

# Gettysburg / Learning Activities

## #3. "A NEW BIRTH OF FREEDOM"?

### Hearing the Gettysburg Address through Different Ears

*[For teachers: Students will begin this activity by updating their character's autobiographical sketch using the 1870 research folder. If your class is using this lesson as a stand-alone activity and has not written the autobiographical sketches in Learning Activity #1, you may find autobiographies here. (insert link to pre-written bios.)]*

- A. Use the 1863 Research Folder to update your autobiographical sketch. Focus on answering the following questions:
  - i. Where are you and what are you doing in November 1863?
  - ii. Describe the appearance of the town of Gettysburg and your home upon your return.
  - iii. What did the battle wreak? What have you lost? What experiences have you gained? What are your frustrations? Hopes? Fears?
  
- B. Using your newly updated autobiography as a reference, speculate on how and when might you have heard of the Gettysburg Address.
  
- C. Read the following sources to complete this worksheet:
  - i. Lincoln's Gettysburg Address  
*[Create mechanism for scaffolding, parsing, etc.]*
  - ii. Contemporary attitudes of the Lincoln Administration, government policies, the course of the war
  - iii. Reactions to the Gettysburg Address in newspapers and accounts from residents of Gettysburg

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### #3. "A NEW BIRTH OF FREEDOM"? (cont'd)

D. Your character has just read or heard on of the following comments from a friend or family member. Choose one and respond to it in the form of a letter or dialogue.

i. "Someone read me Mr. Lincoln's speech from the paper. When I heard those words I could only think that they were flowery promises that won't really change anything or amount to much. You were there — what do you think?"

ii. "I saw the President's speech in the paper the other day. He has promised the nation a 'new birth of freedom,' but I'm not sure if this applies to us or not. You were there — what do you think?"

iii. "I heard President Lincoln was in Gettysburg last week and talked about 'unfinished work' and the 'great task remaining before us.' What do you think he means by this?"

iv. "Father Abraham was here last week to dedicate the new cemetery for those he called 'these honored dead' and talked about consecrating the ground on which they died. But tell me — Do you believe that the promises he has made of a 'new birth of freedom' will really amount to changes worthy of this type of language?"

v. "I heard that Mr. Lincoln was in town last week to dedicate the new cemetery. I have heard nothing of the speech but that he used high flown language about a new world being made, and we're all consecrating the ground like we're preachers. You were there — what did you hear him say and what do you think it means?"