

Analyzing an Historical Speech

Introduction

Since almost the beginning of time, people have found reasons to give speeches. We're going to look at ways we can break down what the speakers said and try to understand why they said it and why they said it the way they did. We'll look at what impact it had on people and why it had the impact it did. It sounds hard, but it won't be. We'll just take it one step at a time. Understanding how authors and speakers made their points will help us learn to write clearly in ways that communicate our ideas to others and might just change the world!

Step One:

Read the speech thoughtfully and carefully out loud. Then read it silently to yourself. Are there any words of which you aren't sure of the meaning? Write them down.

Step Two:

What do you think the words mean from their context in the speech? Write down your thoughts and then look the words up in a dictionary. Revise or expand their definitions based on what you learn.

Step Three:

Who gave the speech? When and where was it given?

Step Four:

What was the occasion for giving it? Who was the audience?

Step Five:

Was the speaker the author of the speech? If not, who was the author, and why was that person given the task?

Step Six:

What kind of speech was it? Was it an argument, an informative speech, a speech meant to entertain, or something else? What clues tell you this?

Step Seven:

What was the speech's purpose, or what were the speaker's goals in giving the speech?

Step Eight:

How did the speaker get the audience's attention in the beginning of the speech?

Step Nine:

How did the speaker appeal to the listener's mind or intellect? What words or phrases were used to do this?

Step Ten:

How did the speaker appeal to the listener's emotions? What words or phrases were used to do this?

Step Eleven:

How did the speaker connect with the audience? If you felt connected, what words or phrases made you feel like the speaker cared about you or shared something in common with you? If you didn't feel connected, how could the speaker have done better?

Step Twelve:

If the speech was an argument meant to persuade, how did the speaker make his or her point and encourage a reaction from the audience?

Step Thirteen:

Did the speaker's tone change through the speech? If so, how and for what purpose?

Step Fourteen:

Did the speaker make any claims in the speech? If so, what were they?

Step Fifteen:

Did the speaker offer any evidence or proof of his or her claims in the speech? If so, what was offered?

Step Sixteen:

Are any of the claims able to be disproven? If so, how?

Step Seventeen:

Are there any logical fallacies in the speech? If so, what are they?

Step Eighteen:

Did the speaker make any promises in the speech? If so, what were they?

Step Nineteen:

Write a brief outline of the speech, highlighting the key points made at different points in the speech.

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Step Twenty:

Why do you think the author structured the speech in this way?

Step Twenty-One:

What literary and rhetorical devices can you identify in the speech? There are many to consider, but some you could look for are tone, diction, figurative language, repetition, parallel structure, hyperbole, understatement, statistics, examples, anecdotes, imagery, metaphor, alliteration, personification, allegory, allusion, assonance, hyperbole, and simile.

[illegible]

Step Twenty-Two:

What purpose or purposes were the devices used for? What did they accomplish?

Step Twenty-Three:

Can you think of anything related to the topic or setting of the speech that the author did not include or mention? If so, why do you think it was left out?

Step Twenty-Four:

If it's possible to know this, how did the audience respond?

Analysis and Summary:

Now it's time to summarize the speech, take what you've learned and noticed about the speech, and write it all out together. Think of what you would tell someone about the speech that would help them understand what it was about and why it was important if they had never heard it before.

[illegible]

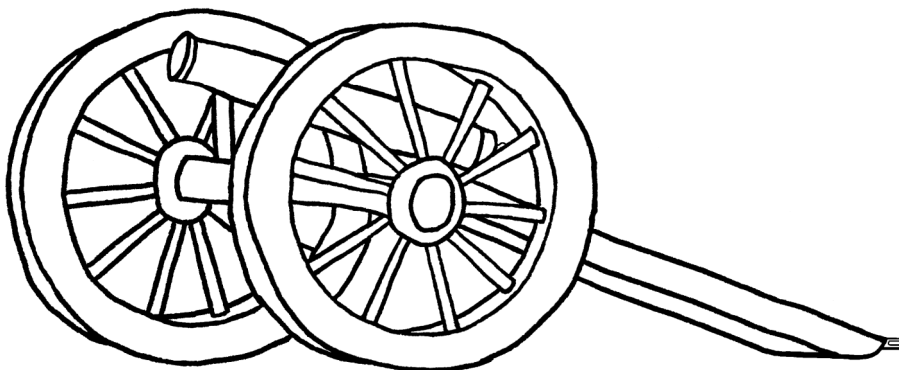
A blank sheet of lined paper. It features a solid black border and a dashed black border. The writing area is filled with horizontal lines. There are 20 lines in total, with the first line being a dashed line and the remaining 19 being solid lines.

President Abraham Lincoln's
Gettysburg Address
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.



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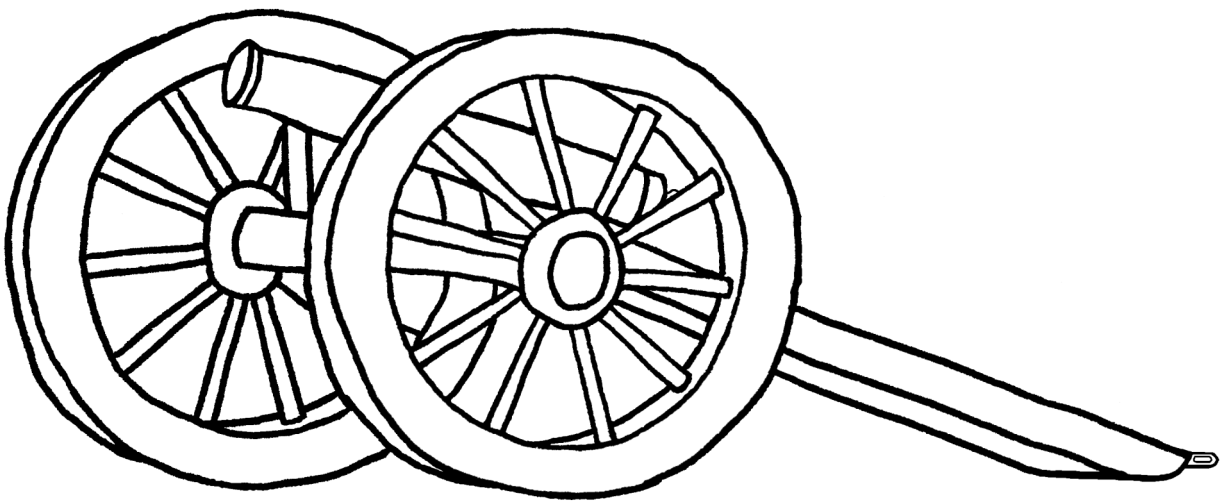
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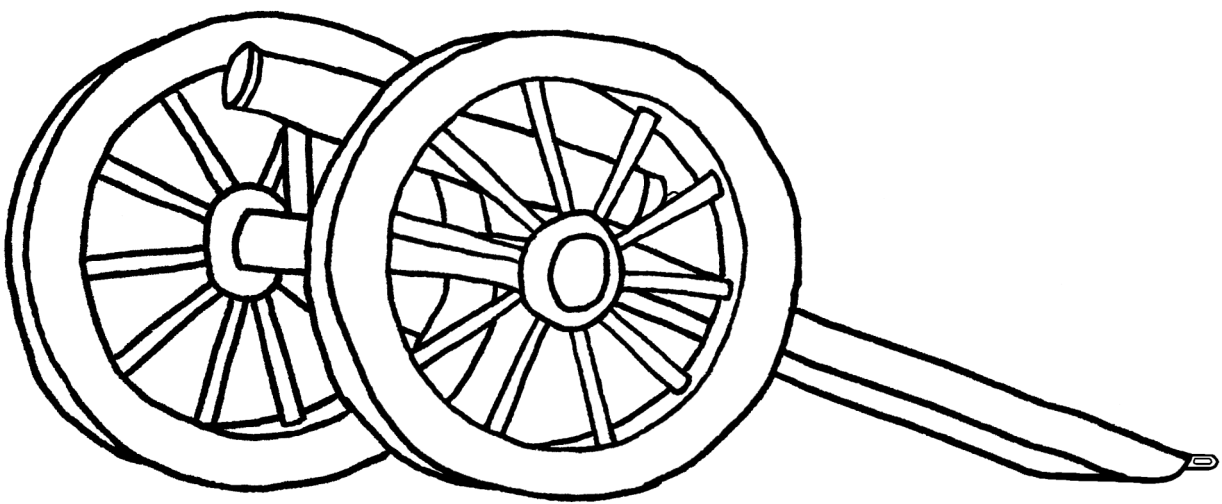
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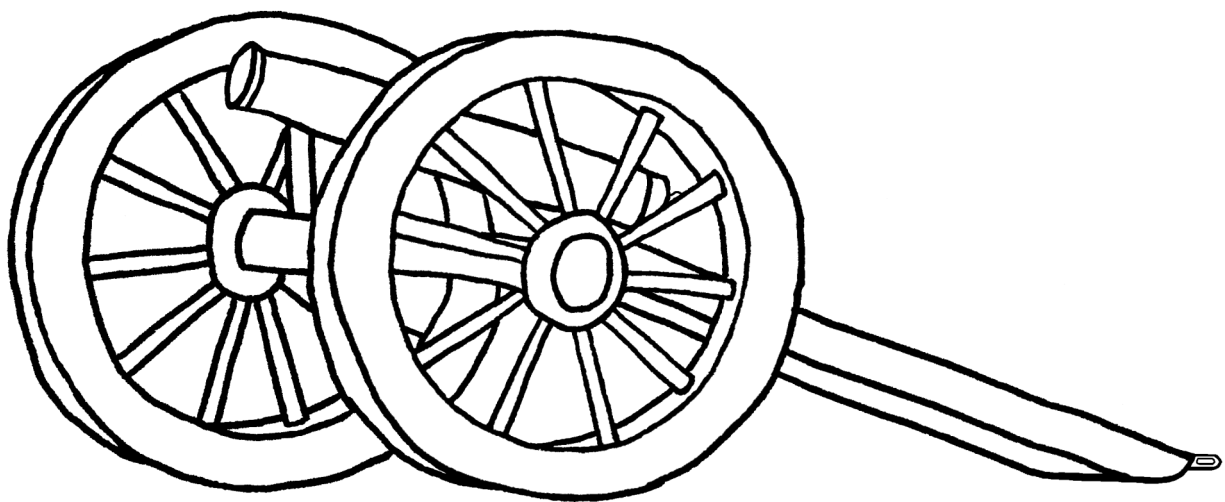


Handwriting practice paper with a dashed border and multiple sets of three horizontal lines (top solid, middle dashed, bottom solid) for writing practice.

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Handwriting practice paper with a dashed border and 20 sets of three horizontal lines (top solid, middle dashed, bottom solid) for writing practice.

Handwriting practice lines consisting of multiple sets of three horizontal lines (top solid, middle dashed, bottom solid) for letter formation.



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