

LINCOLN ESSAY CONTEST

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“America will never be destroyed from the outside. If we falter and lose our freedoms, it will be because we destroyed ourselves.” That was a quote by Abraham Lincoln, the 16th president of the United States of America. In this day and age, his words are more relevant than ever. Abraham Lincoln presided over the most trying times in American History – the Civil War. He paved the way for civil rights for all citizens by eliminating slavery. He lived as we SHOULD live – as a respectful and righteous human being.

“A house divided cannot stand” – Abraham Lincoln. The United States of America is 16 trillion dollars in debt. Isn’t this an example of destroying our country from within? Our public offices are plagued with partisanship and infighting. It seems as if the two parties can’t agree on anything! Our country is fractured, and this is exactly what President Lincoln feared. We will falter from within because our elected officials can’t come to agreement anymore. Lincoln went to war to make sure the Union stayed whole. Today, we should do the same. Officials should stand behind their values, yes, but not let differences tear this country apart from within. As Lincoln said, a house divided cannot stand.

““That on the first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, 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...” The beginning lines of Lincoln’s most monumental document – the Emancipation Proclamation. With a few well thought-out words on January 1st, 1863, Lincoln freed slaves in Confederate states and changed the future, the destiny, and the legacy of a nation. The Emancipation Proclamation led to the 13th Amendment, freeing all the slaves in the United States. From there, it only got better. From the Woman’s Suffrage movement of the 1920s, to the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s – none of this would have been possible without Abraham Lincoln, the greatest president in history. If we keep Abraham Lincoln as our model, we can strive toward freedom and equality for all.

If the Emancipation Proclamation was Lincoln’s most monumental document, then the Gettysburg Address is the most famous. The lines, “Four Score and Seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent...” are taught to every student, and for good reason. On the Battlefield of Gettysburg, where the smell of gunpowder and blood still lingered – Lincoln underlined the fact that we were fighting for the freedom of all people; we were fighting because of the ideals in the Declaration of Independence. He promised that the soldiers who made the ultimate sacrifice did not die in vain. He swore that we would move forward as a country so everyone, regardless of race, color, or creed, would be free. Now, we must make sure of the same. Today, we’re fighting for freedom in places like Iraq and Afghanistan. We should honor those who died there by making sure that people everywhere are free.

In addition to his national accomplishments, Lincoln's life is an example for us all. Lincoln ran for Congress and Vice President, and lost. He didn't give up. His son died at a young age; a misery unimaginable. He still didn't give up. Consider the following quote by Lincoln – "In the end, it's not the years in your life that count. It's the life in your years." Lincoln lived a productive, meaningful, and fruitful life until he was assassinated in April of 1865 at age 55. Yet, he is an inspiring figure. As well as being elected President, he fundamentally changed this nation. I look toward Lincoln as a role model. He never gave up, and I won't either. I will do as Lincoln did – make sure my years are filled with meaning.

President Lincoln lived a life worth living, but he had an inspiring viewpoint in another aspect of life. He asked the question "Am I not destroying my enemies by making friends of them?" Politicians should ask the same question – choosing a more passive approach, and seeking to resolve conflict by conversation rather than fighting. Perhaps on the global stage, we should aim to make friends of our enemies, rather than destroying them with military might. Even in our daily lives – instead of arguing with the neighbor who mows his lawn at 7:00 a.m., make a friend, and solve the problem. If more followed Lincoln's example of choosing every possible peaceful approach before resorting to violence, the world would be a better and safer place.

"Sir, my concern is not whether God is on our side; my greatest concern is to be on God's side, for God is always right." – Lincoln. Whether you are a spiritual or not, this quote still applies. Instead of asking yourself whether you're morally right doing something, make sure you are morally right BEFORE you do it. Today, many of us disregard our own moral standards - with the advent of the internet and social media, we forget respectfulness and righteousness. Lincoln tried his to be the best man he could, and we, as a society, country, and individuals, should do the same.

In the essay, I chose quotes spoken by the greatest President in history – Abraham Lincoln. These quotes are still relevant today, as is Lincoln. From politics, to our daily lives, the 16th President should be an example of how to act, how to live, how to lead. Politicians today should look toward Lincoln as an example for public office. He isn't called "Honest Abe" for nothing. Lincoln fought for freedom; he fought for this country; he fought for us. He did something with his life. He won freedom for generations to come; shaping a nation. He's inspired millions; he's inspired me. I leave you with this quote from Lincoln, my favorite - "Those who deny freedom for others do not deserve it for themselves."