

**TEACHER GUIDE**

# 1864 DOC. #2: Four Newspaper Reports on Gettysburg Address

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Reporters’ accounts of a presidential speech can mean as much as the speech itself in the way the words will be remembered, or not remembered. A reporter was present to transcribe the text of the speeches at the dedication of the Gettysburg cemetery. His telegraphed report appeared in newspapers across the country the next day. Not surprisingly, press reports about the speech differed greatly depending on the party affiliation of the newspaper in which they were printed.

- > **Have students** analyze the four different excerpts in pairs or small groups using the handout. **Project** each excerpt as they present their answers to the whole class.

**QUESTION** | **Is the report from a Republican paper or a Democratic paper? Give evidence from the document to support your answers.**

- > **Project** 1864 doc. #2a: *Chicago Tribune*

**SUGGESTED ANSWER** | Republican

**EVIDENCE** | “Impressive Exercises of the Occasion,” “A Grand National Testimonial,” “impressive civic occasion,” “splendidly dedicated,” “immense applause, and three cheers” for Lincoln

- > **Project** 1864 doc. #2b: *Harrisburg Patriot and Union*

**SUGGESTED ANSWER** | Democratic

**EVIDENCE** | “silly remarks of the President,” “no more repeated or thought of” (Lincoln’s address forgotten)

- > **Project** 1864 doc. #2c: *Providence Journal*

**SUGGESTED ANSWER** | Republican

**EVIDENCE** | “admirable speech,” “beautiful... touching... inspiring... thrilling words of the President,” “charm and power of the very highest eloquent”

**1864 DOC. #2a-d**

## Four Newspaper Reports on Gettysburg Address

**PowerPoint Slide**  
Text on student handout

**1864 DOC. #2a**

*1864 doc. #2a*  
From the *Chicago Tribune*  
Saturday, November 21, 1863

FROM GETTYSBURG, PA.  
The consecration of the  
Battle Cemetery,  
50,000 PERSONS IN ATTENDANCE.  
Impressive Exercises of  
the Occasion.  
Dirge by Hon. D. B. French – Oration by Hon. Edward Everett.  
Dedictory Address by President Lincoln.  
A Grand National  
Testimonial to Our  
Fallen Braves.

[Special Dispatch to the Chicago Tribune]

HARRISBURG, NOV. 20, 1863  
My dispatch last night concerning the exercises yesterday, by occupation of the wires, was made necessarily brief. I send you my full notes of the most impressive civic occasion of the war.  
A great day for the nation, the burial place of her glorious defenders on the crisis of the national safety was splendidly dedicated to valor, to patriotism and to freedom.  
...  
The conclusion of the President’s remarks was followed by immense applause, and three cheers given for him, as also three cheers for the Governors of the States.

**Chicago Tribune**

**1864 DOC. #2b**

*1864 doc. #2b*  
From *Harrisburg Patriot and Union*

“We pass over the silly remarks of the President, for the credit of the nation we are willing that the veil of oblivion shall be dropped over them and that they shall no more be repeated or thought of.”

**Harrisburg Patriot and Union**

**1864 DOC. #2c**

*1864 doc. #2c*  
From the *Providence Journal*

“We know not where to look for a more admirable speech than the brief one which the president made at the close of Mr. Everett’s oration... Could the most elaborate and splendid be more beautiful, more touching, more inspiring, than those thrilling words of the President? They had in our humble judgment the charm and power of the very highest eloquent.”

**Providence Journal**

> **Project** 1864 doc. #2d: *Chicago Times*

SUGGESTED ANSWER	Democratic
EVIDENCE	“exceedingly bad taste which characterized the words of the President,” “shame as he reads the silly, flat, and dish-watery utterances” of the easy to overlook and non-distinguished President
QUESTION	<b>How is this coverage biased? What is your evidence?</b>
SUGGESTED ANSWER	Use of subjective language.
EVIDENCE	each article takes a strongly subjective or opinionated perspective in describing Lincoln’s speech, by using words like “impressive,” “silly,” “admirable” and “dish-watery” to describe the speech
QUESTION	<b>Why do you suppose that the coverage was so biased?</b>
SUGGESTED ANSWER	The papers were published during a civil war when political positions were polarized.
SUGGESTED ANSWER	Newspapers at this time were highly partisan so that editorial positions and news reports regularly supported politicians from one party and criticized politicians from the other party.

**FURTHER QUESTIONS**

What if candidates’ words were reprinted without commentary from reporters or editors? Would this be a better way to help voters choose candidates?

Are today’s media sources more or less biased than these newspapers from 1864?

The 1864 papers used carefully selected adjectives to convey their bias. How do media sources today reveal their bias?

Should media sources like newspapers and television stations be free of any bias? Can they be?

**1864 DOC. #2d**

1864 doc. #2d  
From the *Chicago Times*

“Readers will not have failed to observe the exceeding bad taste which characterized the remarks of the President... at the dedication of the soldier’s cemetery at Gettysburg. The cheek of every American must tingle with shame as he reads the silly, flat, and dish-watery utterances of the man who has to be pointed out to the intelligent foreigners as the President of the United States.

**Chicago Times**

**CONNECTIONS**

(see thematic listing)

**Attack  
Media Bias**