Lesson 1 - The Gettysburg Address: An American Treasure

Materials (Worksheets and Primary Sources):

Student worksheets:
* Worksheet #1: Origins of the Gettysburg Address
* Worksheet #2: Gettysburg Address Ideas Found Elsewhere
* Worksheet #3: Persuasive Speech

Primary sources
* Text of The Gettysburg Address

Documents A:
* Source 1: Wisconsin State Agriculture Society Speech, 1859
* Source 2: Republican Party Platform, 1860

Documents B:
* Source 3: First Inaugural Address, 1861
* Source 4: Letter to the Widow Bixby, 1864

Strategies/Procedure

Day 1

1. **Hook:** Begin with a quick brainstorming session to check students’ associations by writing the words “Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address” on chalkboard or flip chart. The purpose is to find out where students start on this topic. Distribute copies of the Gettysburg Address to all students and introduce students to it by having two or three able students—to whom you have given the speech ahead of time to practice—read it.

2. The second activity will provide students with a basic historical context for the Gettysburg Address. Give each student a copy of Worksheet #1: The Origins of the Gettysburg Address. Ask students to read the worksheet and answer the questions to get information about how this famous speech was regarded in 1863, when it was given. Students can compare their answers with a partner once they have completed the reading and questions. Then have students re-read their copies of the Gettysburg Address.

3. The third activity will be done in groups of four or five students. The teacher will determine the size of each group based upon class size. For purposes of clarity in directions, the teacher should call one collection of documents “Documents A” and the other set of documents “Documents B.” Each group of students should receive two primary source documents created by Abraham Lincoln.

4. Each group of students should decide how they want to accomplish the task of reading and reacting to each primary source, but each student or pair of students should be responsible for one of the documents. Some are longer and more
complicated, so group members may decide to have partners work on those documents. Students in each group can use a highlighter to go over the documents. They should highlight key passages or phrases that contain sentiments similar to those expressed in the Gettysburg Address. Then, the group will complete **Worksheet #2: Gettysburg Address Ideas Found Elsewhere** in which they list the name of the primary source where they found a similar idea expressed as well as cite the passage. They will present their findings to the class and discuss what they mean. Since some groups of students worked on the same documents, there may be different opinions expressed on each document.

Day 2
1. **Wrap Up:** The final required activity asks students to select one or two of the ideas in the Gettysburg Address such as “government of the people, by the people, and for the people shall not perish from the earth.” Their task will be to write a persuasive speech focused upon the idea but updated to the present time period.

2. Use **Worksheet #3: Persuasive Speech.** Specifically, they will create a persuasive speech that uses the ideas in the Gettysburg Address to commemorate critically important events of the early 21st century, like the September 11, 2001, tragedy at the World Trade Center, Pentagon, and in Somerset County, Pennsylvania or another major event that students suggest.

**Assessment**

**Rubric for Worksheets**

**Worksheet 1**  
**Exemplary** Able to give detailed answers when required and explain why the Gettysburg Address is considered a great speech.  
**Proficient** Provided details to completely answer the questions.  
**Adequate** Factually answered all questions with no elaboration.  
**Inadequate** Unable to answer all of the seven questions.

**Worksheet 2**  
**Exemplary** Could explain the common thread that connected the Gettysburg Address ideas with those found elsewhere in other Lincoln documents.  
**Proficient** Located three or more ideas found in the Gettysburg Address that were embedded in other Lincoln documents.  
**Adequate** Located at least two ideas found in the Gettysburg Address that were embedded in other Lincoln documents.  
**Inadequate** Unable to locate key ideas in primary sources.

**Worksheet 3**  
**Exemplary** Speech selected and articulated one or two key ideas from the Gettysburg Address and made a clear and cogent connection to a recent critical event. The speech was concise (272 words or less) and the delivery of the speech showed evidence of careful rehearsal.
Proficient Final draft of the speech captured the essence of one of the key ideas in the Gettysburg Address.

Adequate Prewriting and first draft were adequate preparation for the final draft.

Inadequate Incomplete prewriting and/or first draft.

Differentiation
Able readers can be provided more challenge by having them share the reading of the Gettysburg Address aloud at the beginning of the lesson. They should also be encouraged to take the more difficult documents when working in groups, perhaps alongside other students who might benefit from their skills. Less able readers could select the shorter documents during the group activity or work with average students to share the reading of harder documents. Before the lesson, the teacher could sort through all readings to select and compile a list of more challenging vocabulary words and their meanings to have on hand. Some of these words are italicized and a list of these words is included after primary sources.