

# *“Blood, Toil, Tears and Sweat”*

## Speech by Winston Churchill

I beg to move,

That this House welcomes the formation of a Government representing the united and inflexible resolve of the nation to prosecute the war with Germany to a victorious conclusion.

On Friday evening last I received His Majesty's commission to form a new Administration. It was the evident wish and will of Parliament and the nation that this should be conceived on the broadest possible basis and that it should include all parties, both those who supported the late Government and also the parties of the Opposition. I have completed the most important part of this task. A War Cabinet has been formed of five Members, representing, with the Opposition Liberals, the unity of the nation. The three party Leaders have agreed to serve, either in the War Cabinet or in high executive office. The three Fighting Services have been filled. It was necessary that this should be done in one single day, on account of the extreme urgency and rigour of events. A number of other positions, key positions, were filled yesterday, and I am submitting a further list to His Majesty to-night. I hope to complete the appointment of the principal Ministers during to-morrow. The appointment of the other Ministers usually takes a little longer, but I trust that, when Parliament meets again, this part of my task will be completed, and that the administration will be complete in all respects.

I considered it in the public interest to suggest that the House should be summoned to meet today. Mr. Speaker agreed, and took the necessary steps, in accordance with the powers conferred upon him by the Resolution of the House. At the end of the proceedings today, the Adjournment of the House will be proposed until Tuesday, 21st May, with, of course, provision for earlier meeting, if need be. The business to be considered during that week will be notified to Members at the earliest opportunity. I now

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[FOR TEACHER  
REFERENCE ONLY]

SAMPLE THINK-ALOUD

Lesson 2. Noticing the Conversation:  
Thinking Aloud

“Blood, Toil, Tears and Sweat”

Speech by Winston Churchill

*OK, before I start, what do I know? The title is “Blood, Toil, Tears and Sweat.” Authors expect us to pay attention to titles. Titles often help orient us to the conversation. I call what authors expect us to pay attention to a rule of notice. Titles are one kind of rule of notice, what I term a **call to attention**. Sounds like this speech is going to be about something bad, hard, or challenging and the difficulty of meeting the challenge.*

Give students a moment to record this rule on their copy of the speech or highlight it in some fashion.

*Well, the speech is from 1940. That’s not too long after the start of World War II and England’s entry into the conflict in September 1939.*

**I beg to move,**

*OK, so the speech is a motion before Parliament. This is another **call to attention**—introductions and beginnings set things up. Maybe this is Churchill’s first speech as prime minister—I bet it is. In a first speech, you might be setting up an agenda, framing the problems to be addressed, that kind of thing. Like a presidential inaugural address.*

Have students note this rule on their paper.

**That this House welcomes the formation of a Government representing the united and inflexible resolve of the nation to prosecute the war with Germany to a victorious conclusion. . . .**

*Hmm, “House” must mean Parliament. He’s getting right to it in his introduction: We have to pursue all-out war with Germany, and we have to win. Seems like this resolve to beat Germany should be pretty obvious. That’s another rule of notice: when you are surprised. I call this rule the **reader’s response**. I always pay special attention whenever an author seems to be trying to create an emotional response in me.*

Have students note this rule on their copy of the speech. As you read the next few paragraphs, continue to name further rules of notice, pause, and have students mark each rule with a different-colored highlighter.

**I hope that any of my friends and colleagues, or former colleagues, who are affected by the political reconstruction, will make allowance, all allowance, for any lack of ceremony with which it has been necessary to act.**

*I am noticing the word “former.” There’s an emotional charge to “former”—like “ex” as in “ex-girlfriend.” Emotional charges are examples of the rule of **reader’s response**. So I think this must mean that he let some people go.*

Stop and allow students to annotate or highlight.

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## SAMPLE THINK-ALOUD (CONT.)

I would say to the House, as I said to those who have joined this government: "I have nothing to offer but blood, toil, tears and sweat."

Give students time to annotate or highlight.

*Wow, this is a surprise, which you always want to notice—he is not offering any inspiring vision as I might have expected in a first speech to the country, but is offering trouble and a challenge. I call this rule of notice a **rupture**. It seems as though people must have been questioning his qualifications or his approach and policy.*

*I wonder how many people doubted him. So this speech has to be about laying out the challenge before the country and the government and his qualifications to lead them in meeting this challenge. Maybe even to lay out his plan for meeting the challenge. This might be the central topic of his speech.*

We have before us an ordeal of the most grievous kind.

*"Grievous" is an intense and emotionally charged word. I wonder whether other people at the time were making the situation seem less serious. This is another example of the rule of the **reader's response**.*

We have before us many, many long months of struggle and of suffering.

Give students time to annotate or highlight.

*Wow, saying this right up front like this is interesting. I wonder if he thinks his audience thinks the struggle is either impossible or easy. He's saying it's going to be a long, hard fight. He's preparing the audience of the country's citizens for a long, hard fight.*

You ask, what is our policy?

Give students time to annotate or highlight.

*Remember, always notice direct questions and the answers to them. They're **calls to attention**. I'm thinking that some people were saying he's moving too fast and wanted him to wait until a plan is all worked out. So he's going to be clear and direct here about his plan.*

I can say: It is to wage war, by sea, land and air, with all our might and with all the strength that God can give us; to wage war against a monstrous tyranny, never surpassed in the dark, lamentable catalogue of human crime. That is our policy.

Give students time to annotate or highlight.

*A colon is always something to notice, as what follows it is going to be an answer or a **direct statement** of some kind. That's another rule of notice. You always have to pay attention to direct statements of a principle or generalization.*

You ask, what is our aim? I can answer in one word: It is victory, victory at all costs, victory in spite of all terror, victory, however long and hard the road may be; for without victory, there is no survival.

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## SAMPLE THINK-ALOUD (CONT.)

*Questions and answers—again—have to be noticed! They are **calls to attention**. And notice the repetition and the ideas he keeps returning to, another **call to attention**. The question about aim almost seems silly considering how big the stakes are. I think he's saying not to worry so much about the details now but to know at this time that what's important is to stand strong, for without victory, there is no survival. They will all have to dig deep and stay the course, knowing that it is going to be really, really hard.*

Give students time to annotate or highlight.

**Let that be realised; no survival for the British Empire, no survival for all that the British Empire has stood for, no survival for the urge and impulse of the ages, that mankind will move forward towards its goal.**

*The repetition is really striking, a **call to attention**. Particularly of “survival” I think there must have been people saying that going to war could be avoided, that the stakes weren't that high. He's really pounding it through that that's not the case.*

**But I take up my task with buoyancy and hope.**

*OK, another surprise and shift, so this **rupture** has to be noticed. The “But” signals the shift, and the shift is emotional in tone. I think he's aware of how hard he's sounding. You can't inspire people to act if they think things are hopeless. Maybe some people out there thought that things were hopeless. Looks like he's going to close by giving them hope. And conclusions are usually the most important part of a text, so I want to pay attention.*

Give students time to annotate or highlight.

**I feel sure that our cause will not be suffered to fail among men. At this time I feel entitled to claim the aid of all, and I say, “come then, let us go forward together with our united strength.”**

*He's closing with a statement of certainty—a **direct statement**—“I am sure” about the country's strength, but also the strength of other countries who might be its allies—maybe the United States? My guess is that everyone saw Germany as hugely strong. He's saying we can do this. We can stand against the Germans. But we have to start now and call on all our strength and all our allies. So the topic is how to respond to Germany, and the answer is to fight the Germans with absolutely every resource we can find and to never give up. And he's obviously speaking against others who think that either this is hopeless or it can be avoided.*

Source: Churchill, W. (1940, May 13). *Blood, toil, tears and sweat*. The Churchill Centre. Retrieved from <http://www.winstonchurchill.org/resources/speeches/1940-the-finest-hour/92-blood-toil-tears-and-sweat>