“Inaugural Address”—Speech, by John F. Kennedy

Introduce the author
John Fitzgerald Kennedy
Born: May 29, 1917
Died: Assassinated November 22, 1963
Occupation: President of the United States
Award: Presidential Medal of Freedom

Give a brief biographical note
John F. Kennedy served in the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate before becoming the 35th president in 1961. Like any American president, Kennedy faced crises off of America’s shores that required swift and consequential action. The Cuban Missile Crisis was one such crisis. After the 13-day incident had ended without nuclear war, the Soviet Union and the United States discussed major international arms agreement. During Kennedy’s short term as president, he brought about the Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty and the Alliance for Progress. On November 22, 1963, Kennedy was assassinated while riding in a motorcade in Dallas, Texas.

Kennedy’s contemporaries—Fidel Castro, August 13, 1926; Richard Nixon, January 9, 1913

Words to know:
Study the meanings, point out the Greek and Latin roots; point out prefixes, suffixes
subversive aggression sovereign invective eradicate

Pre-reading Activity
Discuss with students the nature of a speech, and the differences between an essay to be read, like King’s Birmingham letter, and essentially an essay designed to be spoken, like Kennedy’s speech.

During the reading
Point out sentence variety, and how a variety of sentence length and structure engages the reader of an essay, or the listener of a speech.

Post-reading Activity
Use class work / homework 1 literary device on parallelism worksheet

Skills to be taught in the worksheets and test for “Inaugural Address”
parallelism, sentence variety, vocabulary

As students read through the text, stop, discuss aspects of the speech, and teach examples of the skills found in the worksheets and tests.

Supplemental enrichment
John F. Kenney Library
http://www.jfklibrary.org/
Class work / Homework 1  “Inaugural Address” by John F. Kennedy

**Literary Device – Parallelism**

Parallelism is expressing ideas of equal importance using the same grammatical construction. Study the parallel construction in the following lines excerpted from President Kennedy’s Inaugural Address.

1. 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.

   …symbolizing an end as well as a beginning  --  signifying renewal as well as change  have equal importance, and thus, are parallel.

   Identify the lines that are parallel, and write them on the lines.

   2. 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*....

   

   

   

   

   

   

   

   

   

   

   

   

2. 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.

   

   

   

   

   

   

   

   

   

   

3. If a free society *cannot help the many who are poor, it cannot save the few who are rich.*
We dare not tempt them with weakness. For only when our arms are sufficient beyond doubt can we be certain beyond doubt.

Now create your own sentences with parallel construction. An example is below.
I’m going to go home to change my clothes, do my homework, eat my dinner, then go to bed.
Sentence Variety

Sentence variety is a mix of sentence lengths and sentence types, and adds interest and spice to your writing. After a long explanation, or a meandering sentence of exposition or description, use a blast of a short sentence, or a few words. Like this. Now that’s sentence variety!

1. Write a paragraph using the four kinds of sentences: interrogative, declarative, imperative, exclamatory

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2. Write a paragraph using a complex sentence, a compound sentence, and simple sentences.

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3. Combine the four kinds of sentences with a complex sentence, a compound sentence, and simple sentences. Use at least one idiom, and one foreign phrase used in English.

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General Knowledge / Vocabulary

1. __D___ Subversion  A. a severe or violent reproach or accusation
2. __C___ Aggression  B. to root out and destroy
3. __E___ Sovereign  C. act of initiating hostilities or invasion
4. __A___ Invective  D. harming the cause in an indirect way; destruction
5. __B___ Eradicate  E. supreme authority, especially in government

Greek and Latin Root Words. Use prefixes, suffixes or roots from the following words to form new words.

7. Aggression _____________________________ 10. United __________________________
8. Sovereign _____________________________ 11. Tyranny _________________________

Write a sentence in context using:

13. Invective
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Cultural Literacy -- Metaphor, Tone, Use of Interesting Words

15. What did President Kennedy mean when he said “…we are the heirs of that first revolution.” Which revolution? Explain.
16. What is the similarity in **tone** between “Letter from a Birmingham Jail” by Martin Luther King, Jr. and President Kennedy’s Inaugural Address?

17. What does this line mean: *To those old allies whose cultural and spiritual origins we share: we pledge the loyalty of faithful friends.*

18. What does this line mean: *To our sister republics south of our border: we offer a special pledge. . . to convert our good words into good deeds.*
19. What does this line mean: *And so, my fellow Americans. . .ask not what your country can do for you. . .ask what you can do for your country.*

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20. Write your favorite quote from this speech below and tell what it means to you.

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