

Focus on Freedom

JEFFERSON'S INAUGURAL ADDRESS

When Thomas Jefferson became the third President of the United States, the nation was divided. The two political factions, as many feared, had become full-blown political parties. Facing his inaugural audience, Jefferson sought to reassure them that good intentions would underlie his policies and actions as President.

Though the will of the majority is in all cases to prevail . . . the minority possess their equal rights, which equal law must protect, and to violate would be oppression. . . . Let us then, fellow citizens, unite with one heart and one mind. . . . Having banished from our land that religious intolerance under which mankind so long bled and suffered, we have yet gained little if we countenance [allow] a political intolerance as despotic, as wicked, and capable of as bitter and bloody persecutions. . . . Every difference of opinion is not a difference of principle. We have called by different names brethren of the same principle. We are all Republicans; we are all Federalists. . . . Sometimes it is said that man cannot be trusted with the government of himself. Can he, then, be trusted with the government of others? Or have we found angels in the forms of kings to govern him? Let history answer this question. . . .

I ask so much confidence only as may give firmness and effect to the legal administration of your affairs. I shall often go wrong through defect of judgment. When right, I shall often be thought wrong by those whose positions will not

command a view of the whole ground. I ask your indulgence for my own errors, which will never be intentional, and your support against the errors of others, who may condemn what they would not if seen in all its parts. . . . My future solicitude [attention] will be to retain the good opinion of those who have bestowed it in advance, to conciliate that of others by doing them all the good in my power, and to be instrumental to the happiness and freedom of all.

—THOMAS JEFFERSON, 1801

Examining the Document

Reviewing Facts

1. Cite the type of intolerance Jefferson fears.
2. Explain what Jefferson means by the questions he asks in his speech.

Critical Thinking Skills

3. Making Inferences What inference can be drawn from Jefferson's statement, "We are all Republicans; we are all Federalists"?

RONALD REAGAN'S FIRST INAUGURAL

Ronald Reagan became the fortieth President of the United States on January 20, 1981. In his inaugural address, Reagan reiterated certain points that he had made throughout his campaign—such as the dangerous economic condition of the country and the need to reduce the federal bureaucracy.

In this present crisis, government is not the solution to our problem; government is the problem. From time to time we've been tempted to believe that society has become too complex to be managed by self-rule, that government by an elite group is superior to government for, by, and of the people. Well, if no one among us is capable of governing himself, then who among us has the capacity to govern someone else? All of us together, in and out of government, must bear the burden. . . .

So, as we begin, let us take inventory. We are a nation that has a government—not the other way around. And this makes us special among the nations of the Earth. Our government has no power except that granted it by the people. It is time to check and reverse the growth of government, which shows signs of having grown beyond the consent of the governed.

It is my intention to curb the size and influence of the Federal establishment and to demand recognition of the distinction between the powers granted to the Federal Government and those reserved to the States or to the people. All of us need to be reminded that the Federal Government did not create the States; the States created the Federal Government.

Now, so there will be no misunderstanding, it's not my intention to do away with govern-

ment. It is rather to make it work—work with us, not over us; to stand by our side, not ride on our back. Government can and must provide opportunity, not smother it; foster productivity, not stifle it.

In the days ahead . . . steps will be taken aimed at restoring the balance between the various levels of government. Progress may be slow, measured in inches and feet, not miles, but we will progress. It is time to reawaken this industrial giant, to get government back within its means, and to lighten our punitive tax burden. And these will be our first priorities, and on these principles there will be no compromise.

—RONALD REAGAN, JANUARY 20, 1981

Examining the Document

Reviewing Facts

1. Point out how Reagan believes the United States is different from other nations.
2. Describe the role Reagan believes government should have.

Critical Thinking Skills

3. Identifying Central Issues What do you think the proper role of the federal government should be?

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JOHN F. KENNEDY'S INAUGURAL

On January 20, 1961, the youngest man ever elected President of the United States took the oath of office. Robert Frost, a friend of the Kennedy family, read a poem into the icy sunlight. Then as Kennedy spoke to the nation, he also addressed the world. Speaking to a world divided into two camps—communist and free—Kennedy asked for a new spirit of cooperation.

We observe today not a victory of party but a celebration of freedom—symbolizing an end as well as a beginning—signifying renewal as well as change. For I have sworn before Almighty God the same solemn oath our forebears prescribed nearly a century and three-quarters ago.

The world is different now. For man holds in his mortal hands the power to abolish all forms of human poverty and all forms of human life. And yet the same revolutionary beliefs for which our forebears fought are still at issue around the globe—the belief that the rights of man come not from the generosity of the state but from the hand of God.

We dare not forget today that we are the heirs of that first revolution. Let the word go forth from this time and place, to friend and foe alike, that the torch has been passed to a new generation of Americans—born in this century, tempered by war, disciplined by a hard and bitter peace, proud of our ancient heritage—and unwilling to witness or permit the slow undoing of those human rights to which this nation has always been committed. . . .

Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe to assure the survival and the success of liberty. . . .

So let us begin anew—remembering on both sides that civility is not a sign of weakness, and sincerity is always subject to proof. Let us never negotiate out of fear. But let us never fear to negotiate. . . .

And if a beachhead of cooperation may push

back the jungle of suspicion, let both sides join in creating a new endeavor—not a new balance of power but a world of law, where the strong are just and the weak secure and the peace preserved. . . .

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 can do for you but what together we can do for the freedom of man.

—JOHN F. KENNEDY, JANUARY 20, 1961

Examining the Document

Reviewing Facts

1. Discuss what Kennedy says has changed about the world and what remains the same.
2. Identify what Kennedy believes is worth any price or hardship to defend.

Critical Thinking Skills

3. Making Inferences What approach toward relations with communist nations did Kennedy signal in this address?