The Lincoln Speeches

Abraham Lincoln has become firmly entrenched as one of the most prominent figures in American history. Much of this reputation that Lincoln carries stems from his speeches delivered during the Civil War. Lincoln’s speeches are not only a primary source from the Civil War, but they also represent the greater impact of the war as a “new birth of freedom.”

As a class, we will use Lincoln’s speeches to study the Civil War. In reading his speeches, we will highlight and examine major moments and events of the war in order to contextualize the moment in which Lincoln addresses the nation. At the end of this series of readings, you should be able to answer the following:

**How did Lincoln’s speeches (and the Emancipation Proclamation) reflect the changing course and goals of the war?**

Speeches/Documents examined:

*The First Inaugural Address* (1861)
*Emancipation Proclamation* (1862)
*Gettysburg Address* (1863)
*Second Inaugural Address* (1865)

At the conclusion of each of Lincoln’s addresses, you should be able to complete the following:

ONE: Decide which historical issues motivated Lincoln to address the nation. How is this speech a product of the moment in which Lincoln is addressing the nation? Be specific with regards to the course of the war.

TWO: List the major thesis/theses in the piece. What point is Lincoln trying to convince the country of?

THREE: Decide what direction Lincoln hopes his speech will send the nation. What vision does he have for America after his speech?