

# In Defense of Memorizing

If you ever read the [Betsy-Tacy](#) series by Maud Hart Lovelace as a kid, you probably know that Betsy and her friends were big fans of producing home-grown entertainment programs.

And the entertainment perpetually ran along the same lines: Betsy and Tacy performed the Cat Duet, little Tib did the Baby Dance, talented Julia played the piano or sang, and poor, stage-fright Katie always recited Lincoln's *Gettysburg Address*.

It was Katie's nervous, regular recital of *The Gettysburg Address* that made me stop and think. Admittedly, Katie did not possess the stage talent and performing nature of the other children in the book. Yet because she had been required in school to commit *The Gettysburg Address* to memory, she had a ready performance at her fingertips, and was likely able to draw on and muse over its words well into her adulthood.

Memorization of poems and classic speeches like *The Gettysburg Address* has admittedly fallen out of favor today. Many schools perceive memorization as an unengaging, useless task, preferring instead to instill their students with critical thinking skills.

But as Dr. William Klemm implies in [Psychology Today](#), memorization can actually build critical thinking skills, particularly as the practice exercises the mind and provides ready information from which students can readily draw. Furthermore, memorization can also help students focus, a quality which Klemm notes is "lacking in many youngsters," a fact particularly "obvious in the growing number of kids diagnosed with ADHD."

Given these benefits, should schools be more accepting of memorization and once again expect students to commit items like *The Gettysburg Address* to memory?