



English Society of Maria College

ESSAY CRITICISM CONTEST

A DEDICATION 1863

[The words of Abraham Lincoln when he dedicated a cemetery to the men killed in the battle of Gettysburg during the American Civil War]

Fourscore 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 battlefield of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field as a final resting-place for those who have given their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this. 5

But, in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate, we cannot consecrate, we cannot 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 honoured 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. 10 15

ABRAHAM LINCOLN (1809-65)

AIM

To arouse public interest in Standard English (Formal English), anyone is welcome to point out the strengths and weaknesses in "A Dedication", viewed in our time, not in Lincoln's, with reasons from authoritative sources.

AWARDS

Awards for merit entries are related to the degree of difficulty:

An easy one gets HK\$500; a hard one, HK\$1,000; a harder one, HK\$2,000; and the hardest, HK\$3,000. Awards for demerit entries will have a flat rate of HK\$3,000 per item.

Here is an example for a merit of an easy one:

- ☺ 'We cannot dedicate, we cannot consecrate, we cannot hallow this ground.' (line 7) This is a structure of parallelism. ('Correct English' by Brian Phythian, Hodder & Stoughton, 1998, p.191.)

Others:

- ☺ What are the functions of "that that"? (line 6) (\$2,000)*
☺ Explain fully the functions of (not meaning) "— that from these honoured dead ... of devotion". (line 12) (\$2,000)*
*Answer should come with authoritative sources.

ADDRESS & RESULTS

Please send all entries with contestants' phone number and fax number to Kowloon Central Post Office Box 70395 or by fax at 2387 6294 before 15 October, 1999.

Results will come out by the end of October 1999. Of similar answers the most comprehensive one is the winner. The decision of the English Society will be final.

COMMENTS

There are at least 10 more merits and more than 2 demerits judged in our time. This passage was taught in Primary 6 in US, Form 5 in UK and 2nd year in a local university. Professors, teachers, students: all praise this Gettysburg Address, but we hardly hear why. Now, we are waiting for your concrete responses to enlighten the world as to its strengths and weaknesses.