

New Frontiers

A newsletter for ★ educators

THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT OF THE JOHN F. KENNEDY PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY AND MUSEUM

MAKE A DIFFERENCE AWARD

THE KENNEDY LIBRARY IS

LAUNCHING the first annual

Make a Difference Award Program, whereby up to 100 middle school students will be formally recognized for contributions they have made to

their communities through volunteer work. Students from grades 6, 7, or 8 who participate in any type of community service or volunteer work are eligible for this award. Each school may submit the names of two students.

For more information or to submit the name of a student volunteer, please visit the "For Teachers" section of the web site, www.jfklibrary.org. ★

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Poetry and Power: The Inaugural Address of John F. Kennedy

Forty-eight years ago on January 20th, a clerk of the U.S. Supreme Court held the large Fitzgerald family Bible as John F. Kennedy took the oath of office to become the nation's 35th president. Against a backdrop of deep snow and sunshine, more than twenty thousand people huddled in 20-degree temperatures on the east front of the Capitol to witness the event. Kennedy, having removed his topcoat and projecting both youth and vigor, delivered what has become a landmark inaugural address.



Inauguration Day, January 20, 1961.

His audience reached far beyond those gathered before him to people around the world. In preparing for this moment, he sought both to inspire the nation and to send a message abroad signaling the challenges of the Cold War and his hope for peace in the nuclear age. He also wanted to be brief. As he'd remarked to his close advisor, Ted Sorensen, "I don't want people to think I'm a windbag."

He assigned Sorensen the task of studying other inaugural speeches and Lincoln's Gettysburg Address to glean the secrets of successful addresses. The finely-crafted final speech had been revised and reworked numerous times by Kennedy and Sorensen until the President-elect was satisfied. Though not the shortest of inaugural addresses, Kennedy's was shorter than most at 1,355 words in length and, like Lincoln's famous speech, was comprised of short phrases and words. In addition to message, word choice and length, he recognized that captivating his audience required a powerful delivery. On the day before and on the morning of Inauguration Day, he kept a copy handy to take advantage of any spare moment to review it, even at the breakfast table.

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Poetry and Power: The Inaugural Address of John F. Kennedy (continued)

What many consider to be the most memorable and enduring section of the speech came towards the end when Kennedy called on all Americans to commit themselves to service and sacrifice: “And so, my fellow Americans: ask not what your country can do for you – ask what you can do for your country.” He then continued by addressing his international audience: “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.”

Having won the election by one of the smallest popular vote margins in history, Kennedy had known the great importance of this speech. People who witnessed the speech or heard it broadcast over television and radio lauded the new President. Even elementary school children wrote to him with their reactions to his ideas. Following his inaugural address, nearly seventy-five percent of Americans expressed approval of President Kennedy.

The Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum has mounted a special display providing a rare glimpse into the drafting of this speech. “Poetry and Power: The Inaugural Address of John F. Kennedy” features original documents from the Library’s collections and includes: President Kennedy’s dictation, taken down by his secretary on January 10, in a combination of shorthand and long-hand; Ted Sorensen’s notes revealing some of Kennedy’s instructions; the earliest surviving draft of the address; a draft of the speech handwritten by President Kennedy on January 17; and the final reading copy of the speech,



JFK takes the oath of office.

revealing a last-minute change suggested to the President-elect. Also included is a letter from a 10-year-old admirer from New York. “Poetry and Power” will be on view through June 2009. WCVB-TV5 is the official media sponsor of the exhibit.

To hear or view President Kennedy’s address and to read a transcript, visit www.jfklibrary.org/historical+resources/archives/reference+desk/speeches.

Classroom teaching suggestions for elementary, middle and high school audiences begin below.

FOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL AUDIENCES:

“Ask What You Can Do”: Kennedy’s Call to Action

John F. Kennedy’s inaugural address inspired children and adults to see the importance of civic action and public service. His historic words, “Ask not what your country can do for you – ask what you can do for your country,” challenged every American to contribute in some way to the public good. The letter included in this activity, written by a third-grade student, is one of thousands housed at the Kennedy Presidential Library.

Analyzing the Evidence: A Letter to President Kennedy

In this activity, students analyze a primary source document, reflect on its historical significance, and make connections to their own lives.

Begin the activity with a discussion about the 2009 presidential inauguration. What happened that day? Did students watch it? Listen to it? Read about it? What were some of the topics and ideas President Obama discussed in his speech? How did the crowd respond?

Explain that forty-eight years ago, John F. Kennedy, the youngest U.S. president ever elected, gave an inaugural address which is now well-known for its powerful language and message. They will have the opportunity to examine historical evidence from the Kennedy Presidential Library to find out more about John F. Kennedy’s inaugural address and its impact on people at that moment in time. >>

Poetry and Power: The Inaugural Address of John F. Kennedy (continued)

FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL AUDIENCES:

Recipe for an Inaugural Address

In this lesson for middle grades, students consider what “ingredients” might go into the speech that will launch a President’s term in office as they examine some of the most memorable inaugural addresses of the past.

Procedure

1. Ask students to imagine being an advisor to the newly-elected President who has asked for ideas about what to put into his upcoming inaugural address. “Give me your recipe,” the President-elect says, “because we need to start cookin’!” *You begin by writing down some notes and questions.*

Go over the list of ingredients and related questions below with the whole class, either writing on the board or presenting as a handout.

2. Continue with students in their role as advisors: *Using these categories and the related questions, examine some outstanding inaugural addresses from the past, beginning with John F. Kennedy’s.*

Hand out copies of JFK’s inaugural address. Divide the class into seven small groups, and assign a category to each team. Ask them to read Kennedy’s speech, and search for evidence of whether he incorporated the particular ingredient and in what ways. The whole class reassembles and each group reports its findings.

3. As a homework assignment, ask students to go through a similar process on their own with one of the following speeches:

- Abraham Lincoln, March 4, 1865
- Franklin D. Roosevelt, March 4, 1933
- Ronald Reagan, January 20, 1981

These speeches may be found online at www.presidency.ucsb.edu/inaugurals.php.

4. Students should now be prepared to write a “Memo to the President-Elect” with their suggested ingredients for his upcoming speech.

5. Finally, have the class read and listen to President Obama’s inaugural address, analyzing and comparing it with the “recipes” contained in their memoranda.

Sources:

President Kennedy’s inaugural address can be found on the Kennedy Library web site at www.jfklibrary.org/Historical+Resources/Archives/Reference+Desk/Speeches/Speeches+of+John+F.+Kennedy.htm. (Both audio and video of the speech are available here.)

On-line source for all presidential inaugural addresses: www.presidency.ucsb.edu/inaugurals.php.

INAUGURAL ADDRESS INGREDIENTS

One nation, indivisible

What words will help bring people together following a hard-fought election? What to say to those who voted for a different candidate? What are the basic beliefs and principles that unite us as Americans?

Historical moment

Where have we come from as a nation? What are the great challenges and opportunities of this time in history? What kind of future are we looking at?

Goals

What will the priorities of this administration be? What new course is the President charting for the country?

Audiences/messages

Who else is the speech aimed at? Along with the American people, which groups at home and around the world should the President be addressing? And what are the messages?

Inspiration

How can the President best convey a sense of hope? What can this

speech do to help get citizens energized and involved?

Emotional content

What other feelings or attitudes should be expressed given the current circumstances and mood of the country?

Language and form

How should the speech be structured? In what ways can the president use language that will lift the address to a level above that of other speeches he’s given while still keeping it in his own voice?



FOR HIGH SCHOOL AUDIENCES:

Analyzing JFK's Inaugural Address

President Kennedy's inaugural speech addressed not only the American people, but also people throughout the world – including newly independent nations, old allies, and the Soviet Union. In this lesson plan, challenge your students to consider how the speech might have resonated with some of these audiences.

1. Provide students with a timeline of Cold War and civil rights events that occurred from January 1959 to January 20, 1961. (*Available in the Materials, Resources, and Activities for Teachers* section of the Library's web site: www.jfklibrary.org.) Discuss the historical significance of these events.

- 2. Divide students into groups of 3-4.
- 3. Provide each group with one of three profiles of a fictional individual responding to the speech: (a) a young civil rights activist, (b) a Soviet diplomat, or (c) a Cuban exile. Additional background information related to these characters is provided below.
- 4. Ask students to analyze the inaugural address and answer the questions associated with their individual.
- 5. Have students share their group's response with the entire class.
- 6. For homework, have students write a letter to President Kennedy as the fictional individual and voice their reactions to the inaugural address.

Sources:

Clarke, Thurston. *Ask Not: The Inauguration of John F. Kennedy and the Speech that Changed America*. Henry Holt and Company, 2004.

Hershberg, Jim. Introduction. "'A Typical Pragmatist': The Soviet Embassy Profiles John F. Kennedy, 1960." *Cold War International History Project Bulletin* 4 (Fall 1994), 64-67. (Soviet document provided by Vladislav M. Zubok, National Security Archive, translated by Benjamin Aldrich-Moody.) Or online: <http://www.wilsoncenter.org/topics/pubs/ACF1B9.pdf>; scroll through to page 64.

Hill, Kenneth L. *Cold War Chronology: Soviet-American Relations, 1945-1991*. Congressional Quarterly, Inc., 1993.

Sorensen, Theodore C. *Kennedy*. Harper & Row, Publishers, 1965.

Tofel, Richard J. *Sounding the Trumpet: The Making of John F. Kennedy's Inaugural Address*. Ian R. Dee, Publisher, 2005.



Civil Rights Activist

You are a college-aged, African American member of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), a group of young civil rights activists formed in April 1960. Although the Supreme Court had ruled in 1954 in their *Brown v. Board of Education* decision that public schools must be integrated, you attended an all-black elementary and high school in Alabama and are now attending Fisk University, a private, all-black college in Nashville, TN.

A few months ago, you participated in a sit-in in an effort to desegregate the lunch counter at the local department store. Your organization is planning more non-violent demonstrations.

Initially, you did not support Kennedy for president because you thought that Richard Nixon, raised as a Quaker, might be a stronger advocate for civil rights. But, after hearing Kennedy speak during his campaign

about ending discrimination in federally subsidized housing "by a stroke of the Presidential pen," and after learning that he had called Coretta Scott King when her husband, Martin Luther King, Jr., was unjustly thrown into jail in October 1960, you have been hopeful that Kennedy might help gain equality for African Americans.

You are sitting in the college dining hall with your friends, watching President Kennedy's inaugural address on the university's black and white television set. What are your reactions to his speech? Is there anything in the speech that surprises you? What did Kennedy say that might either have reinforced or changed your previously held beliefs?

For more background information on the sit-in movement in Tennessee, visit the University of Tennessee Press/Tennessee Historical Society website: <http://tennesseeencyclopedia.net/imagegallery.php?EntryID=S043>.

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Boston Teacher Sparks Enthusiasm for the Kennedy Library

Steve Goode is a familiar face around the Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum. For 15 years, the 11th- and 12th-grade U.S. History and AP Government and Politics teacher at Boston's John D. O'Bryant School has taken advantage of all the Library has to offer for teachers and students. His students have participated in the *Election-Year Debate Program*, *Federal Budget Simulation Program*, guided museum visits, and Kennedy Library Forums. Goode advertises forums in all of his classes and urges students to take advantage of this opportunity to engage with nationally-known speakers. "I can't say enough about how much the Library helps keep students excited about learning! The archives' primary source materials teach my students how to interpret information first hand." He is equally enthusiastic about learning opportunities for teachers. "There are no words to express how valuable the Kennedy Library's priceless resources have been to my professional development." Goode hopes more of his fellow educators will take advantage of the professional development opportunities, exhibits, and free programs at the Kennedy Library.



Steven Goode (far left) and his students with Kennedy Library Forum panelists Garrett Graff of *The Washingtonian*, Matt Bai of *The New York Times* and political strategist Joe Trippi at the September 2008 forum *The Internet, Blogs, You Tube and Presidential Campaigns*.

For more information on professional development opportunities and student programs at the Library and Museum, visit the "For Teachers" section of our website at www.jfklibrary.org. ★

Massachusetts Students Cast 90,893 Votes in National Mock Election

Massachusetts students cast a record number of more than 90,800 votes in the *2008 National Student/Parent Mock Election*. The John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum served as the state headquarters for the *Mock Election*, a nation-wide program held biennially to increase student interest and participation in voting. The Library created age-

The Mock Election was a wonderful resource and gave students a feeling of having their vote count.

appropriate curriculum packets for K-12 audiences about the presidential candidates and key campaign issues. Materials were distributed to educators and parent coordinators throughout Massachusetts. Although *National Mock Election Day* was held on October 30, the polls were open

October 27 - November 4. In total, 5.1 million votes were cast nationally.

Massachusetts students elected Senator Barack Obama with 67% of the vote, while Senator John McCain received 29%. Third party candidates received 4% of students' votes. When asked about the usefulness of government spending, 35% responded that money spent toward aiding the economy would be most helpful, followed by healthcare and the environment, with 17% and 16% of the vote, respectively. When asked which President from the past they would most like to lead the country again, 26% of students voted for Abraham Lincoln. John F. Kennedy came in second with 22% overall.

To prepare for *National Mock Election Day*, classrooms across Massachusetts made posters encouraging both students

and parents to vote; invited local politicians to speak about the importance of voting; and held debates about the issues and candidates. On voting day, many school gymnasiums and cafeterias were transformed into polling stations where students registered, cast their votes, and received 'I voted' stickers. One teacher wrote that the *National Student/Parent Mock Election* was "a wonderful resource and gave students a feeling of having their vote count. It was exciting announcing the winners at the end of the day."

Information about the *National Student/Parent Mock Election* and nation-wide results are available on www.NationalMockElection.org. To have your school added to the mailing list for the 2010 brochure, please send an email with your school's contact information to mock.election@nara.gov. ★

BRING YOUR STUDENTS TO THE KENNEDY LIBRARY!

THE LIBRARY OFFERS MUSEUM-BASED PROGRAMS for elementary, middle and high school students from September to June on topics ranging from a biography of JFK to the challenges of the Cold War.

For more information, visit the "For Teachers" section of our web site at www.jfklibrary.org or contact Esther Kohn at esther.kohn@nara.gov (elementary school programs); Sam Rubin at sam.rubin@nara.gov (middle school programs); or Nina Tisch at nina.tisch@nara.gov (high school programs). ★



Elementary school students explore the road to the White House in the "Presidential Campaigns and Elections" program.

History and civic education programs at the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum receive major support from Bank of America, The Boston Globe Foundation, Citizens Bank Foundation, the Paul A. Dever Fund, Fidelity Foundation, the Government of Ireland, and Staples Foundation for Learning. Educational outreach is underwritten by the Boston Foundation, the Connell Family Fund, John Hancock Financial Services, Liberty Mutual, and the Red Sox Foundation.

Museum Hours
Daily, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Closed Thanksgiving,
Christmas and New Year's Day

The Kennedy Library Education Department offers free museum passes to teachers considering a field trip to the library. Please call 617.514.1600

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