The Gettysburg Address Close Reading

Exercise:

1. Read the passage below once and answer questions 1-5 on your own paper.
2. Read the passage a 2nd time, and answer the 1-5 questions on your own paper.
3. Read for the final time and the answer the 3rd read questions on your own paper.

Fourscore and seven years ago our fathers brought forth, upon 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 it, as a final resting place for those who died here, that the nation might live. This we may, in all propriety do. 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 hallowed it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here; while it can never forget what they did here.

It is rather for us the living, we here be dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they here gave the last full measure of devotion—that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain, that this nation 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.

First Read Questions:

1. Who are the “fathers” he speaks of in line one?
2. Explain what he is talking about in the first four lines.
3. Why can “we” not dedicated, consecrate, and hallow the ground in question?
4. According to President Lincoln what will not be remembered the day these words were given?
5. What does the president hope will come from what happened in Gettysburg? (give at least 3 things mentioned.

2nd Read Questions:

1. What does fourscore and seven years ago mean?
2. Why does Lincoln use the word conceived? What other word could be used and how would it change the meaning?
3. Why does Lincoln use the word “proposition? What connotations does that word hold?
4. Why does Lincoln choose the word “great” in describing the civil war? How would the meaning have changed if he would have used the word terrible or the word glorious?
5. Explain what the word “propriety” means in this context:

Third Read Questions:

1. Where have you heard the phrase, “All men are created equal” before?
2. Circle all the nouns. Now read the last 2 lines of the speech. What connection can you make between the pronouns and those lines?
3. Compare the last sentence of each paragraph. What connection can you make?