



## Letter of Leadership

**Directions:** Read the primary source excerpt carefully. Think about the author's perspective, purpose, and the historical context. Answer the guiding questions that follow, using evidence from the text in your responses. Reflect on how this source helps us better understand the period in history.

### Abraham Lincoln's Letter to Horace Greeley (August 22, 1862)

*(adapted for clarity and length)*

"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.' 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 the 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 this Union; and what I forbear, I forbear because I do not believe it would help to save the Union."

### Guiding Questions

1. What does Lincoln identify as his "paramount object" in this letter?
2. How does Lincoln describe his approach to the issue of slavery in relation to saving the Union?
3. What does this letter suggest about Lincoln's leadership style during the Civil War?
4. Why might Lincoln have chosen to write this letter to Horace Greeley, a well-known editor and critic of his policies?
5. Based on this excerpt, how might the letter have influenced public opinion at the time?