

HILDENE - BROWN  
Lincoln Essay Competition

September 2009

Re: Hildene-Brown Eighth Grade Lincoln Essay Competition

Dear Parent or Teacher:

For the last three years Hildene, The Lincoln Family Home, in Manchester, Vermont has sponsored an eighth grade essay competition focused on President Lincoln. The competition is open to all eighth graders in the State of Vermont. This year, in partnership with Brown University, a parallel competition will run in Providence, Rhode Island. Next year, the competition will extend to eighth graders in all of Rhode Island.

Hildene was the summer residence of Robert Todd Lincoln and his wife Mary Harlan Lincoln. Mr. Lincoln was the only child of President and Mary Todd Lincoln to survive to adulthood. Between 1905, when they moved in, and the death of their granddaughter Mary Lincoln Beckwith in 1975, more Lincolns lived at Hildene longer than any other place in the United States. Hildene's mission is to advance the Lincoln legacy through education, commitment to community and active stewardship of the family's home and land.

The Brown University Library is the home of the great McLellan Lincoln Collection at the John Hay Library. It has the resources of a major academic institution with teaching and research as its mission. The Brown University Library's mission is as follows:

The Brown University Library, in support of the University's educational and research mission, is the local repository for and the principal gateway to current information and the scholarly record. As such, it is simultaneously collection, connection, and classroom, primarily for the current and future students and faculty of the University, while also serving other colleagues in the University community and our regional, national, and global communities of learning and scholarship.

Hildene and Brown (through the University Library) have previously partnered on other endeavors and have recently entered into a long-term collaborative agreement. Both institutions also believe they have a responsibility to advance the Lincoln legacy and see each other as a means to make the whole greater than the sum of its parts. The two institutions' geographical proximity makes personal interaction, the sharing of programs and the loaning of materials less complicated than it might be if the distance were greater. Partnering to bring the Lincoln Essay Competition to Rhode Island is an exciting next step in the Collaborative.

We judge essays on understanding of the subject and the ability to convey that understanding through good writing. Cash prizes and certificates will be awarded to all winners as follows:

First Prize: \$1,000  
Second Prize: \$750  
Third Prize: \$500  
Up to ten Honorable Mentions: \$200 each

Additionally, each winner, along with their parents and teacher will be invited, as our guests, to our first annual Rhode Island Lincoln's Birthday Luncheon at the Faculty Club at Brown University. The luncheon will be held on Sunday, January 31, 2010 at 1:00 p.m. It is required that, in order to receive their checks and certificates the first, second and third place winners must attend and read their essays. Our keynote speaker will be former Rhode Island Supreme Court Chief Justice and well-known Lincoln scholar, Frank J. Williams.

The attached pages give the details including this year's topic, maximum number of words, eligibility requirements, an application form and related materials. Also included are winning essays from the last two years to give teachers an idea of what we are looking for. We ask that you copy the the packet, including this letter, and forward them to your eighth grade history and English teachers. Those teachers who decide to participate can then copy the packets for their students.

Please note that this does not have to be a class project, although some teachers treat it as such. It can also be something that the teacher makes available as, perhaps, extra credit, or simply explains to students who then make their own decision to participate or not.

Winners will be notified as early in January as possible. All of our winners for the last three years have had a remarkable experience. Their hard work has been rewarded with recognition and a healthy check. All participants have learned about the importance of President Lincoln's legacy at the same time they have had the importance of good writing reinforced.

Hildene and Brown University are proud to bring this opportunity to your students. If you or any of your teachers have any questions please feel free to Cathy Hall at Hildene. Cathy's direct line is 802-367-7962. You may also e-mail her at [cathy@hildene.org](mailto:cathy@hildene.org).

Sincerely,

Seth B. Bongartz  
Executive Director  
Hildene, The Lincoln Family Home

Samuel Streit  
Director of Special Collections  
Brown University Library

## EXAMPLES OF WINNING ESSAYS

2007 Essay Topic: It is March 1869. Imagine President Lincoln had not been assassinated. Draft what might have been his farewell address. (Note: We gave students a handful of facts they could assume to have taken place between April 1865 and March 1869).

### 2007 Second Place Essay

During these eight years past, this country has faced many hardships. That perfect union which our founding fathers wished to create was torn apart by internal strife. One country became two, as we battled our brothers to gain freedom and liberty for all people. Hundreds of thousands died in this battle to decide to whom freedom should belong, but Him to whom we all prayed answered the prayers of the enslaved, and those who were once chained are now free to pursue happiness. All men now may share the rights provided by our constitution. All of God's children, from this point forward, shall walk free on the soils of our founding fathers.

All of the states of the union are again united under one nation. The constitution is amended to include all men, white and black. All men are equal, and now may raise their sons as free men, yet there is still much work to be done. The south is slowly being reconstructed after suffering a devastating blow. Many homes still must be rebuilt and economic independence must be acquired. The north and the south must work as brothers to emerge as an even stronger union.

Although the days of war are behind us, there is still a great battle to be fought. Many still have not accepted this victory of liberty. Many have yet to envision true equality. Black men still live in the shadow of white men. We are approaching a greater and more peaceful era, but before our nation can call itself truly free, we must achieve government of the people, by the people, and for the people. We must accept all members, black and white, men and women, as part of our nation. Only when this is done, will we have accomplished the tasks set forth by our forefathers.

I take leave from my post as leader of this great nation with both pride and expectation. I am blessed to be returning to my home and family and proud to have been called your leader. To my successors, I pass the torch of liberty. May it light your way to justice, tranquility, and equality to all. Do not let those who have died to unite us die in vain. Honor them with peace. Honor them with achievement. Honor them with righteousness. And then we will all prosper under God.

2008 Essay Topic: Analyze the following sentence from Lincoln's Second Inaugural: If we shall suppose that American Slavery is one of those offenses which, in the providence of God, must needs come, but which, having continued through His appointed time, He now wills to remove, and that He gives to both North and South, this terrible war, as the woe due

to those by whom the offense came, shall we discern therein any departure from those divine attributes which the believers in a Living God always attribute to Him? (Note: We told students to do some research and connect the sentence to what was going on in the country at the time and to the entirety of the second inaugural address).

### 2008 First Place Essay

At the beginning of his second term, President Lincoln used his second inaugural address as a speech of reconciliation in order to reunite the people of the North and South while the war raged on. Through a careful selection of words, Lincoln pointed out similarities between the North and the South and whose guilt for the war was shared. He asked a question that seems to be an explanation and delivered his course of action to achieve a “lasting peace“. As a gifted speaker and respected leader, President Lincoln chose to address how both parties went to war, since one “would make war“ and “the other would accept war“. While he expressed that the South’s powerful slave interest was the object over which the war was fought, Lincoln was careful not to place blame on the South alone. He also implied that the Union allowed slavery by territory and both sides shared the guilt of war. The goal was to bring both parties together and unify the wounded country. As a Christian nation, President Lincoln pointed out another likeness in which both Northerner and Southerner alike would “read the same Bible, and pray to the same God“.

Although Abraham Lincoln was not a “religious“ man, he read the Bible, studied and quoted the scriptures. This knowledge of the scriptures taught Lincoln to think deeply and trust in God. In the third paragraph of the address, Lincoln raised a question about “American Slavery“ where both North and South were guilty of the “offense“ or sin. He went on to suppose that God had seen and allowed this sin to continue and “He now wills“ to end slavery. He brought His judgment on the sinners, North and South, through the punishment of war. Lincoln finally stated the question, asking that if God allowed all this evil, were we to believe that He was not the just, compassionate, merciful and loving God who possessed these attributes? “The judgments of the Lord, are true and righteous altogether“ quoted by Lincoln, reassured his listeners that God always does what is right.

President Lincoln demonstrated his gifted speaking ability and strong leadership skills as he laid out a plan, through his second inaugural address, to unite a broken nation. He instructed all people to do what was right and accept the responsibility to work together and heal the country. “To bind up the nation’s wounds“ meant to care for all those who had been affected by the war, and to do everything possible to achieve peace.

At the beginning of President Abraham Lincoln’s second term for the presidency, he realized that the responsibility of reconciling a divided nation was in his hands. In addressing the nation at his inaugural, he took the opportunity to recognize the similarities of both North and South, to explain the intervention of God’s will with regard to the war and present his plan to achieve a “lasting peace“ by speaking directly to the hearts and minds of his fellow man.

HILDENE - BROWN  
Lincoln Essay Competition

APPLICATION FORM

Applicant's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Telephone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

County: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of School: \_\_\_\_\_

Current Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

Essay Topic: Horace Greeley's Letter; Why Did Lincoln Respond?

By signing below, I certify that I live or go to school in Providence and that the submitted essay is my own work. I authorize Hildene and Brown University to use my work in all future related events and publications without compensation and I understand that I must attend the luncheon and read my essay to receive my prize.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Print your name: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Print your name: \_\_\_\_\_

Submission Deadline: November 28, 2009. Essay must arrive at John Hay Library before 5:00 pm

How did you hear about the Hildene-Brown Lincoln Essay Competition?

\_\_\_ Parents

\_\_\_ Newspaper

\_\_\_ Teacher (Teacher's Name) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_



HILDENE - BROWN  
Lincoln Essay Competition

**Mission:**

The goal of Hildene's Lincoln Essay Competition is to promote awareness in the minds of a young generation of Americans of the contributions of this nation's 16th president, Abraham Lincoln, and to honor his birth and his legacy.

**Essay:**

Non-fiction, maximum length: 500 words

**Eligibility:**

The competition is open to eighth grade students who live or go to public, private, or home schools in Providence. Each entrant is permitted to submit one entry.

**Essay Topic:**

Horace Greeley's Letter; Why Did Lincoln Respond?

**Essay Requirements:**

- Must not exceed 500 words
- Must be written in English
- Must be typewritten
- Must have page numbering
- Must not have name or any other identifier of applicant on essay
- Must submit by mail or by hand to:  
John Hay Library, 20 Prospect Street, Box A, Providence, RI 02912  
Attention: Lincoln Writing Competition
- Essay must be the original work of the submitting student
- It is permissible to receive editorial comment or guidance from the teacher or parent as long as the actual writing is the student's own work.

**Criteria for Evaluation:**

Essay will be judged on understanding of Abraham Lincoln as a writer and a leader, as well as content, style, composition and grammar.

**Prizes:**

First Place \$1,000

Second Place \$750

Third Place \$500

Up to ten Honorable Mentions of \$200 each

**Use of Submitted Entries:**

Hildene and Brown University reserve the right to use all submitted pieces in future publications and there will be no compensation to the author for such use.

**Submission Deadline:**

Essay must arrive on or before November 28, 2009, by 5:00 pm.

**Announcement of Winners:**

Winners will be notified in advance and as soon as possible in early January, 2010. Announcements to the press will follow soon after. In order to receive the prize check, the top three winners must attend a luncheon in Providence on Sunday, January 31, 2010. The winners will read their essays at this time. Former Rhode Island Chief Justice of the Supreme Court and noted Lincoln scholar, Frank J. Williams will present the keynote address. The winners, their parents and their teachers will be guests of Hildene and Brown University at this special event held annually to honor the birthday and legacy of Abraham Lincoln.

**Application Form Attached**

**Contact Information:**

Cathy Hall  
Hildene, The Lincoln Family Home  
802 367-7962  
cathy@hildene.org

H I L D E N E - B R O W N  
Lincoln Essay Competition

WELCOME TO THE HILDENE-BROWN 2010 LINCOLN ESSAY COMPETITION

This year's contest requires you to engage in some research, read the enclosed open letter to President Lincoln printed in August 1862 and his response thereto. Your job is to then write an essay of no more than 500 words analyzing why Lincoln responded.

We enclose also a few examples of President Lincoln's speeches to give you a feel for who he was and how well he used words.

In order to write your essay you will need to understand what was going on in America in the summer and fall of 1862, what issues were then pressing on President Lincoln and what had happened between his election in 1860 and that time.

As you read President Lincoln's letter and his speeches you will begin to understand that he was an excellent writer. Like the letter which is the topic of your essay, his speeches were usually very short, with every word carefully chosen. His writings provide great examples of the kind of writing we like to see from those participating in our essay competition. Note the brevity and power of President Lincoln's letter as compared to the length and wordiness of Horace Greeley's letter. You don't necessarily need to use the kind of language Lincoln used, but a good short essay requires well-chosen words and meaningful sentences.

Pay close attention to the attached rule sheet. For instance, we have in the past eliminated otherwise very good essays because they exceeded the 500 word limitation.

HILDENE - BROWN  
Lincoln Essay Competition

TOPIC FOR THE 2010 HILDENE-BROWN LINCOLN ESSAY COMPETITION

Key Facts:

1. President Lincoln drafted what has become known as the Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation in July 1862. He read it to his cabinet, but then put it in his desk drawer waiting until a Union victory before making the announcement.

2. On August 19, 1862, Horace Greeley, the editor of the powerful New York Tribune newspaper, wrote an open letter to President Lincoln sharply criticizing him for his failure to free the slaves in rebellious states.

3. On August 22, 1862 President Lincoln responded to Greeley with his own open letter to the New York Tribune.

4. On September 22, 1862 President Lincoln issued the Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation. It reads in part as follows:

... on the first day of January (1863) .... all persons held as slaves within any State, or designated part of a State, the people whereof shall then be in rebellion against the United States shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free.

Your Job:

Write an essay explaining why Lincoln wrote his response to Horace Greeley.

Do some research to understand what was going on in the country in the summer and fall of 1862 and how those events might have affected Lincoln's thinking. Read the letters included in your packet and, with your research, find other examples of things Lincoln said about slavery (Hint: Look at the time before he was President, including the famous Lincoln - Douglas debates).

Bring all of this to bear on your essay.

HILDENE - BROWN  
Lincoln Essay Competition

LETTERS

On August 19, 1862, Horace Greeley, the influential editor of the New York Tribune, published an open letter ("The Prayer of Twenty Millions") calling on Lincoln to free the slaves as a way of weakening the Confederacy. In response to Greeley's editorial, Lincoln stated that his main purpose was to preserve the Union, and, to achieve that goal, he was prepared to free none, some, or all of the slaves, depending on the circumstances. Below is Greeley's original article as published and directly following that is Lincoln's reply.

HORACE GREELEY'S "THE PRAYER OF THE TWENTY MILLIONS"

August 19, 1862

To ABRAHAM LINCOLN,  
President of the United States

DEAR SIR: I do not intrude to tell you—for you must know already—that a great proportion of those who triumphed in your election, and of all who desire the unqualified suppression of the Rebellion now desolating our country, are sorely disappointed and deeply pained by the policy you seem to be pursuing with regard to the slaves of the Rebels. I write only to set succinctly and unmistakably before you what we require, what we think we have a right to expect, and of what we complain.

I. We require of you, as the first servant of the Republic, charged especially and preeminently with this duty, that you EXECUTE THE LAWS. Most emphatically do we demand that such laws as have been recently enacted, which therefore may fairly be presumed to embody the present will and to be dictated by the present needs of the Republic, and which, after due consideration have received your personal sanction, shall by you be carried into full effect, and that you publicly and decisively instruct your subordinates that such laws exist, that they are binding on all functionaries and citizens, and that they are to be obeyed to the letter.

II. We think you are strangely and disastrously remiss in the discharge of your official and imperative duty with regard to the emancipating provisions of the new Confiscation Act. Those provisions were designed to fight Slavery with Liberty. They prescribe that men loyal to the Union, and willing to shed their blood in her behalf, shall no longer be held, with the Nations consent, in bondage to persistent, malignant traitors, who for twenty years have been plotting and for sixteen months have been fighting to

divide and destroy our country. Why these traitors should be treated with tenderness by you, to the prejudice of the dearest rights of loyal men, We cannot conceive.

III. We think you are unduly influenced by the counsels, the representations, the menaces, of certain fossil politicians hailing from the Border Slave States. Knowing well that the heartily, unconditionally loyal portion of the White citizens of those States do not expect nor desire that Slavery shall be upheld to the prejudice of the Union—(for the truth of which we appeal not only to every Republican residing in those States, but to such eminent loyalists as H. Winter Davis, Parson Brownlow, the Union Central Committee of Baltimore, and to The Nashville Union)—we ask you to consider that Slavery is everywhere the inciting cause and sustaining base of treason: the most slaveholding sections of Maryland and Delaware being this day, though under the Union flag, in full sympathy with the Rebellion, while the Free-Labor portions of Tennessee and of Texas, though writhing under the bloody heel of Treason, are unconquerably loyal to the Union. So emphatically is this the case, that a most intelligent Union banker of Baltimore recently avowed his confident belief that a majority of the present Legislature of Maryland, though elected as and still professing to be Unionists, are at heart desirous of the triumph of the Jeff. Davis conspiracy; and when asked how they could be won back to loyalty, replied "only by the complete Abolition of Slavery." It seems to us the most obvious truth, that whatever strengthens or fortifies Slavery in the Border States strengthens also Treason, and drives home the wedge intended to divide the Union. Had you from the first refused to recognize in those States, as here, any other than unconditional loyalty—that which stands for the Union, whatever may become of Slavery, those States would have been, and would be, far more helpful and less troublesome to the defenders of the Union than they have been, or now are.

IV. We think timid counsels in such a crisis calculated to prove perilous, and probably disastrous. It is the duty of a Government so wantonly, wickedly assailed by Rebellion as ours has been to oppose force to force in a defiant, dauntless spirit. It cannot afford to temporize with traitors nor with semi-traitors. It must not bribe them to behave themselves, nor make cheat fair promises in the hope of disarming their causeless hostility. Representing a brave and high-spirited people, it can afford to forfeit anything else better than its own self-respect, or their admiring confidence. For our Government even to seek, after war has been made on it, to dispel the affected apprehensions of armed traitors that their cherished privileges may be assailed by it, is to invite insult and encourage hopes of its own downfall. The rush to arms of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, is the true answer at once to the Rebel raids of John Morgan and the traitorous sophistries of Beriah Magoffin.

V. We complain that the Union cause has suffered, and is now suffering immensely, from mistaken deference to Rebel Slavery. Had you, Sir, in your Inaugural Address, unmistakably given notice that, in case the Rebellion already commenced were

persisted in, and your efforts to preserve the Union and enforce the laws should be resisted by armed force, you would recognize no loyal person as rightfully held in Slavery by a traitor, we believe the Rebellion would therein have received a staggering if not fatal blow. At that moment, according to the returns of the most recent elections, the Unionists were a large majority of the voters of the Slave States. But they were composed in good part of the aged, the feeble, the wealthy, the timid—the young, the reckless, the aspiring, the adventurous, had already been largely lured by the gamblers and negro-traders, the politicians by trade and the conspirators by instinct, into the toils of Treason. Had you then proclaimed that Rebellion would strike the shackles from the slaves of every traitor, the wealthy and the cautious would have been supplied with a powerful inducement to remain loyal. As it was, every coward in the South soon became a traitor from fear; for Loyalty was perilous, while Treason seemed comparatively safe. Hence the boasted unanimity of the South—a unanimity based on Rebel terrorism and the fact that immunity and safety were found on that side, danger and probable death on ours. The Rebels from the first have been eager to confiscate, imprison, scourge and kill: we have fought wolves with the devices of sheep. The result is just what might have been expected. Tens of thousands are fighting in the Rebel ranks to-day whose, original bias and natural leanings would have led them into ours.

VI. We complain that the Confiscation Act which you approved is habitually disregarded by your Generals, and that no word of rebuke for them from you has yet reached the public ear. Fremont's Proclamation and Hunter's Order favoring Emancipation were promptly annulled by you; while Halleck's No. 3, forbidding fugitives from Slavery to Rebels to come within his lines— an order as unmilitary as inhuman, and which received the hearty approbation of every traitor in America— with scores of like tendency, have never provoked even your own remonstrance. We complain that the officers of your Armies have habitually repelled rather than invited approach of slaves who would have gladly taken the risks of escaping from their Rebel masters to our camps, bringing intelligence often of inestimable value to the Union cause. We complain that those who have thus escaped to us, avowing a willingness to do for us whatever might be required, have been brutally and madly repulsed, and often surrendered to be scourged, maimed and tortured by the ruffian traitors, who pretend to own them. We complain that a large proportion of our regular Army Officers, with many of the Volunteers, evince far more solicitude to uphold Slavery than to put down the Rebellion. And finally, we complain that you, Mr. President, elected as a Republican, knowing well what an abomination Slavery is, and how emphatically it is the core and essence of this atrocious Rebellion, seem never to interfere with these atrocities, and never give a direction to your Military subordinates, which does not appear to have been conceived in the interest of Slavery rather than of Freedom.

VII. Let me call your attention to the recent tragedy in New Orleans, whereof the facts are obtained entirely through Pro-Slavery channels. A considerable body of res-

olute, able-bodied men, held in Slavery by two Rebel sugar-planters in defiance of the Confiscation Act which you have approved, left plantations thirty miles distant and made their way to the great mart of the South-West, which they knew to be the indisputed possession of the Union forces. They made their way safely and quietly through thirty miles of Rebel territory, expecting to find freedom under the protection of our flag. Whether they had or had not heard of the passage of the Confiscation Act, they reasoned logically that we could not kill them for deserting the service of their lifelong oppressors, who had through treason become our implacable enemies. They came to us for liberty and protection, for which they were willing render their best service: they met with hostility, captivity, and murder. The barking of the base curs of Slavery in this quarter deceives no one—not even themselves. They say, indeed, that the negroes had no right to appear in New Orleans armed (with their implements of daily labor in the cane-field); but no one doubts that they would gladly have laid these down if assured that they should be free. They were set upon and maimed, captured and killed, because they sought the benefit of that act of Congress which they may not specifically have heard of, but which was none the less the law of the land which they had a clear right to the benefit of—which it was somebody's duty to publish far and wide, in order that so many as possible should be impelled to desist from serving Rebels and the Rebellion and come over to the side of the Union. They sought their liberty in strict accordance with the law of the land—they were butchered or re-enslaved for so doing by the help of Union soldiers enlisted to fight against slaveholding Treason. It was somebody's fault that they were so murdered—if others shall hereafter suffer in like manner, in default of explicit and public directions to your generals that they are to recognize and obey the Confiscation Act, the world will lay the blame on you. Whether you will choose to hear it through future History and at the bar of God, I will not judge. I can only hope.

VIII. On the face of this wide earth, Mr. President, there is not one disinterested, determined, intelligent champion of the Union cause who does not feel that all attempts to put down the Rebellion and at the same time uphold its inciting cause are preposterous and futile—that the Rebellion, if crushed out tomorrow, would be renewed within a year if Slavery were left in full vigor—that Army officers who remain to this day devoted to Slavery can at best be but half-way loyal to the Union—and that every hour of deference to Slavery is an hour of added and deepened peril to the Union, I appeal to the testimony of your Ambassadors in Europe. It is freely at your service, not at mine. Ask them to tell you candidly whether the seeming subserviency of your policy to the slaveholding, slavery-upholding interest, is not the perplexity, the despair of statesmen of all parties, and be admonished by the general answer.

IX. I close as I began with the statement that what an immense majority of the Loyal Millions of your countrymen require of you is a frank, declared, unqualified, ungrudging execution of the laws of the land, more especially of the Confiscation Act. That Act gives freedom to the slaves of Rebels coming within our lines, or whom those

lines may at any time inclose—we ask you to render it due obedience by publicly requiring all your subordinates to recognize and obey it. The rebels are everywhere using the late anti-negro riots in the North, as they have long used your officers' treatment of negroes in the South, to convince the slaves that they have nothing to hope from a Union success—that we mean in that case to sell them into a bitter bondage to defray the cost of war. Let them impress this as a truth on the great mass of their ignorant and credulous bondsmen, and the Union will never be restored—never. We cannot conquer Ten Millions of People united in solid phalanx against us, powerfully aided by the Northern sympathizers and European allies. We must have scouts, guides, spies, cooks, teamsters, diggers and choppers from the Blacks of the South, whether we allow them to fight for us or not, or we shall be baffled and repelled. As one of the millions who would gladly have avoided this struggle at any sacrifice but that Principle and Honor, but who now feel that the triumph of the Union is dispensable not only to the existence of our country to the well being of mankind, I entreat you to render a hearty and unequivocal obedience to the law of the land.

Yours,  
Horace Greeley  
New York, August 19, 1862

Source: "Lincoln and Greeley" by Harlan Horner

LINCOLN'S REPLY TO GREELEY  
August 22, 1862

Executive Mansion,  
Washington, August 22, 1862

Hon. Horace Greeley:

Dear Sir. I have just read yours of the 19th addressed to myself through the New York Tribune. If there be in it any statements, or assumptions of fact, which I may know to be erroneous, I do not, now and here, controvert them. If there be perceptible in it an impatient and dictatorial tone, I waive it in deference to an old friend, whose heart I have always supposed to be right.

As to the policy I "seem to be pursuing" as you say, I have not meant to leave any one in doubt.

I would save the Union. I would save it the shortest way under the Constitution. The sooner the national authority can be restored; the nearer the Union will be "the Union as it was." If there be those who would not save the Union, unless they could at the same time save slavery, I do not agree with them. If there be those who would not save the Union unless they could at the same time destroy slavery, I do not agree with them. My paramount object in this struggle is to save the Union, and is not either to save or to destroy slavery. If I could save the Union without freeing any slave I would do it, and if I could save it by freeing all slaves I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing some and leaving others alone I would also do that. What I do about slavery, and the colored race, I do because I believe it helps to save the Union; and what I forbear, I forbear because I don't believe it would help to save the Union. I shall do less whenever I shall believe what I am doing hurts the cause, and I shall do more whenever I shall believe doing more will help the cause. I shall try to correct errors when shown to be error; and I shall adopt new views so fast as they shall appear to be true views.

I have here stated my purpose according to my view of Official duty: and I intend no modification of my oft-expressed personal wish that all men everywhere could be free.

Yours,  
A. Lincoln

Source: "Abraham Lincoln: His Speeches and Writings" edited by Roy Basler

HILDENE - BROWN  

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Lincoln Essay Competition

EXAMPLES OF LINCOLN'S EXCELLENT WRITING

LINCOLN'S FAREWELL ADDRESS  
Springfield, Illinois, February 11, 1861

My friends, no one, not in my situation, can appreciate my feeling of sadness at this parting. To this place, and the kindness of these people, I owe everything. Here I have lived a quarter of a century, and have passed from a young to an old man. Here my children have been born, and one is buried. I now leave, not knowing when, or whether ever, I may return, with a task before me greater than that which rested upon Washington. Without the assistance of the Divine Being who ever attended him, I cannot succeed. With that assistance I cannot fail. Trusting in Him who can go with me, and remain with you, and be everywhere for good, let us confidently hope that all will yet be well. To His care commending you, as I hope in your prayers you will commend me, I bid you an affectionate farewell.

LINCOLN'S SECOND INAUGURAL ADDRESS  
Washington, D.C., March 4, 1865

“At this second appearing to take the oath of the presidential office, there is less occasion for an extended address than there was at the first. Then a statement, somewhat in detail, of a course to be pursued, seemed fitting and proper. Now, at the expiration of four years, during which public declarations have been constantly called forth on every point and phase of the great contest which still absorbs the attention, and engrosses the energies of the nation, little that is new could be presented. The progress of our arms, upon which all else chiefly depends, is as well known to the public as to myself; and it is, I trust, reasonably satisfactory and encouraging to all. With high hope for the future, no prediction in regard to it is ventured.

On the occasion corresponding to this four years ago, all thoughts were anxiously directed to an impending civil war. All dreaded it—all sought to avert it. While the inaugural address was being delivered from this place, devoted altogether to saving the Union without war, insurgent agents were in the city seeking to destroy it without war—seeking to dissolve the Union, and divide effects, by negotiation. Both parties deprecated war; but one of them would make war rather than let the nation survive; and the other would accept war rather than let it perish. And the war came.

One eighth of the whole population were colored slaves, not distributed generally over

the Union, but localized in the southern part of it. These slaves constituted a peculiar and powerful interest. All knew that this interest was, somehow, the cause of the war. To strengthen, perpetuate, and extend this interest was the object for which the insurgents would rend the Union, even by war; while the government claimed no right to do more than to restrict the territorial enlargement of it. Neither party expected for the war, the magnitude, or the duration, which it has already attained. Neither anticipated that the cause of the conflict might cease with, or even before, the conflict itself should cease. Each looked for an easier triumph, and a result less fundamental and astounding. Both read the same Bible, and pray to the same God; and each invokes His aid against the other. It may seem strange that any men should dare to ask a just God's assistance in wringing their bread from the sweat of other men's faces; but let us judge not that we be not judged. The prayers of both could not be answered; that of neither has been answered fully. The Almighty has his own purposes. "Woe unto the world because of offenses! for it must needs be that offenses come; but woe to that man by whom the offense cometh!" If we shall suppose that American Slavery is one of those offenses which, in the providence of God, must needs come, but which, having continued through His appointed time, He now wills to remove, and that He gives to both North and South, this terrible war, as the woe due to those by whom the offense came, shall we discern therein any departure from those divine attributes which the believers in a Living God always ascribe to Him? Fondly do we hope—fervently do we pray—that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet, if God wills that it continue, until all the wealth piled by the bond-man's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash, shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said "the judgments of the Lord, are true and righteous altogether".

With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation's wounds; to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan—to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace, among ourselves, and with all nations."

## GETTYSBURG ADDRESS

Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, November 19, 1863

Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battle-field of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field, as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

But, in a larger sense, we can not dedicate – we can not consecrate – we can not hallow – this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us – that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion – that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain – that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom – and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.