

Words at Gettysburg Answer Key

1. Main Message (Model Answer):

Lincoln's main message was that the Civil War was a test of the nation's commitment to equality and democracy, and that Americans must continue the fight to ensure freedom and unity survive.

2. Historical Importance (Model Answer):

At the time, the speech reminded the nation of its founding ideals during a period of deep division. It redefined the Civil War as not just a battle for survival, but a struggle for equality and democratic government.

3. Most Powerful Phrase (Model Answer):

- "Government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth."
- *Why:* It powerfully captures the democratic ideal and reassured Americans that their sacrifices had a larger purpose. (*Accept other choices if explained thoughtfully with text evidence.*)

Teacher's Notes:

- Students may phrase the **main message** differently (e.g., "Lincoln urged the nation to finish the soldiers' work" or "Lincoln said America needed a new birth of freedom"). Accept as long as it shows understanding of unity, equality, and democracy.
- Stress the **cross-curricular element**: this speech is both a **literary masterpiece** (rhetorical power, conciseness) and a **historical document** (delivered during a turning point in the Civil War).
- Extension idea: Have students compare Lincoln's message to a modern speech about unity or democracy.