

Inaugural Address by John F. Kennedy, January 20, 1961 7th Grade Speech

The text of this speech is in the public domain.

This is part of the speech that John F. Kennedy gave when he became President of the United States.

In your hands, my fellow citizens, more than in mine, will rest the final success or failure of our course. Since this country was founded, each generation of Americans has been summoned to give testimony to its national loyalty. The graves of young Americans who answered the call to service surround the globe.

Now the trumpet summons us again - not as a call to bear arms, though arms we need; not as a call to battle, though embattled we are - but a call to bear the burden of a long twilight struggle, year in and year out, "rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation" - a struggle against the common enemies of man: tyranny, poverty, disease, and war itself.

Can we forge against these enemies a grand and global alliance, North and South, East and West, that can assure a more fruitful life for all mankind? Will you join in that historic effort?

In the long history of the world, only a few generations have been granted the role of defending freedom in its hour of maximum danger. I do not shrink from this responsibility - I welcome it. I do not believe that any of us would exchange places with any other people or any other generation. The energy, the faith, the devotion which we bring to this endeavor will light our country and all who serve it -- and the glow from that fire can truly light the world.

And so, my fellow Americans: ask not what your country can do for you -- ask what you can do for your country.

My fellow citizens of the world: ask not what America will do for you, but what together we can do for the freedom of man.

Finally, whether you are citizens of America or citizens of the world, ask of us the same high standards of strength and sacrifice which we ask of you. With a good conscience our only sure reward, with history the final judge of our deeds, let us go forth to lead the land we love, asking His blessing and His help, but knowing that here on earth God's work must truly be our own.

Analyze Author's Techniques, including Figurative Language - Speech

Questions developed by Center for Urban Education for use by Chicago Public Schools 2008-2009.

Choose the best answer for each question.

1. Why does Kennedy start by saying "in your hands"?

- a. because people need to listen to the speech
- b. to make it clear that people are responsible
- c. so they know what he means in the speech
- d. so they will join hands in the audience

3. What does "history the final judge mean"?

- a. History books report what happens.
- b. In later years people will think about what happens now.
- c. When people write histories they tell what people did.
- d. People should think about history when they do things.

2. Why does Kennedy say "Ask not what your country can do for you"?

- a. because people need to work for progress
- b. because he is going to set more taxes
- c. because the President is the leader of the country
- d. because he wants people to vote for him

4. Why does he say "Let us go forth"?

- a. He wants them to leave.
- b. He wants them to work for progress.
- c. He wants to win the election.
- d. He wants people to save money.

5. Write your own answer to this question. An inauguration speech is written to inspire people. What is one sentence Kennedy wrote that would inspire people?

TEACHER NOTES: Develop Students' Skills: Exercise Thinking

These questions have not been validated, so decisions about student's achievement should not be made based on their responses. They are intended to exercise skills. Recommended activities include: students work in pairs to choose the best response; give students the questions without the responses so they generate their own answers; students make up additional questions; students make up questions like these for another passage.

Answers: You can remove this answer key and then give it to students and ask them to figure out the basis for the correct response.

Item	1	2	3	4
Answer	b	a	b	b

Question 5 is open-ended. Here is a suggested response.
Any appropriate sentence can be cited.