

# Speeches That Inspire





Some schools take part in speech competitions.

## The Power of Speech

Speeches can affect people deeply. The words in a speech can calm, anger, or inspire the people in an audience. However, the way in which the words are said can also affect people.

Today, speeches can be recorded with video cameras and other machines. People who were not in the audience when the speech was delivered can hear and see the speech. They can be calmed, angered, or inspired, just as the first audience was.

A written copy of a speech can affect people, too. Many famous speeches were made before video cameras were invented. In 1775, Patrick Henry made a speech that ended with the words, “Give me liberty or give me death.” Even today, Patrick Henry’s speech still inspires Americans to fight for their liberty.

**Key Notes:**

How can speeches affect people?

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President Franklin D. Roosevelt delivered many inspiring speeches.

## A Day of Infamy

On December 7, 1941, Pearl Harbor, in Hawaii, was attacked by Japan. The surprise attack killed many people and destroyed many ships. People feared that the United States mainland would be attacked, just like Hawaii had been.

The day after the attack, President Franklin D. Roosevelt spoke to Congress, describing December 7 as “a date which will live in infamy.” He said that we, as Americans, “will not only defend ourselves...but will make very certain that this...shall never endanger us again.”

President Roosevelt said that Americans must work together to prevent future attacks. The speech helped to calm people’s fears, but it also inspired them to act. Throughout the war that followed, Roosevelt’s Day of Infamy speech reminded Americans they must work together to win the war.

### Key Notes:

What did President Roosevelt tell Americans in his speech?

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**John F. Kennedy**  
gave many powerful  
speeches, including his  
inaugural speech.

## A Call to Service

American Presidents begin a new term by giving a speech called an inaugural address. In 1961, when John F. Kennedy became president, four countries had nuclear bombs, and many people were afraid of the damage nuclear bombs could have.

In his inaugural address, President Kennedy asked people to work on their shared problems, not their differences. He challenged Americans to “ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country.” President Kennedy also challenged people around the world to “ask not what America will do for you, but what together we can do for the freedom of man.”

President Kennedy’s inaugural address inspired people to work for freedom and human rights. He said that working together would make people safe, and free.

### Key Notes:

**What did President Kennedy ask the people of the United States and the world to do?**

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Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., spoke at the Lincoln Memorial in 1963.

## I Have a Dream

On a hot day in 1963, more than 250,000 people gathered at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C., to hear Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. speak. Standing in front of the Lincoln Memorial, Dr. King said that he wanted equal rights for all people. Dr. King reminded people that African Americans did not have the same rights that white Americans had.

Dr. King repeated the phrase, “I have a dream” to describe his hopes for the future, including his dream that his “four children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.” Dr. King’s “I have a dream” speech continues to inspire people to dream, and to work, for human rights.

### Key Notes:

What did Dr. King say he wanted in the speech “I Have a Dream?”

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