

Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address

Fellow-Countrymen:

At this second appearing to take the oath of the Presidential office there is less occasion for an extended address than there was at the first. Then a statement somewhat in detail of a course to be pursued seemed fitting and proper. Now, at the expiration of four years, during which public declarations have been constantly called forth on every point and phase of the great contest which still absorbs the attention and engrosses the energies of the nation, little that is new could be presented. The progress of our arms, upon which all else chiefly depends, is as well known to the public as to myself, and it is, I trust, reasonably satisfactory and encouraging to all. With high hope for the future, no prediction in regard to it is ventured.

On the occasion corresponding to this four years ago all thoughts were anxiously directed to an impending civil war. All dreaded it, all sought to avert it. While the inaugural address was being delivered from this place, devoted altogether to *saving* the Union without war, insurgent agents were in the city seeking to *destroy* it without war—seeking to dissolve the Union and divide effects by negotiation. Both parties deprecated war, but one of them would *make* war rather than let the nation survive, and the other would *accept* war rather than let it perish, and the war came.

One-eighth of the whole population were colored slaves, not distributed generally over the Union, but localized in the southern part of it. These slaves constituted a peculiar and powerful interest. All knew that this interest was somehow the cause of the war. To strengthen, perpetuate, and extend this interest was the object for which the insurgents would rend the Union even by war, while the Government claimed no right to do more than to restrict the territorial enlargement of it. Neither party expected for the war the magnitude or the duration which it has already attained. Neither anticipated that the *cause* of the conflict might

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cease with or even before the conflict itself should cease. Each looked for an easier triumph, and a result less fundamental and astounding. Both read the same Bible and pray to the same God, and each invokes His aid against the other. It may seem strange that any men should dare to ask a just God's assistance in wringing their bread from the sweat of other men's faces, but let us judge not, that we be not judged. The prayers of both could not be answered. That of neither has been answered fully. The Almighty has His own purposes. "Woe unto the world because of offenses; for it must needs be that offenses come, but woe to that man by whom the offense cometh." If we shall suppose that American slavery is one of those offenses which, in the providence of God, must needs come, but which, having continued through His appointed time, He now wills to remove, and that He gives to both North and South this terrible war as the woe due to those by whom the offense came, shall we discern therein any departure from those divine attributes which the believers in a living God always ascribe to Him? Fondly do we hope, fervently do we pray, that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet, if God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled by the bondsman's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said "the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether."

With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in, to bind up the nation's wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan, to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations.

Source: Lincoln, A. (1865, March 4). *Second inaugural address*. Retrieved from http://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/lincoln2.asp

**[FOR TEACHER
REFERENCE ONLY]**

SAMPLE THINK-ALOUD

Lesson 7. Noticing Varied Nonfiction Genres:
Putting It All Together

Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address

Before I start, what do I know about inaugural addresses?

They're important speeches, because they kick off a presidency. I don't have much experience reading or hearing them, but they probably deliver the big picture about whatever is being kicked off—the challenges being faced and an agenda for addressing the challenges.

The few I've watched on television got the audience emotionally involved. Let's see what Lincoln does.

OK, I immediately see a rule of notice as I look at this: a genre marker. Inaugural addresses typically are not titled except for "inaugural." So I know that this is an address given on the occasion of his second inauguration. I expect he'll reflect back on his first four years as president and ahead to the next four.

Add to students' list of what they know on chart paper, capturing what they did not say.

Fellow-Countrymen:

*This is a **call to attention**. Beginnings are always important, and anytime someone or some group is addressed directly I have to pay attention. So he's talking to everyone. That's pretty common, I guess, but during the Civil War maybe not. I wonder if he is addressing Southerners too when he says "Fellow-Countrymen" or whether he is just addressing Northerners who elected him.*

At this second appearing to take the oath of the Presidential office there is less occasion for an extended address than there was at the first. Then a statement somewhat in detail of a course to be pursued seemed fitting and proper.

*Another **call to attention**. One of the things I have to pay attention to is when the speaker or author refers to another text. Here he's referring to his first inaugural address. Last time he talked about the course to take in the face of Southern secession. Maybe this one will be about unity in some way or another.*

Now, at the expiration of four years, during which public declarations have been constantly called forth on every point and phase of the great contest which still absorbs the attention and engrosses the energies of the nation, little that is new could be presented.

He's reflecting back on history and then moving on to the challenges of the current moment. Inaugural speeches are about the future and not the past, so I expect he'll be moving on.

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SAMPLE THINK-ALLOUD

(CONT.)

The progress of our arms, upon which all else chiefly depends, is as well known to the public as to myself, and it is, I trust, reasonably satisfactory and encouraging to all. With high hope for the future, no prediction in regard to it is ventured.

This is a direct statement of importance. Winning the war is what is most important. But I also notice the rule of rupture: Lincoln says he won't report on the war, but he does so—it's going well. He says he is making no predictions, but he kind of does.

On the occasion corresponding to this four years ago all thoughts were anxiously directed to an impending civil war. All dreaded it, all sought to avert it.

Repetitions are an example of a call to attention.

While the inaugural address was being delivered from this place, devoted altogether to saving the Union without war, insurgent agents were in the city seeking to destroy it without war—seeking to dissolve the Union and divide effects by negotiation. Both parties deprecated war, but one of them would make war rather than let the nation survive, and the other would accept war rather than let it perish, and the war came.

Here is the rule of the reader's response. This is pretty emotionally charged language. Lincoln blames the South for causing the war.

One-eighth of the whole population were colored slaves, not distributed generally over the Union, but localized in the southern part of it. These slaves constituted a peculiar and powerful interest.

A direct statement of importance.

All knew that this interest was somehow the cause of the war.

Another direct statement of importance.

To strengthen, perpetuate, and extend this interest was the object for which the insurgents would rend the Union even by war, while the Government claimed no right to do more than to restrict the territorial enlargement of it. Neither party expected for the war the magnitude or the duration which it has already attained. Neither anticipated that the cause of the conflict might cease with or even before the conflict itself should cease.

This is a call to attention. In my experience, presidents often use figurative language and rhetorical devices to make their speeches

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SAMPLE THINK-ALOUD (CONT.)

memorable. He repeats “neither” to show that the war was not what either side would have predicted. He refers to prior policy that appeased the South and allowed slavery while trying to restrict its growth, and to the Emancipation Proclamation that freed the slaves.

Each looked for an easier triumph, and a result less fundamental and astounding. Both read the same Bible and pray to the same God, and each invokes His aid against the other. It may seem strange that any men should dare to ask a just God’s assistance in wringing their bread from the sweat of other men’s faces, but let us judge not, that we be not judged. The prayers of both could not be answered. That of neither has been answered fully. The Almighty has His own purposes. “Woe unto the world because of offenses; for it must needs be that offenses come, but woe to that man by whom the offense cometh.” If we shall suppose that American slavery is one of those offenses which, in the providence of God, must needs come, but which, having continued through His appointed time, He now wills to remove, and that He gives to both North and South this terrible war as the woe due to those by whom the offense came, shall we discern therein any departure from those divine attributes which the believers in a living God always ascribe to Him? Fondly do we hope, fervently do we pray, that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet, if God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled by the bondsman’s two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said “the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.”

Referring to God and the Bible here is for sure a call to attention.

With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in, to bind up the nation’s wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan, to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations.

Here I notice the rule of the reader’s response. Look at the use of “us” and “we” in this final paragraph. I think Lincoln really wanted to end by getting everybody emotionally involved.

Source: Lincoln, A. (1865, March 4). *Second inaugural address*. Retrieved from http://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/lincoln2.asp