

---

## Objectives:

- Students will be able to analyze a rhetorical work and to understand its cultural influence and its historical significance.
- Students will be able to use context clues to determine the meanings of unfamiliar words.
- Students will be able to correctly use vocabulary words.

## *Abraham Lincoln (1809 – 1865)*

Abraham Lincoln was the sixteenth President of the United States. He was elected in 1860 and reelected in 1864. He is known for many great achievements, including successfully leading the United States to victory in the Civil War and helping to end slavery. Sadly, he was assassinated April 15, 1865 – the first President to be assassinated – and did not get to see the reunited country for which he had fought so determinedly.

When an elected official takes office, there is a ceremony known as an “inauguration.” This is when the person formally takes office. President Lincoln gave speeches at both of his inaugurations, and both speeches have become very famous.

## *Rhetoric*

Why didn’t the President just use the word “slavery”? Why did he use a poetic phrase? The careful use of language to create a strong emotional reaction is called **rhetoric**. The next important section we will analyze is full of rhetorical language.

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 the North and South this terrible war as the woe due to those by whom the offense came...

In the first phrase it is important that Lincoln did not use the term “Southern slavery,” but instead used “American Slavery.” He correctly placed the blame for slavery coming to America on both sides. Again, the President was trying to smooth out Reconstruction.

## *The Second Inaugural Address*

President Lincoln's "Second Inaugural Address" is both **historically** and **culturally significant**. When he gave it, the end of the Civil War was at hand and there was the important question of how the rebellious southern states would be treated. Would they be treated as a conquered nation, or would the northern states welcome them back into the Union?



In his "Second Inaugural Address," President Lincoln makes clear to his listeners that he believed that the correct approach to "Reconstruction" - which means putting the country back together - was not to treat the South harshly. He said that both sides in the Civil War had been at least partially responsible for the war, but he made it absolutely clear that slavery was an evil institution that should be abolished, or rid of forever. President Lincoln also made many references to the Bible in order to encourage Americans to treat each other with generosity and forgiveness. He knew that the war had generated much hate in both the North and the South, and that only forgiveness could ever allow the country to be reunited.

### *Context Clues*

Context clues are "helper" words and phrases within a sentence that can help you understand an unfamiliar word. Being able to understand what you are reading will help you better grasp the full understanding of the literary work.

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.

In these lines, Lincoln is saying that both the North and the South worship the same God. Since that is something they have in common, peace between them should be possible. What does the word **invoke** mean? How can we use **context clues** to figure it out? If we read the next line we get a **clue**.

It may seem strange that any men should dare to ask a just God's assistance

President Lincoln says "...should dare to ask a just God's assistance..." It seems that both sides are "asking" or "calling upon" God's help in the war effort. Using these clues, it can be understood that **invoke**, means to "ask" or "call upon."

What does the phrase "wringing their bread from the sweat of other men's faces" mean? As you read in the Address, President Lincoln wrote a great deal about slavery. You've probably heard the phrase, "earning your bread," which means making a living. You might have heard the phrase to "wring out the laundry" which means to twist all the water out of it. Putting those together, it becomes clear that the President is referring to slavery.

He gives to both North and South this terrible war as the **woe** due to those by whom the offense came...

Here the President means that both sides are being punished by God for allowing slavery to come to the United States. From the context, can you figure what the word **woe** means? If you think about the term “terrible war,” then you can understand **woe** to mean pain and sadness. Again, President Lincoln is telling Americans how much they have in common. Not only do they worship the same God, but they all share the responsibility for slavery and that God is punishing them all with a “terrible war.” Lincoln is trying to reunite the country in this Address.

The last paragraph of the speech is the most famous.

With **malice** towards 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 a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations.

What does the word **malice** mean? President Lincoln doesn’t want it for anybody, but he does want charity for everybody, so “malice” must mean something very different from “charity.” We know that charity is generously giving to those in need – a good thing. **Malice**, then, must mean having mean, evil thoughts towards people.

## *Vocabulary*

Being able to understand the vocabulary in President Lincoln’s “Second Inaugural Address” will help you better understand and appreciate impact it had on America’s future. The following is a list of words from this section that you can use to help your vocabulary grow.

**Triumph** – noun – Victory

We celebrate our *triumph* over Britain every Fourth of July

**Fervently** – adjective – Having great intensity, enthusiasm

“Fondly do we hope, *fervently* do we pray...”

**Deprecated** – verb – To go against; disapprove of

“Both parties *deprecated* war...”

---

## Growth & Assessment

1. What is an inauguration?
  - a. A speech
  - b. An event that occurs during August
  - c. A ceremony when an elected official takes office
  - d. An election
2. In the context of the Civil War, what does “Reconstruction” mean?
  - a. Putting the country back together
  - b. Repairing a damaged house
  - c. To re-fight a battle
  - d. To return a runaway slave
3. President Lincoln believed only what could reunite the country?
  - a. Rhetoric
  - b. Forgiveness
  - c. Pain
  - d. War
4. In your own words, how did President Lincoln want the North to treat the Southern states?
5. Read the following passage from President Lincoln’s “Second Inaugural Address,” and in your own words, describe what the bolded word means.

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 the North and South this terrible war as the woe due to those by whom the offense came...