final blow on slavery. Lincoln boasted a rigid adherence to the Jeffersonian ideals embodied in the Declaration of Independence, on which was penned the incontestable equality of all humans. Yet that father of the Declaration, Thomas Jefferson, was hypocritical to the writings of his own heroic hand – he had owned slaves. In Lincoln at Gettysburg, author Garry Wills explores in depth the mentality of Lincoln, a discussion from which we can draw inference as to how Lincoln might have defended his forefather from those who considered actions to speak louder than words.

The idea of being faithful to the founding fathers’ vision of America was crucially important to Lincoln. The clearest example of his views on their original intent in the matter of equality is presented in one of his speeches.

I think the authors of that notable instrument [the Declaration] intended to include *all* men, but they did not intend to declare all men equal *in all respects*. They did not mean to say all were equal in color, size, intellect, moral development, or social capacity. They defined, with tolerable distinctness, in what respects they did consider all men created equal – equal in “certain unalienable rights, among which are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” This they said, and this they meant. (Wills 100)

Lincoln vehemently believed in his interpretation of the Declaration but he recognized that slavery had been “hid away...with the promise, nevertheless, that the cutting [of a cancer, metaphorically representing slavery] may begin at the end of a given time [because] this our fathers could not do” (Wills 101). Lincoln forgave Jefferson in the understanding that the social context of the 18th century had not been as accommodating for emancipation as was the 19th century’s. Therefore, despite Jefferson’s apparent hypocrisy, Lincoln would have argued that the original intent of the Declaration of Independence had been in favor of freedom for all.

In a less perfect image of Lincoln, Wills notes that the former president’s primary concern during the Civil War was to maintain the Union. In that effort, he explicitly mentioned that the abolition of slavery in select states would be enacted only if the action were beneficial to his winning the war and the continued unification of the United States of America. Indeed, in many instances, Lincoln seemed quite indifferent to the prospects of enslaved individuals. Even in Illinois, Lincoln spoke differently to audiences of different sentiments toward slavery,

appealing to abolitionists in the North as well as pro-slavery supporters in the South. This behavior is comparable to Jefferson's slave-owning as both men acted in ways contrary to their greatest feats. As such, Lincoln could have related well to Jefferson and must have observed many similar pressures and dynamics of the American population.

Lincoln regarded the Declaration of Independence as an "expression of a transcendental ideal to be approximated" (Wills 132). By no means did he expect the transition from slavery being commonplace to being obsolete to happen in as short a time as a single lifetime, especially not in the newly-formed America of the 18th century. Lincoln also knew that his ultimate responsibility was to protect the Union. Whether or not that Union was ready for emancipation was extraneous in the atmosphere of the time. Nevertheless, Lincoln agreed with Jefferson that the country must not relinquish the determination toward liberty for all people even if slavery existed. In this respect, we may see Jefferson in a new light – one where the immortality of the words holds more value than one's ephemeral actions.

*Jimmy Xiao Wang is enrolled in the College of Arts & Sciences studying biological sciences. He was born in China but grew up in Vancouver, Canada. In his free time, he enjoys hanging out with friends, writing, theatre, student publications, math and science, government and debate, and playing video games, badminton, and the piano. He thinks that being an international student allowed him to view **Lincoln at Gettysburg** from a different perspective.*

The first sentence of the “final text” of the Gettysburg Address (quoted in full on p. 263), asserts that America is “dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.” Wills comments on this claim at several points in Lincoln at Gettysburg (e.g. pp. 37, 54, 120), observing in one passage that Americans have “no pedigree except that of the idea” of equality (p.86). What might he mean by this, and why might it be important?

Kate Orlofsky

“A Transformation of the Real into the Ideal”

“Americans are intellectually autochthonous, having no pedigree except that of the idea” (86).

Garry Wills’s claim defines a fundamental aspect of American political and cultural identity. Wills’s assertion draws attention to how American belief and thought have basis in the ideal proposition of equality, but more importantly how that proposition has thus far failed to be realized. In order for the ideality expressed in the Gettysburg Address to become reality, Lincoln and Wills declare that the nation must look to its past and respect and honor the fallen. The proposition of which both Wills and Lincoln speak is inextricably tied to the ideals the founding fathers placed in the Declaration of Independence, demonstrating how a nation’s history and past can bring clarity to present circumstances and help frame the future. Furthermore, the proposition calls on the nation to honor and respect the dead who freely sacrificed their lives so that the nation could live up to those ideals on which it was founded.

When seeking guidance about the future, history serves as a useful navigator. By calling upon and examining past hopes, ideas, and events, an idea of what the future could and should hold can form and begin to take shape. The founding fathers “brought forth a new nation...dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal” (263) and presented the ideals that the nation must try to uphold. However, in no way could the idealistic right of equality be immediately conferred upon the nation. The fathers “meant simply to declare the *right* so that the *enforcement* might follow as fast as circumstances should permit” (87). The right to equality was not placed in the Declaration of Independence to be immediately enjoyed, but instead to be continually striven towards. As Wills states, “the ideal is not captured at once in the real” (87). The founding fathers’ ideal was put forth as a challenge, a test to see whether a nation “conceived in liberty” (263) could indeed uphold such a high standard and succeed in making the ideal and the real one. What was remarkable about the Gettysburg Address was that Lincoln raised this challenge anew and made it fresh and reborn in the minds of his listeners. Lincoln made the roots of the nation, its “pedigree,” vivid once more. The test to live up to the ideal of equality was transformed and made “part of a larger process” (54) through his words. The past was resurrected in hope and spirit; now the ideal needed to be put into action. This rebirth was necessary in that it brought focus back to the nation’s roots and founding ideals; it challenged the norm. By presenting this noble and abstract challenge and by looking to the nation’s history to teach and guide, Lincoln cleansed the morose air of Gettysburg and gave the blood and gore of the battle a higher meaning. The nation’s history could now serve an even greater purpose – as the framework for the future.

While the country's past and the ideals of its founding fathers provided a basis for the future in store, the fallen at Gettysburg inspired hope that that future could be attained. The dead advanced the nation "on the course it must complete" (62) and took an important step toward that ideal by proving that the nation's proposition of equality was worth dying for. Though buried, the dead were "still restless under a soil that [throbbed] with their emotions" (54) because the ideal for which they sacrificed themselves lived on. It was now for the living to complete "the unfinished task" (263) of uniting the ideal and the real by channeling their respect for the dead and embracing the hope the dead had inspired within them. In death there is grief and anguish, but more importantly there is a strong sense of hope that blooms in the face of such despair. The dead died for a purpose: "that that nation might live," that "the great task remaining" (263) could be completed. With this purpose, the living and the nation could find life in and through death. "The wintry blast of death kills not the buds of virtue" (65), nor does it prevent those buds from blooming. It was now for the living to uphold that virtue. Lincoln calls on this in the Gettysburg Address, declaring the nation to be resolved that the "dead shall not have died in vain" (263). The *parainesis* form that he employs in his speech comforts the living by acknowledging that the dead have acted with nobility and through their bravery have displayed and won honor. Lincoln then challenges the living and the nation to prove worthy of such sacrifice by not making reality merely tend toward but making it transform into ideality. The dead sacrificed themselves so that the nation could become the best version of itself. This bravery instilled hope in the living and gave them the courage to embark on the journey towards the ideal of equality to which their respect for the dead bound them. The reality of death could bring upon the nation the ideality of life.

Wills's observation that Americans had "no pedigree except that of the idea" (86) urges an analysis of the nation's history and roots, as well as a consideration of the inspiration the fallen at Gettysburg instilled in the living. The founding fathers' declaration of equality tested whether a nation was capable of upholding such a proposition and living in an ideal state. At Gettysburg, Lincoln renewed this challenge, fervently encouraging the nation to take a step further and put the idea planted in its roots into action so that the deserved honor and respect could be shown for the dead. Those who died in battle imbued a sense of hope in the hearts of the living, inspiring them to make reality become ideality. The ultimate message was that through death, there is life; through the real, the ideal will come. A pedigree of the idea will lead to a future of that idea in action.

Kate Orlofsky is a freshman in CALS from Surry, ME. She is currently majoring in animal science and would like to pursue her interests in veterinary medicine, agricultural development, and wildlife and natural resource conservation. She is a member of the Block & Bridle Club, Pre-Vet Society, and CU Jazz.

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington D.C. is notable for many things, not least the names of over 58,000 Americans who died or went missing in action during the Vietnam War. This stands in striking contrast to the abstract, generalizing, even “idealizing” character of the Gettysburg Address (pp. 54-55; 87-88). Do Wills’ views help explain the differences between these two ways of commemorating the deaths and loss of war?

Miles Ludek

“From Marble to Granite”

As clearly demonstrated by Garry Wills in his *Lincoln at Gettysburg: The Words That Remade America*, Abraham Lincoln’s Address rendered Edward Everett’s oration at The Soldier’s National Cemetery, and all others like it, obsolete within minutes of its delivery (148). The reasoning Wills uses is as follows: “Lincoln’s words acquired a flexibility of structure, a rhythmic pacing, a variation in length of words and phrases and clauses and sentences, that make his sentences move ‘naturally,’ for all their density and scope” (157). The reader is led to believe that the stylings of Everett were not “natural” at all and could never thrive in an age when the megalith that separates the educated and the ignorant rapidly erodes. However, while Lincoln’s remarks at Gettysburg are quite bare, the American public, in general, does not have in its mind’s eye the austere Lincoln who spoke on November 19, 1863. Rather, the popular image of not only Lincoln but of most American Presidents of note is derived from monuments. Wills describes a foreign Lincoln in his Prologue, one with a much higher Kentucky tessitura than the deep grandfatherly treatment given to modern renditions of the 16th President; one who is not the glorious centerpiece of the ceremony, but rather a mild commentator on the whole scene. This is not the man we expect to see seated on a great marble throne or profiled in copper and zinc. While Lincoln’s contributions to modern oratory thrive even today, Lincoln himself lives on through the antiquated and highly ornate art of monument. Maya Ying Lin’s Vietnam Veterans Memorial is an exception to the rule: it exists not only in the highly detailed form of Everett’s supposedly extinct sublimity, but also in the sparseness for which Lincoln strove. It represents an analogous change in monuments to the one represented by Lincoln’s Address at Gettysburg. The Memorial spares no name, yet spares all else. In short, according to Wills, the act of commemorating the fallen differs between Everett and Lincoln’s styles, which culminate in Lin’s creation, in that one associates with the dead and the other transcends those dead.

The Ancient Greek format of burial, the *Epitaphios Logos*, sheds much light on identification with both the quick and the dead. The *Epitaphios* is divided between *epainesis* of the dead and *parainesis* of the living – “praise for the fallen” and “advice for the living,” respectively (59). With *epainesis* comes the sentiment felt by most 19th century American Romantics. Everett, in his customarily long Address, begins with ultimate reverence for the dead: “it is with hesitation,” he claims, “that I raise my poor voice to break the eloquent silence of God and Nature” (213). To drive the point home, Everett closes two hours later by quoting Pericles: “The whole earth is the sepulchre of illustrious men” (247). The Ancient Greeks are well known for their fascination with death – this aspect of Classical culture Everett captures. However, this morbid focus accounts for only half of the purpose of the *Epitaphios*. Lincoln remembers also the *parainesis* as mentioned above. The form as outlined by Wills compiles this

second section into two parts – the *paramythenikon*, which claims “The living should be comforted that the dead have won honor,” and the *protreptikon*, which announces that “The living should prove worthy of the fallen” (60). Of the 272 words in Lincoln’s Address, 106 are devoted to transcending the inevitable fact of death (*ibid*). Wills highlights Lincoln’s superior devotion to the Greek art of eulogy by claiming, “Everett, despite his training as a Hellenist, is not really classical in spirit” (54). Everett’s obsession with the concrete, though acclaimed in reviews of his Address, partially limits Everett and his audience to the confines of the present without looking forward to better times (50). Lincoln could not make his Transcendental leanings more clear when he speaks of “the great task remaining before us” (263). Lincoln finds the ideal state of the Union elsewhere from the Cemetery and thus speaks in lofty ideal terms rather than dwelling on individual faults or accomplishments. The Union, to him, cannot be saved by the dead but by the living. Pandering to the popular Classicism of his time, Lincoln reaches across not only geographic barriers but also chronological barriers with devotion to original democratic experiment.

The connection between monuments and political rhetoric should be quite obvious. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial marks a similar “transition” to the one made by the Gettysburg Address in terms of tangible eulogy. What Wills describes as a “revolution” sprouting from Lincoln’s concise language is not truly such – it is rather a gradual “transition” between centuries. The true revolution at work is mentioned in great detail in Wills’ first chapter – the rural cemetery movement. Only following the completion of Mount Auburn Cemetery in 1831 did monuments of all shapes and sizes begin to emerge in Washington, most notably the Washington Monument in 1848 and the redesigned Capitol Building in the 1850s. It is no coincidence that Edward Everett himself took part in the creation of the very same Mount Auburn Cemetery (63). The legacy of America’s most beloved dead lives not through tact but rather by force – is it possible to ignore the sight of a slightly phallic 555-foot obelisk? With such a standing tradition of bluntly obvious expressions of adulation, the nation’s capital saw a drastically different new monument with the arrival of the severely minimal Vietnam Memorial. It follows the old-fashioned tradition of dwelling in the concrete – or, rather, the granite. Nonetheless, no lush design feature of any kind is to be found on the Memorial, only the reflection of visitors. Never before did a monument with such widespread emotional attachment present itself as humbly as this one – that is the very spirit of Lincoln’s Address.

By most respects, the Vietnam Memorial represents a modern approach to commemoration of the dead. There are no actual bodies interred at the monument; the austere granite leaves little else to be desired, gradually diminishing into soil as if declaring itself the only thing worthy of burial (how many other popular American monuments are only 10 feet tall?). The engravings alone betray Lincoln’s sentiments on the subject of war and liberty. Maya Lin even stated, “the politics eclipsed the veterans, their service and their lives”; her goal in the design was elegant simplicity (“Vietnam”). What Lin achieved was intended to avoid controversy as well as to bring hope and unity to the American people. Truer words cannot be used to describe Lincoln’s efforts in his delivery of his Address at Gettysburg. The past, in terms of both monument and rhetoric, was pompous and grandiose. In their respective efforts, Lin and Lincoln brought commemoration of America’s finest into the modern era.

Evidently, iconography is a popular teacher when it comes to American history. The invisible essence of Lincoln that is found in his Address is indeed an intrinsic part of daily American life, both on The Hill and in The Home. However, the mundane nature of the Gettysburg Address in the 21st century often goes unnoticed, especially when compared to the awe-inspiring grandeur that includes The Mall in Washington, Mount Rushmore, and even the Soldier's National Cemetery in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. The Gettysburg Address' "several revolutions" of which Wills writes are too great in number; the singular change it brought on has changed how we think and therefore how we speak as Americans, but not how we celebrate as Americans (148). There is little doubt that Wills makes the difference between Lincoln and Everett's ways of commemorating the deaths and of loss of war very clear. Nonetheless, to claim that we as Americans no longer live with Everett's eloquence in mind is a mistake. The United States has always seen itself as a "City on a Hill" and has always celebrated itself with considerable grandeur, whether it be through the many monuments and statues in the nation's capital or the fantastic fireworks show on every July 4th in Lindsborg, Kansas. America itself will never reflect the spare quality of the Gettysburg Address due to the simple fact and circular that do so is not the "American way." The death of our protectors is always a cause for our greatest tribute, even if it does mean having to sit still and listen to a two-hour rant to show it.

Sources

Wills, Garry. *Lincoln at Gettysburg: The Words That Remade America*. New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 1992.

"Vietnam Veterans Memorial National Memorial." U.S. National Park Service. U.S. Department of the Interior. 25 Aug. 2008 <<http://www.nps.gov/vive/>>.

Miles Ludek is from Rochester, New York, and is currently undecided in the College of Arts and Sciences. He is thinking of majoring in English, but says "there are so many exciting options!"

In his discussion of Lincoln's "Revolution in Style", Wills explores the development of the "spare quality" of Lincoln's mature prose. That quality seems to have been, in part, a matter of making effective use of what Twain called "crash words" that should be put in "emphatic places" (161), and what Blair called "capital words" that should stand "clear and disentangled from any other words that would clog them" (p.289, note 15). As you read the Gettysburg Address, what "crash" or "capital" words stand out as most striking and central, and why?

Gabrielle Yo

While Lincoln did develop a "spare quality" in his prose, that certainly should not be confused with an insubstantial quality. Indeed, each word in his speech was made to count—some (like crash words) more than others. In this particular speech, the words *we*, and *that* can be considered crash words because of their placement and ability to allow Lincoln to deliver a strong statement on such a delicate issue.

The word *we* is conspicuously repeated 10 times in this short speech. At one point, it is repeated three times in the same sentence: "But, in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate—we cannot consecrate—we cannot hallow—this ground." Through its repetition, its presence is not only made clear, but readers should also take it as a sign of the word's importance. The main goal for Lincoln, during this time, was to unify the nation. In that case, it is quite fitting to use (and re-use) such an inclusive word as *we*. And while the word is somewhat vague, that works toward Lincoln's favor. It would have been too divisive to speak to a more specific group, such as the north or south; pro abolitionists or anti abolitionists. Instead, by simply using *we*, the address can not only speak to those who already believe in the ideals of "that nation", but also welcome those who may now be open to that proposition. For example, "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..." It is unclear, exactly, who *we* is, but the fact that this word is so open makes it much more inviting to any listener or reader.

The word *that* can also be considered a crash word. In this address, Lincoln seems to almost go out of his way to make use of it. "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." And again with: "Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether *that* nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure." This crash word serves to differentiate between the current state of the nation and *that* nation—the ideal nation "our fathers brought forth on this continent." His constant use of the word in the phrase "that nation" shows us that he sees a significant difference between the two. Perhaps the most visible contrast comes with his careful wording of the end of the speech. "...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." He speaks of both this nation (the current state of the nation), and *that* government, and describes them in very different ways. With "this nation" he hopes for a new birth of freedom, while "that government" is described as already being "of the people, by the people," and "for the people." It is central to the address for him to make this point, because it emphasizes that the nation is currently not what it set out to be. The use of this word, in particular, allows

Lincoln to make such a bold, compelling statement without having to appear belligerent or aggressive. This crash word is central because it offers an outlet to display the ideal while leaving it up to the audience to see its (arguably large) contrast with reality.

While both very simple words, *we* and *that* allow Lincoln to make some very powerful statements. Of course, it must be said that much of this power is due to Lincoln's brilliance and precision in his choice of the words themselves. However, it is important to note what these crash words allow the audience to see (and compel them to feel), without explicitly having to say any of it.

Gabrielle Yo grew up outside of Los Angeles, California. She is currently enrolled in the College of Arts and Sciences where she intends to major in Economics.

In describing Lincoln's "Revolution in Thought," Wills notes that in Lincoln's time (and even to this day) some critics (in the North and the South) worried that Lincoln had no rational arguments for, but only a "mystical attachment" to, the importance of protecting the Union (p. 125). Does Wills' discussion do anything to demystify Lincoln's views, especially his conviction, in the 1850's, that one could be genuinely opposed to slavery and yet make concessions that would convince Southern states not to secede from the Union? Explain.

Matthew Christensen

Lincoln and the Union: Sense or Sensation?

Garry Wills points out in his book Lincoln at Gettysburg that critics in the North and South, "think, to this day, that Lincoln did not really have *arguments* for union, just a kind of mystical attachment to it." (Wills 125) Lincoln's critics are not irrational in their disapproval. Although the central issue of the Civil War was slavery, Lincoln focused on the preservation of the Union, at nearly any cost. The Southern arguments for secession were clear: they claimed the right of self-government and seceded only because the North was attempting to impose anti-slavery laws upon them. The Northern arguments against slavery were clear as well. Slavery was an evil and an unacceptable infringement upon the human rights of African Americans. Lincoln's insistence in the preservation of the Union, and his conviction that "one can remain opposed to slavery while making temporary concession to the South in order to keep the nation together," (Wills 123) appear to be unfounded and frankly, irrelevant. In the chapter "Revolution in Thought" in Lincoln at Gettysburg, Wills reveals the reasons for Lincoln's 'mystical attachment' to the preservation of the union. Ultimately, Wills shows that Lincoln's arguments for union were logical.

Central to Lincoln's case for the union is his perception of its origin. The viewpoint held by the South was that the Constitution is the essential founding document wherein sovereign states formed a pact to create a single nation. To Southerners, since the union was only a pact, they had the right to break that pact in the name of self-government (states rights). But to Lincoln, the Declaration of Independence, not the Constitution, marked the formation of a single United States of America. Wills notes that Lincoln drew upon Webster and Justice Story to develop his view of the Declaration as a founding document. Webster, who was undoubtedly logical, argued that the U.S. government was a republic of the whole American people and not "the creature of State governments." (Wills 129) Wills notes that Webster and Story adequately argue that the *people* came together as a whole in the Declaration of Independence to found the Union. As such, the Southerners could not simply break off as if they were already sovereign states choosing to end an alliance. State legislatures were not individual governments but rather implements of the larger federal government and singular nation. According to Wills, "if the Declaration is the sovereign act of a single people, that people could not rend itself when brought to face a problem that affected the whole." (Wills 132) Lincoln's argument for protecting the Union is based in the nature of the Declaration of Independence as a founding document and is supported by the logical arguments of both Webster and Justice Story.

Wills demonstrates that Lincoln's argument for the preservation of the Union was strongly rooted in historical fact. Lincoln's argument itself was logical. Wills notes that Lincoln's manner of conducting the Civil War complements his literal argument for importance of protecting the union. Wills uses two examples to demonstrate that Lincoln was more logical than passionate in preserving the union. Lincoln upheld the Constitution in his assessment of the legal status of the southern rebels and in his execution of the emancipation measures. Lincoln did not actually treat the Civil War as a war at all. To him the 'war' was a civil insurrection. All of his military measures were taken as the Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Navy of the United States in time of actual armed rebellion in an effort to "insure domestic tranquility". Likewise, Lincoln emancipated only the slaves in rebellious states as an absolutely necessary military measure. In this manner Lincoln stayed within his presidential boundaries as a civilian leader and commander-in-chief as dictated by the Constitution. Although he was genuinely opposed to slavery, Lincoln could not, and would not, unilaterally abolish slavery. Lincoln's conviction that a critic of slavery could make compromises to the south to preserve the Union was based in the Constitution. Slavery was protected by the Constitution, by an agreement that was enacted by the whole nation as a single people. The existence of slavery could only be lawfully changed through the amendment process. Lincoln is essentially reverting back to the idea of compromise. In Wills' words:

Above all, by avoiding a unilateral (civil) emancipation while insisting there could be no unilateral secession, Lincoln kept the Constitution intact (slave clauses and all) for the whole people. Lincoln was expressing in every way possible his determination that the nation remain united. (Wills 144)

Lincoln's actions during the Civil War complemented his argument for the preservation of the union because he abided by the law of the Constitution; a law that both the North and South had agreed upon as a single people. Lincoln looked to historical truths to develop his argument and then carried it out under the umbrella of present law.

Lincoln was, above all, logical in his attachment to the preservation of the Union. Both his argument for, and his actions towards, preserving the Union were carefully thought out and consistent with each other. Lincoln may have seemed mystical simply because he was ahead of his time. States Rights advocates were still prominent in the federal government and sectional conflicts were still major political issues. The idea of Americans as a distinguished *whole* people simply was not that common. That was Lincoln's 'revolution in thought'; the idea that the Union founded by the Declaration of Independence is the government "of the people, by the people, and for the people." Just as the single American people as a whole is inseparable, the Union ought not be broken. Despite the high tempers and burning sensationalism during the Civil War, Lincoln made sense of it all and successfully preserved a single nation for a single people.

Matt Christensen is enrolled in the Engineering School. He has not yet declared a major but is considering Engineering Physics and pre-med. Matt's hometown is Wheaton, Illinois, a western suburb of Chicago.

Choose a topic of political importance, either national or international, about which reasonable people can disagree. Then write a speech of 272 words or less that conforms as closely as possible to the main ideas about rhetoric and style discussed in Chapter 5 of Lincoln at Gettysburg. Consider making a DVD of yourself or someone else delivering the speech, and submitting the DVD with your speech. (If the videos are properly labeled they can eventually be returned to you via campus mail.) With or without a DVD, the best submissions will be accompanied by a few sentences explaining how your speech measures up to the example set by Lincoln.

Steven Xu

Background Information

Currently, the Internet is largely unregulated. However, there are a number of techniques that several major Internet Service Providers can use to regulate the internet. Namely, they can redistribute traffic to accelerate access to some sites, and decelerate or cut off access to others (Save the Internet). ISPs are tending towards this behaviour. In recent news, the Canadian ISP Bell was sued for restricting access speeds for the BitTorrent protocol, which is often, but not always, employed to share copyrighted work (Nowak, 2008).

However, widespread throttling by large ISPs in the future may threaten the spirit of the Internet. ISPs would have the power to ask for payment from websites to increase access speeds. They could also provide tiered Internet access to the end user, charging individuals more for the ability to access “less favourable” sites (Save the Internet). My speech is a call to action for individuals to get involved in standing up against this anti-competitive behaviour.

Speech

Nineteen years ago, Tim Berners-Lee introduced to the world, an unprecedented medium through which global citizens may freely engage in debate, study, and recreation, under the premise that no notion shall be curtailed by any voice acting against individuality in the name of profit or homogeneity.

Today, the Internet faces a crisis, and our society must rise to the challenge to preserve our individual spirit.

This nation sits at the battleground of war. We may be the model that leads the world’s economic dance, but the institutions intended to preserve our haven of capitalism, when uncontrolled, threaten to break the freedoms which we hold so dear.

They masterfully thrust on our minds the behemoth of widespread censorship; they burden our infrastructure with elaborate impediments to universal access; they conspire with the officers of our nation to break down competition so that they may further their agenda.

We, the people, have but one advantage in the battle against these assailants to our liberty: the very bulk that comprises their threat to society also encumbers their aspirations,

affording us the time to fight back. Nevertheless, these aspirations are powerful, and our time, short. Thus we must awaken against this grave threat to our most powerful mechanism of uninhibited intellectual exchange and fight this war to ensure that individual ideas, academic dialogue, and the rights and freedoms of every citizen shall never vanish from the World Wide Web.

A Note on Thematic Parallels

Introduction and Repetition of the Central Theme

In the first paragraph of the Gettysburg Address, Lincoln introduces the concept of the American nation in a favourable light. Throughout his speech, he makes reference to the great threat posed to the nation, recapitulating the idea in the call to action in the final sentence. In my speech, the concept of the nation is replaced by the call of individual rights. Like Lincoln, I use several synonyms and make several implied references through the speech.

Combativeness

The first draft of my speech (Appendix I) was of a significantly stronger tone. Through discussion with my peers, I realized that a significant strength of modern political prose and especially Lincoln's speech is found in its ability to call to action against an enemy without attacking or belittling the enemy. The current draft reflects the idea.

Substance versus Rhetoric

Lincoln's speech is especially strong due to the precision with which he focuses on the ability of speech to generate an emotional appeal. The Gettysburg address does not consist of any elaborate facts, nor does it present any firm lines of logical reasoning. Instead, Lincoln takes the facts for granted, forming a series of flowing assertions: "we must," "we can not," and "it is for us to." Thus the entire speech is a consistent and powerful conglomeration of appeals to emotion and calls to action. My speech seeks to emulate this technique.

Notes on Prose

Nineteen years ago, Tim Berners-Lee introduced to the world, an unprecedented medium through which global citizens may freely engage in debate, study, and recreation, under the premise that no notion shall be curtailed by any voice acting against individuality in the name of profit or homogeneity.

Appeal to history

First introduction of speech's

Today, the Internet faces a crisis, and our society must rise to the challenge to preserve our individual spirit.

Similar to Lincoln's sentence beginning "We are met..." this is a positive initial thesis statement.

This nation sits at the battleground of war. We may be the model that leads the world's economic dance, but the institutions intended to preserve our haven of capitalism, when uncontrolled, threaten to break the freedoms which we hold so dear.

Contrast. Similar to the beginning of Lincoln's third paragraph, the climax of my speech consists of the one direct comparison between "us" and "them." The contrast sets the stage for the call to action.

They masterfully thrust on *our* minds the behemoth of widespread censorship; they burden *our* infrastructure with elaborate impediments to universal access; they conspire with the officers of *our* nation to break down competition so that they may further their agenda.

Similar to the middle of Lincoln's final paragraph, dramatic language creates the effect of the magnitude of the task at hand

We, the people, have but one advantage in the battle against these assailants to our liberty: the very bulk that comprises their threat to society also encumbers their *aspirations*, affording us the *time* to fight back. Nevertheless, these *aspirations* are powerful, and our *time*, short.

This is my only deviation from Lincoln's prose. Although Lincoln generates the image of an incredibly challenging task, I choose to inject a point of hope to rally the audience for the call to action

Thus we must awaken against this grave threat to our most powerful mechanism of uninhibited intellectual exchange and fight this war to ensure that individual ideas, academic dialogue, and the rights and freedoms of every citizen shall never vanish from the World Wide Web.

Parallelism, not unlike Lincoln's reference to "devotion" and "people"

Bibliography

Nowak, P. (2008, June 2). *Bell sued for throttling internet speeds*. Retrieved August 2008, from CBC News: <http://www.cbc.ca/technology/story/2008/06/02/tech-quebec.html>

Save the Internet. (n.d.). Retrieved August 2008, from Save the Internet: <http://www.savetheinternet.com/>

Appendix I – First Draft Speech

Nineteen years ago, Tim Berners-Lee introduced to the world, an unprecedented medium through which global citizens freely engage in debate, study, and recreation, under the promise that no notion shall be curtailed any voice that seeks to act against individual interests in the name of profit or homogeny.

Today, the Internet faces a crisis as our society rises to the challenge to preserve the freedom of the individual spirit. Our nation sits at the battleground of this war. We are the model that leads the world's economic dance, yet the institutions intended to preserve this haven of capitalism, when uncontrolled, threaten to break the freedoms which we hold so dear.

They masterfully execute the behemoth of widespread censorship; they burden our infrastructure with elaborate controls to impede universal access; and against all which we claim to hold dear, they conspire with the officers of society to break down competition so that they may persist in their agenda.

We, the people, have but one advantage to compete against the interests of those who want to break down this powerful tool: their bulk encumbers their aspirations, affording us the time to conquer this challenge. Nevertheless, the aspirations are powerful, and our time, short. And thus we must awaken to this grave threat to our most powerful mechanism of uninhibited intellectual exchange and fight the war to ensure that individual ideas, academic dialogue, and the rights and freedoms of every citizen shall never vanish from this Earth.

Steven Xu was born in China and has lived in Australia and now in Canada. He is enrolled in the College of Arts and Sciences, where he studies economics and computer science. Xu says he's never enjoyed academic writing, but has always been enthralled by the emotional power of inspirational and creative writing, particularly this opportunity to exercise his creativity, which allowed him to imitate one of the best speech writers and orators in American history.

Honorable Mention

In Chapter Three of Lincoln at Gettysburg, Wills discusses Lincoln's many "clever evasions and key silences" on the matter of slavery and the racial prejudices of the 19th Century (p.91). Why do you think Wills refrains from using labels such as "racist" or "prejudiced" to describe Lincoln's beliefs and character?

Olivia Carman

Wills' treatment of Lincoln's racism stands apart in *Lincoln at Gettysburg* as a peculiar sort of emotional appeal. It certainly shouldn't be confused for a rational argument. Wills gives us no basis by which to judge which of Lincoln's statements were pandering and which were sincere, other than that the ones in which he was pandering make us uncomfortable. Wills does not address Lincoln's personal writings, unless we are to believe that 19th Century politics were so appallingly racist that Lincoln had to pander to himself, lest he lose his own vote. Nor does Wills confront Lincoln's involvement in the colonization movement, which culminated in a disastrous attempt to create a black colony near Haiti during the Civil War. And perhaps most relevant to Wills' argument, Wills does not address the statements Lincoln made during his push for colonization -- his assertion in the "Speech on the Dred Scott Decision" that amalgamation was only prevented by complete separation of the races, for example.

But if we find Wills guilty of some "key silences" of his own, we need to remember the social climate in which Wills was writing. Identity politics dominated the early '90's. In 1992,-- the same year that *Lincoln at Gettysburg* was published--then President Clinton was part of a media feeding frenzy centered on identity issues: though Clinton had set out to create the most diverse White House in history, feminists loudly denounced the under-representation of women in his staff. It was in 1992, too, that Spike Lee had gained considerable media attention for his strong objection to the film *Malcolm X's* use of a white director. Lee's statement that "Blacks have to control these films" was plastered across the newspapers. Those same newspapers angsted about multicultural curricula, the busing of schoolchildren to create ethnic diversity, and what was largely perceived by the right as some sort of insidious "PC" brainwashing conspiracy in academia. It was not, in short, a time to take identity issues lightly.

In this environment, Wills could not just shrug off Lincoln's racism with the suggestion that Lincoln was just a product of his time. If the seated President was being ravaged by the press, not for intolerance per se, but for not being tolerant *enough*, it's hard to imagine that a racist Lincoln would be accepted as a torch-bearer of equality. This isn't to suggest that Wills must have been writing insincerely in the same sense that he suggests Lincoln spoke insincerely. It is, however, to say that Wills did not write in an intellectual vacuum. While no one can presume to know the content of Wills' heart, it seems reasonably possible that he, as much as any other person at that time, simply could not square with the idea of a liberating hero who was capable of such disgusting bigotry. Racism was the unforgivable sin of that era, and we can forgive Wills if he did not or could not accept that Lincoln was guilty of it.

Historians do not just chronicle the past. However unintentionally, they provide us with an understanding of the present in which they wrote: present biases, present preoccupations, and present political and social realities. *Lincoln at Gettysburg* is in this sense the story of a nation's unwillingness to confront the racism of its past head on. If Wills shared this unwillingness, we cannot wholly condemn him, only treat him with skepticism.

Olivia Carman, a freshman in the College of Arts and Sciences, is from Wilson, New York. Her intended major is economics, but her interests also include history and political science.

Wills argues that in the 19th Century, the cemetery came to be viewed as “a school for the living” (p.65) and a means for training the “sensibilities” (p.70). What does he mean by this, and might this view of the function of graveyards be relevant to understanding the Gettysburg Address?

Benjamin D. Walker

The death of a family member, or close friend, is a sobering experience that leaves you in a subdued state of mind. Confronting human mortality may cause you to question the purpose of life and evaluate the course you are taking through it. Perhaps the deceased performed some special act on your behalf; something you could not accomplish for yourself. When you reflect upon the death of this individual an emotive response is rendered, not from the memory of your intimate relationship with the deceased, but in remembrance of the action taken for you.

Perhaps not everyone can find commonality in the above outlined scenario, but every American owes a debt of gratitude to the men and women who serve in the United States military. As a nation we observe Memorial Day as a day to recognize those who have given their lives in the service of our nation. Memorial Day, originally called Decoration Day, was first observed on May 30, 1868 under the direction of General John Logan’s *General Order No. 11* as a reconciliatory measure in which flowers were placed at the burial sites of both Union and Confederate soldiers.¹ In his Address, President Lincoln pays homage to the fallen dead at the battle of Gettysburg: “We have come to dedicate a portion of that field, as a final resting place for those who gave their lives that that nation might live”. President Lincoln then declares the righteousness of this dedication when he states “It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this”. It is interesting to note the date of this first observance and its relative proximity to the delivery of the Gettysburg Address, perhaps taking its queue from President Lincoln’s remarks. Continuing in that vein, Memorial Day was made official by the National Holiday Act of 1971 passed by Congress.²

Contemporary Memorial Day observances include parades, picnics, and a day off from work. A less common practice is to frequent cemeteries and place flags at the gravesites of

fallen veterans. This is an activity I myself have partaken in as a Boy Scout. These visits allowed me to visualize the enormity of the sacrifice that had been made in a way that nothing ever could. It is unfortunate that many Americans forget the true purpose of this holiday unless they personally know a service member or are a veteran themselves. In this light, cemeteries serve as a “school for the living”; a reminder of those “who gave their last full measure of devotion.”

The minor uprising turned national schism tried the commitment of the Union. Lincoln needed to rally not only his army, but the north as a whole around a cause that would have a rejuvenating effect. A major purpose of the Gettysburg Address was to accentuate the ideals of liberty and equality. The idea that all men and women are created equal, though not a physical reality, is a treasured ideal of American political philosophy. Although preserving the Union

¹ Merchant, David. [Usmemorialday.org](http://www.usmemorialday.org). 27 Apr. 2007. 8 Aug. 2008
<<http://www.usmemorialday.org/backgrnd.html>>.

² Ibid.

* Gettysburg Address excerpts obtained from: Wills, Gary. Lincoln At Gettysburg: The Words That Remade America. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992. 263.

was Lincoln's primary objective, the struggle for the preservation of freedom and liberty took precedence in his Address. The link between the Gettysburg Address and Will's theory is in the perpetual act that Lincoln details in the third paragraph of his speech: "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 for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us..." Lincoln demands of his audience that they recognize the ideals that were fought for and at what cost. Neither Union or Confederate forces are mentioned in the Address nor is either side favored. In a way both sides were fighting for the same thing – the Federal army fought to preserve the Union as a nation of freedom while the Confederates struggled against what they perceived was a usurpation of their liberty by an authoritarian government.

Lincoln makes no qualms about the nobility of this cause. Lincoln's words give life to the continued quest for freedom. We as Americans are obligated to continue that pursuit. We are not only citizens of a nation that was founded on these ideals, but we are survivors of various military conflicts and the beneficiaries of a debt we can never repay. The only way we can validate the sacrifice of those who laid down their lives is to fulfill our duty as citizens by taking an active role in the socio-political affairs of our country.

I have personally visited the Gettysburg battlefield as well as Arlington National Cemetery. On both occasions I was a bit too young to understand the complexities of experience. Years later I had the opportunity to visit Aisne-Marne American Cemetery near Chateau-Thierry, France. This site was erected as a memorial for American service members who fought in the Battle of Belleau Wood during World War I. Having studied the history of this battle, the visit was much more vivid. I remember discovering foxholes in the woods that had been dug during the battle. I tried to image taking cover in one of these holes; being fired upon and returning fire. I thought about the men who may have claimed these holes as their original graves. These holes had become overgrown, the scars in the earth now covered by a mossy scab. Time had healed these wounds, but those to the mind and body were not so easily mended. The veterans of this battle were left to carry on their lives after being exposed to the horrors of war. Though others would forget their actions, these veterans would always live with the memory. That day I made a commitment: my appreciation and respect for the efforts of American service members would never fade away like the foxholes in Belleau Wood. I wish that every American could have shared in this experience, to have walked the grounds of Aisne-Marne, training their sensibilities and dedicating themselves to the "unfinished work" of our country.

Benjamin Walker grew up in Cobleskill, New York and completed an apprenticeship as a Toolmaker (specialized machinist) as well as an A. O. S. in Manufacturing Technical Systems from Hudson Valley Community College, Troy, NY. He served four year enlistment with the United States Marine Corps and was deployed overseas. Having completed A. S. in Social Science from SUNY Cobleskill, he transferred as a sophomore to the ILR School in the fall of 2008.

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington D.C. is notable for many things, not least the names of over 58,000 Americans who died or went missing in action during the Vietnam War. This stands in striking contrast to the abstract, generalizing, even “idealizing” character of the Gettysburg Address (pp. 54-55; 87-88). Do Wills’ views help explain the differences between these two ways of commemorating the deaths and loss of war?

John Kirk

A somber remark given on November 19, 1863, would later become regarded as one of the most significant moments in American history. On that day, President Abraham Lincoln delivered the Gettysburg Address. The 272-word “dedicatory remark” stands out as one of the most profound memorials of an American battle. The Address describes the pretexts of the Civil War and honors the ideologies of those who died fighting in it. This speech stands in striking contrast to other, more tangible memorials of other wars, such as the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. The black walls in Washington D.C. serve as a monument for those who died or went missing during the Vietnam War. Memorials such as the Gettysburg Address and the Vietnam Veterans Memorial fulfill the same function, yet they differ in so many ways.

The Gettysburg Address is a dedication of the cemetery at Gettysburg. Lincoln did not provide an opinionated commentary of the war, the battle, or the soldiers. Rather, he spoke on behalf of the freedoms that the soldiers fought for. He honored their lives collectively, both those of the Union and Confederate armies. He also set out to honor the grounds from which he spoke upon, realizing that such a task cannot be done with words, but with respect. Garry Wills, author of *Lincoln at Gettysburg*, makes a key point about the Address Lincoln delivered. As Wills says, “No proper names are used in Lincoln’s Address – not even the name of the battle, or of the cemetery he is dedicating with his speech” (54). Wills go on to say that Lincoln spoke in generalizations, referring to the United States and its Civil War as “a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure” (*The Gettysburg*, n.p.). This, as Wills argues, “makes this military engagement part of a larger process” (Wills, 54). He speaks in abstract terms because he wanted to honor the symbol of Gettysburg and the purposes of those who lost their lives there. This is why the Address has such a legacy. It serves as a powerful testament to the human will. It honors those who die for their beliefs and their pursuits. Lincoln’s words go far beyond the battlefields in Pennsylvania; they echo worldwide.

While the Gettysburg Address is a memorial in words, other perhaps more traditional memorials stand out in similarity of purpose, but in contrast of style. Wills compares these ideas by proposing that the Address has a generalized and sometimes idealized character. This stands out when looking at other memorials such as the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington D.C. The memorial includes two 250-foot long black granite walls with the names of over 58,000 missing or dead soldiers from the Vietnam War. It is one of the most recognizable memorials in Washington and is so significant, that a smaller version travels around America, stopping at various locations, bringing the names and the emotions of the original wall with it.

The wall serves as a different kind of memorial from Lincoln's Address. The wall is located half a world away from the resting places of many of those it honors. This is in contrast to the Gettysburg Address which was given at the site of the bloodshed. Already this gives the Address a greater impact when compared to memorials like the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. It is a vivid tribute, honoring the deceased men and women who died in Vietnam. It is highly symbolic, as the black walls reflect the images of those looking at it, implying a connection with those visiting the monument to the names etched into the granite. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial is a specific memorial, honoring the soldiers as opposed to the ideology behind why they fought. Many argue that this was to avoid drawing attention to the controversies behind the Vietnam War. Nevertheless, it was built to honor those who gave their lives fighting in it. The wall fits the common perception of a monument much better than the Address. We could argue that many tend to think of Washington with its statues and buildings when they think of monuments. However, it is not the concrete aspect of these memorials as it is the symbolic side that is the key. This is what links monuments like the Vietnam Veterans Memorial to the Gettysburg Address and this is what Garry Wills identifies with (Wills, 87).

The Gettysburg Address is a generalized memorial that honors the concept of the battle and the purposes of the soldiers. It is not what we tend to think of as a memorial, in relation to those we see in Washington. Yet, both the Address and memorials like the Vietnam Veterans Memorial serve as profound and appropriate tributes to the wars and the soldiers to which they are honoring. It is intriguing to juxtapose such different kinds of memorials that serve such important and similar functions.

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial serves as a powerful memorial, honoring the seemingly endless list of names of the brave men and women who gave their lives in Vietnam. However at Gettysburg, there is no single monument that embodies the meaning of the battle quite like Lincoln's Address. Lincoln stated in the Address that, "the world will little note, nor long remember what we say here (The Gettysburg, n.p.)." However, at Lincoln's funeral in 1865, Massachusetts Senator Charles Sumner remarked that "the world noted at once what he said, and will never cease to remember it. The battle itself was less important than the speech (The Gettysburg, n.p.)." It is interesting that even now, 145 years later, the Gettysburg Address has such potency. In three short minutes, Abraham Lincoln accomplished so much. He was able to embody all the majesty and all the symbolism that other monuments display today, but in words. It is a remarkable testament to the art of communication and stands today as one of the most influential and defining speeches in American history – all with only 272 words.

Works Cited

Wills, Garry. *Lincoln at Gettysburg*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992.

"The Gettysburg Address." Abraham Lincoln Online. Abraham Lincoln Online. 3 Aug 2008 <<http://showcase.netins.net/web/creative/lincoln/speeches/gettysburg.htm>>.

John Kirk, from Corning, New York, is a sophomore transfer student majoring in Atmospheric Science. Among other things, John's interests include history and travel. An Eagle Scout, John once camped and hiked at the battlefields of Gettysburg National Military Park.

In his discussion of Lincoln's "Revolution in Style", Wills explores the development of the "spare quality" of Lincoln's mature prose. That quality seems to have been, in part, a matter of making effective use of what Twain called "crash words" that should be put in "emphatic places" (161), and what Blair called "capital words" that should stand "clear and disentangled from any other words that would clog them" (p.289, note 15). As you read the Gettysburg Address, what "crash" or "capital" words stand out as most striking and central, and why?

Elsie Shogren

"Dedicated"

As I study the Gettysburg Address, there is one word that seems to stand out and demand to be "disentangled" from other words. It is a strong word that can be used in a variety of ways. Lincoln utilizes two different meanings of the word "dedicate" in six of the nine sentences that comprise the Gettysburg address. The frequency with which he uses this one word emphasizes it, in my mind, and makes it a crucial part of the address and the message Lincoln was trying to impart.

The first meaning that Lincoln ascribes to the word "dedicate" is "to commit to a particular course or action." Lincoln himself exemplifies this definition with his complete dedication to preserving the union. He was unwavering in this commitment and followed the Founding Fathers in leading the country through a terrible war. The Founding Fathers dedicated our country to a course of independence—a risky and challenging action that could have ended in them being tried for treason. Lincoln faced a challenge of equal proportions while enlarging upon their success. Many of his generals were uncertain in battle, he faced a strong anti-war effort, and much apathy toward saving the union.

Lincoln's second use of the word refers to its religious aspect: "to set aside for sacred or religious purposes, to consecrate." After the hastiness and carefulness of burial that Wills describes in the prologue of *Lincoln at Gettysburg*, the sanity and order of a formal dedication ceremony must have been a great comfort to the citizens of Gettysburg as well as the families of the soldiers being reburied. The pomp and circumstance are not what make the site worthy of respect, however, and Lincoln recognizes this in his speech, honoring the soldiers who were being finally laid to rest.

In the Gettysburg Address, Lincoln galvanizes his listeners to rededicate themselves to the cause of keeping the country together. One wonders if perhaps he was re-dedicating himself at the same time. While the war seemed to have reached a turning point, there was still much work to be done. Lincoln reminded his listeners of the history behind the country and exhorted them to continue what the soldiers lying in the cemetery have begun. He casts the war effort in the light of a great test. If pressure is applied, will the country break? Or will it emerge stronger and fairer as a result of the pressure. Lincoln does not try to answer the question, but he leaves no doubt as to what outcome he has dedicated himself to accomplishing.

Elsie Shogren, from Nebraska, is majoring in biology in the College of Agriculture and Life

Sciences. She also works in the Cornell Museum of Vertebrates in the Lab of Ornithology and is a member of the Women's Freshman Novice Crew Team. She is considering specializing in Evolutionary Biology.

Choose a topic of political importance, either national or international, about which reasonable people can disagree. Then write a speech of 272 words or less that conforms as closely as possible to the main ideas about rhetoric and style discussed in Chapter 5 of *Lincoln at Gettysburg*. Consider making a DVD of yourself or someone else delivering the speech, and submitting the DVD with your speech. (If the videos are properly labeled they can eventually be returned to you via campus mail.) With or without a DVD, the best submissions will be accompanied by a few sentences explaining how your speech measures up to the example set by Lincoln.

Ragini Sharma

Several years ago, a dedicated group of people put forth in this country a stunning exposé, noble in purpose, daring in scope, and firm in their conviction that the plague that scourges our country—no, our species—no, our world must be stopped. They have established for us the inconvenient truth, and their work done, it is now time for us all to heed their warnings, that their arduous efforts may not have been in vain. It is now time to return to the sun-gold days and cobalt-blue skies of our fathers.

In a day when the most pressing conflicts are often between one man and another, we must pull together as mankind to ward off a larger conflict between man and nature. And we cannot do this until every man, woman, and child is conscious of the consequences of his or her actions, and until we all institute policies at the town, the state, the federal, the international level, but furthermore, until each active resident will inspire everyone around him, encouraged by their following his example, pledging to be forever kind to our world. Only with full cooperation of the world's people and devotion to this worthy cause as a planet united can we ensure that man shall not, by his own doing, perish from the earth.

This speech is similar to Lincoln's in its somewhat generalizing nature, but does not spring from an opportunity to capitalize on the sentiments associated with a certain event (in Lincoln's case, the dedication of a cemetery). It does reference *An Inconvenient Truth*, much like the address references previous speeches and papers, the Bible, and, of course, the Declaration of Independence. I also attempted to use similar devices such as anaphora, parallelism, and careful placement of important words to my advantage, but clearly not at the level of as experience a student and lover of words and classical forms as Abraham Lincoln.

Ragini Sharma was born in Lucknow, India, moved to the United States when she was six, and has lived in Plainsboro, NJ since then. She is a student in the College of Engineering at Cornell, hoping to study Electrical Engineering.