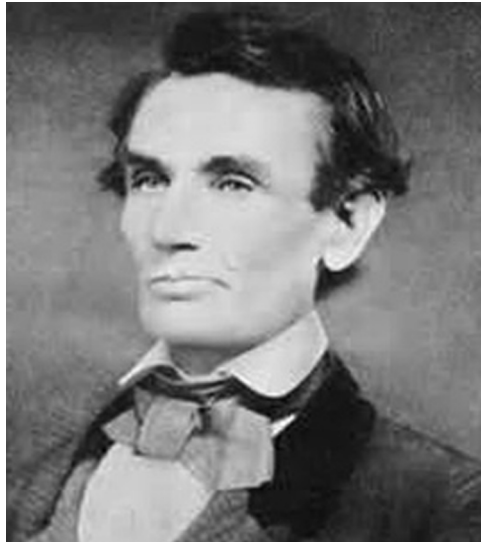


## 55 QUOTATIONS



### Abraham Lincoln

(1809-1865)

Abraham Lincoln is the most noble soul and by far the best writer among American presidents. In the wilderness of the western frontier he educated himself by firelight, developing a prose style influenced by the Bible, Aesop, Shakespeare, John Bunyan, and Thomas Paine. He began as a humorous storyteller and a lawyer who excelled at persuasion and became the most effective public speaker in American political history. His campaign debates with Stephen Douglas remain classics of argumentation. He looms over history as the President who saved the Union by winning the Civil War and got assassinated for it. His sad older face incarnates the tragedy of the war. Lincoln as a tall bent figure in a long black frock coat and tall black top hat appears as an icon in many novels, stories, plays and movies and he has been the subject of countless works, most famously the poems by Walt Whitman, "O Captain! My Captain!" and the moving elegy "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd."

Lincoln combines the traits of a folksy western humorist, the Neoclassical mind of a lawyer and the Transcendental sensibility of a deeply religious poet. His writing is economical, simple, clear, logical, and enhanced by parallelism, antitheses, and wit. It is poetic in its measured cadences, patterned rhythms, metaphors, alliteration, assonance, repetition, inverted syntax, archaic language, elegiac tone, and spiritual resonance. His major works are his "House Divided" speech, his "Cooper Union Address," his "Farewell Address" at Springfield, his inaugural addresses and, of course, "The Gettysburg Address" (1863), one of the masterpieces in world oratory.

**ORDER OF TOPICS:** mother, common man, self-deprecating humor, morality, character, self-reliance, patience, hustle, success, books, tact, positive thinking, equality, slavery, election, the South, America, education, opposition to Socialism, politicians, advice, Gettysburg Address, God, death:

#### MOTHER

All that I am or ever hope to be, I owe to my angel mother.

No man is poor who has a Godly mother.

## COMMON MAN

The Lord prefers common-looking people. That is why he makes so many of them.

## SELF-DEPRECATING HUMOR

If I were two-faced, would I be wearing this one?

It's not me who can't keep a secret. It's the people I tell that can't.

My father taught me to work, but not to love it. I never did like to work, and I don't deny it. I'd rather read, tell stories, crack jokes, talk, laugh—anything but work.

## MORALITY

Whatever you are, be a good one.

Be sure you put your feet in the right place, then stand firm.

When I do good, I feel good. When I do bad, I feel bad. That's my religion.

I am not bound to win, but I am bound to be true. I am not bound to succeed, but I am bound to live up to what light I have.

## CHARACTER

Character is like a tree and reputation its shadow. The shadow is what we think it is and the tree is the real thing.

It has been my experience that folks who have no vices have very few virtues.

I do not think much of a man who is not wiser today than he was yesterday.

I don't like that man. I must get to know him better.

## SELF-RELIANCE

Every man's happiness is his own responsibility.

People are just as happy as they make up their minds to be.

You have to do your own growing no matter how tall your grandfather was.

## PATIENCE

I will prepare and some day my chance will come.

The best thing about the future is that it comes one day at a time.

I am a slow walker, but I never walk back.

## HUSTLE

Things may come to those who wait, but only the things left by those who hustle.

## SUCCESS

Success is going from failure to failure without losing your enthusiasm.

Always bear in mind that your own resolution to succeed is more important than any one thing.

I'm a success today because I had a friend who believed in me and I didn't have the heart to let him down.

#### BOOKS

My best friend is a person who will give me a book I have not read.

Books serve to show a man that those original thoughts of his aren't very new after all.

#### TACT

Tact: The ability to describe others as they see themselves.

#### POSITIVE THINKING

We can complain because rose bushes have thorns, or rejoice because thorn bushes have roses.

#### EQUALITY

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.

I am in favor of animal rights as well as human rights. That is the way of a whole human being.

#### SLAVERY

A house divided against itself cannot stand. I believe this government cannot endure permanently half slave and half free.

Whenever I hear anyone arguing for slavery, I feel a strong impulse to see it tried on him personally.

Those who deny freedom to others deserve it not for themselves.

#### ELECTION

I now leave, not knowing when, or whether ever, I may return, with a task before me greater than that which rested upon Washington.

#### THE SOUTH

The best way to destroy an enemy is to make him a friend.

We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained, it must not break our bonds of affection. The mystic chords of memory will swell when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature.

I have always found that mercy bears a richer fruit than strict justice.

#### AMERICA

My concern is not whether God is on our side, my greatest concern is to be on God's side.

America will never be destroyed from the outside. If we falter and lose our freedoms, it will be because we destroyed ourselves.

## EDUCATION

The philosophy of the schoolroom in one generation will be the philosophy of civil government in the next.

## OPPOSITION TO SOCIALISM

You cannot help the poor by destroying the rich.

You cannot bring about prosperity by discouraging thrift.

You cannot strengthen the weak by weakening the strong.

You cannot further the brotherhood of man by inciting class hatred.

You cannot lift the wage earner up by pulling the wage payer down.

You cannot build character and courage by taking away men's initiative and independence.

You cannot help men permanently by doing for them, what they could and should do for themselves.

## POLITICIANS

How many legs does a dog have? Four. Calling a tail a leg doesn't make it a leg.

Nearly all men can stand adversity, but if you want to test a man's character, give him power.

If you once forfeit the confidence of your fellow citizens, you can never regain their respect and esteem. It is true that you may fool all of the people some of the time; you can even fool some of the people all of the time; but you can't fool all of the people all of the time. [Speech at Clinton, Illinois, 1854]

## ADVICE

When you reach the end of your rope, tie a knot and hang on.

### The Gettysburg Address (1863)

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 here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this. 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 honored 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.

## GOD

I can see how it might be possible for a man to look down upon the earth and be an atheist, but I cannot conceive how a man could look up into the heavens and say there is no God.

I have been driven many times upon my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had nowhere else to go. My own wisdom and that of all about me insufficient for that day.

## DEATH

And in the end it is not the years in your life that count, it's the life in your years.

