

the last full measure

the last full measure is a phrase deeply embedded in American history and culture, evoking themes of sacrifice, honor, and ultimate commitment. Originating from Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, this powerful expression has transcended its historical context to influence literature, film, and public discourse. Understanding the significance of the last full measure involves exploring its historical roots, its moral and symbolic implications, and its representations in modern media. This article delves into these aspects, providing a comprehensive overview of the phrase's enduring importance. From its origins in the Civil War to its use in contemporary narratives, the last full measure continues to resonate as a tribute to those who give everything in service to a cause greater than themselves.

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Historical Origins of the Last Full Measure

The phrase the last full measure is famously derived from President Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, delivered in 1863 during the American Civil War. In this brief but profound speech, Lincoln honored the fallen soldiers who had given "the last full measure of devotion" to preserve the Union. The address was delivered at the dedication of the Soldiers' National Cemetery in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, a site of one of the war's bloodiest battles. The phrase encapsulated the ultimate sacrifice made by soldiers who lost their lives in defense of their country's values.

Context of the Gettysburg Address

The Gettysburg Address was a pivotal moment in American history, reaffirming the nation's commitment to liberty and equality. Lincoln's use of the phrase the last full measure highlighted the cost of war and the debt owed to fallen soldiers. His speech, though only a few minutes long, redefined the purpose of the Civil War and inspired a sense of unity and resolve among Americans.

Military Significance

Within military terminology, the last full measure refers to the complete and ultimate sacrifice of life in service. It symbolizes the highest level of dedication a soldier can offer. The phrase has since been adopted in military honors and commemorations to recognize those who have died in combat, reinforcing the

solemn respect accorded to such sacrifices.

Symbolism and Meaning

Beyond its historical origins, the last full measure carries deep symbolic meaning related to sacrifice, honor, and duty. It represents the willingness to give everything, including one's life, for a cause or principle. This symbolism is integral to understanding the phrase's emotional and cultural resonance.

Sacrifice and Devotion

The last full measure embodies the ultimate expression of sacrifice and devotion. It acknowledges not only the physical loss but also the moral and ethical commitment involved in facing mortal dangers. This concept has universal relevance in contexts where individuals dedicate themselves fully to a mission or belief.

Honor and Remembrance

The concept of the last full measure is closely tied to the ideals of honor and remembrance. It serves as a focal point for memorial ceremonies, military honors, and public acknowledgments of those who have paid the highest price. By commemorating the last full measure, societies reinforce collective memory and respect for those who served.

The Last Full Measure in Literature and Media

The phrase the last full measure has been a source of inspiration in various cultural works, including literature, film, and poetry. Its evocative power makes it a compelling theme for exploring heroism, sacrifice, and the human cost of conflict.

Literary References

Numerous literary works have incorporated the phrase or its concept to highlight themes of valor and sacrifice. Writers often use it to evoke emotional depth and to honor characters who demonstrate extraordinary commitment. The phrase enriches narratives that grapple with the consequences of war and the nobility of selflessness.

Film and Television

In film and television, the last full measure has been depicted in stories focusing on military heroism and the personal struggles of soldiers. These portrayals emphasize the gravity of sacrifice and the enduring impact on families and communities. The phrase serves as a narrative tool to evoke patriotism and to honor those who have given their lives.

Modern Commemorations and Usage

Today, the last full measure continues to hold relevance in public ceremonies, military traditions, and popular discourse. It is used to express respect for fallen soldiers and to remind society of the costs of freedom and peace.

Military Honors and Memorials

The last full measure is often invoked during military funerals, memorial services, and national observances such as Memorial Day. It underscores the solemnity of these occasions and the gratitude owed to service members who died in the line of duty.

Broader Cultural Impact

Beyond the military, the phrase has been adopted metaphorically to describe ultimate sacrifices in various fields, including public service and humanitarian efforts. It symbolizes the highest form of dedication and is used to inspire commitment and resilience.

Key Elements of Commemoration

- Official speeches and dedications referencing the phrase
- Monuments and plaques honoring fallen heroes
- Educational programs promoting awareness of sacrifices
- Media coverage of remembrance events

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the meaning of 'The Last Full Measure'?

'The Last Full Measure' is a phrase from Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, referring to the ultimate sacrifice made by soldiers who gave their lives in battle.

Is 'The Last Full Measure' a movie?

Yes, 'The Last Full Measure' is a 2019 war drama film directed by Todd Robinson that tells the story of a Pentagon staffer working to honor a Vietnam War hero with the Medal of Honor.

Who stars in the movie 'The Last Full Measure'?

The film features an ensemble cast including Sebastian Stan, Christopher Plummer, Samuel L. Jackson, Ed Harris, and William Hurt.

What is the plot of the movie 'The Last Full Measure'?

The movie follows a young Pentagon staffer who fights to secure the Medal of Honor for a Vietnam War medic who sacrificed his life to save fellow soldiers.

When was 'The Last Full Measure' movie released?

The film was released in the United States on January 24, 2020.

What themes does 'The Last Full Measure' explore?

The movie explores themes of heroism, sacrifice, honor, and the bureaucratic challenges faced in recognizing valor.

Is 'The Last Full Measure' based on a true story?

Yes, the film is based on the true story of William H. Pitsenbarger, a U.S. Air Force medic who was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor decades after his heroic actions in Vietnam.

What is the significance of the title 'The Last Full Measure'?

The title signifies the ultimate sacrifice a soldier can make, giving their life in service to their country, as described in Lincoln's Gettysburg Address.

How was 'The Last Full Measure' received by critics?

The movie received mixed to positive reviews, with praise for its performances and respectful portrayal of military heroism, though some critics noted pacing issues.

Where can I watch 'The Last Full Measure'?

As of 2024, 'The Last Full Measure' is available on various streaming platforms for rent or purchase, and may also be found on DVD or Blu-ray.

Additional Resources

1. *Last Full Measure: The Life and Sacrifice of William H. Pitsenbarger*

This biography delves into the heroic actions of William H. Pitsenbarger, a U.S. Air Force pararescueman who posthumously received the Medal of Honor for his bravery during the Vietnam War. The book explores his selfless acts to save fellow soldiers amidst intense combat, highlighting the themes of courage and sacrifice. It also provides a detailed account of the battle that defined his legacy.

2. *The Last Full Measure: Medal of Honor Stories from the Vietnam War*

This collection compiles various Medal of Honor citations and stories from the Vietnam War, focusing on soldiers who gave their "last full measure" of devotion. Each chapter narrates a different individual's extraordinary valor and the circumstances that led to their ultimate sacrifice. The book serves as a tribute to the bravery and commitment of those who fought in Vietnam.

3. *Taking the Last Full Measure: The Untold Story of Vietnam War Heroes*

Uncovering lesser-known tales of heroism, this book shines a light on Vietnam War veterans whose sacrifices have often been overlooked. Through interviews, archival materials, and battlefield accounts, it presents a vivid picture of the challenges and sacrifices faced by these soldiers. The narrative emphasizes the enduring spirit and resilience of those who served.

4. *Last Full Measure: The Battle for Honor in Modern Warfare*

This work examines the concept of honor and sacrifice in contemporary military conflicts, using the phrase "last full measure" as a thematic anchor. It discusses how soldiers navigate the moral complexities of war while maintaining their commitment to duty and comradeship. The book also reflects on how societies remember and honor their fallen heroes.

5. *Beyond the Last Full Measure: Stories of Survival and Remembrance*

Focusing on the aftermath of war, this book explores how families and communities cope with the loss of loved ones who gave their last full measure. It includes personal stories, memorial initiatives, and the psychological impact of sacrifice. The narrative underscores the importance of remembrance and the healing power of acknowledging sacrifice.

6. *The Last Full Measure: A Novel of Valor and Redemption*

A fictional story inspired by true events, this novel follows a soldier's journey through the Vietnam War and his quest for redemption after witnessing profound loss. The protagonist grapples with the meaning of sacrifice and the cost of courage in the face of overwhelming adversity. The book combines action, emotion, and reflection to depict the human side of war.

7. *Last Full Measure: The Medal of Honor and Its Legacy*

This historical account traces the origins and evolution of the Medal of Honor, focusing on the stories behind the award's recipients. It highlights moments when individuals gave their last full measure of devotion, shaping the legacy of American military valor. The book also discusses the cultural and historical significance of the medal.

8. *Honoring the Last Full Measure: Memorials and Monuments of War*

An exploration of how different countries and communities commemorate soldiers who have made the

ultimate sacrifice, this book surveys various memorials and monuments around the world. It discusses the symbolism, design, and stories embodied in these sacred spaces. The work emphasizes the universal desire to remember and honor those who gave their last full measure.

9. *In Their Last Full Measure: Stories from the Front Lines*

This compilation of first-person accounts and eyewitness testimonies brings to life the experiences of soldiers who faced combat situations demanding extraordinary bravery. The narratives provide insight into the split-second decisions and sacrifices made on the battlefield. The book serves as a powerful reminder of the human cost of war and the valor of those who serve.

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