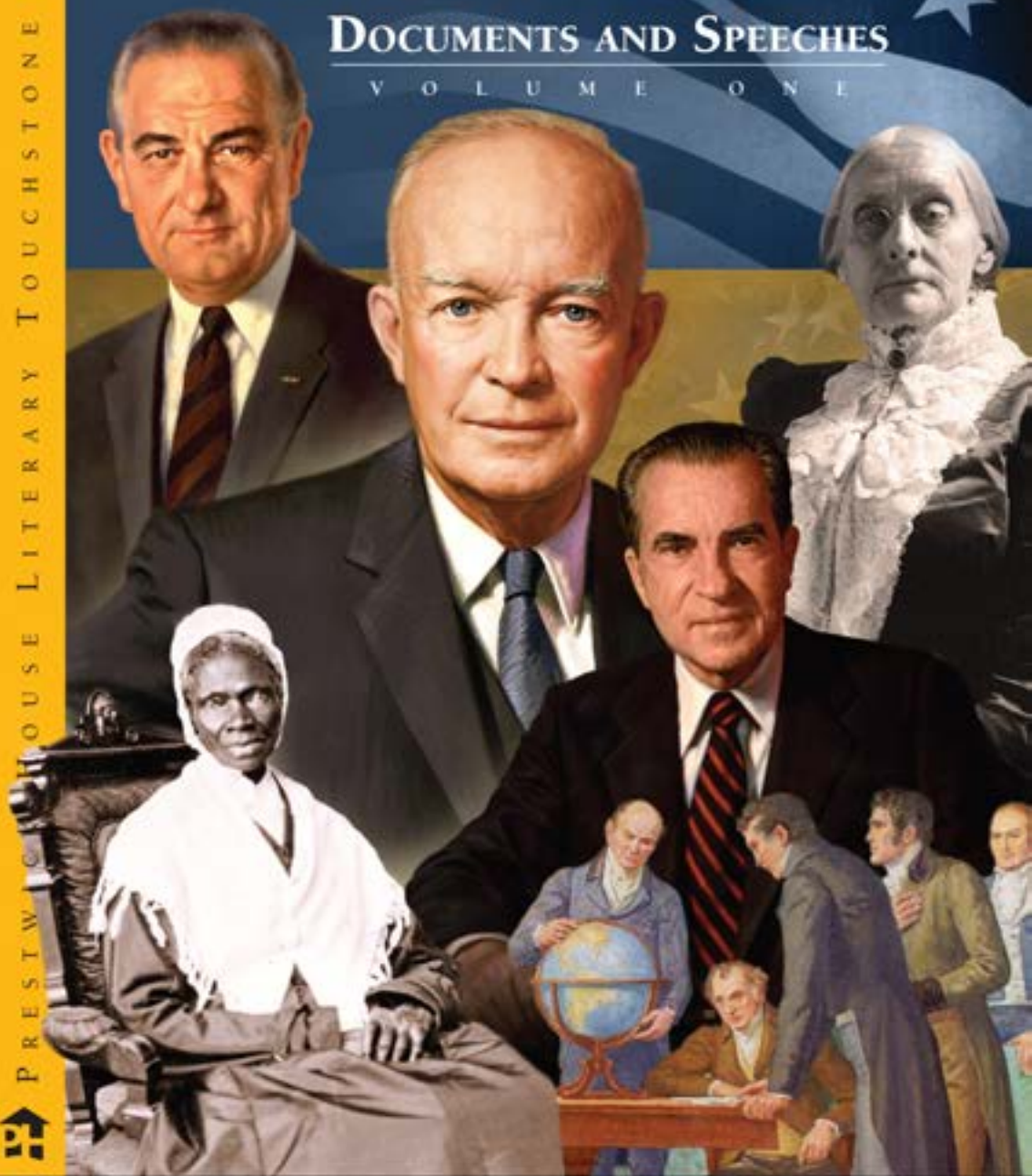


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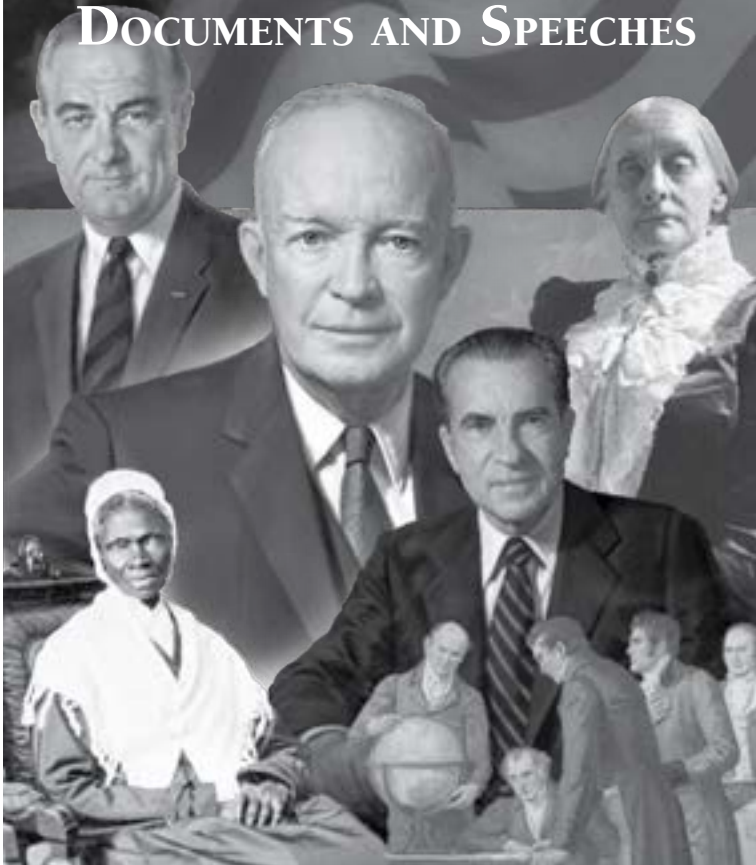
ESSENTIAL AMERICAN

DOCUMENTS AND SPEECHES

VOLUME ONE



ESSENTIAL AMERICAN DOCUMENTS AND SPEECHES



V O L U M E O N E



Prestwick House

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INTRODUCTION

THE SPEECHES AND DOCUMENTS in this first volume of *Essential American Documents and Speeches* cover the entire time span of the United States' existence, from Patrick Henry's stirring "Give me liberty or give me death" to Ronald Reagan's exhortation to "Tear down this wall." There is a great diversity in the selections, with many of them being mentioned as exemplar texts as established by the Common Core State Standards: a Supreme Court decision, Washington's Farewell Address, the Gettysburg Address, and Roosevelt's Four Freedoms speech as examples. However, other selections in the book are equally as important, complex, well written, and logical.

The selections are arranged in chronological order, so that, for instance, Thomas Jefferson's objectives for the Lewis and Clark expedition can be examined next to Chief Red Jacket's explanation of religion. Students will read the Monroe Doctrine, as well as Dwight Eisenhower's speech warning of the power of the "military-industrial complex," aligning with CCSS History and Social Studies Craft and Structure 4. A famous speech by Richard Nixon can be examined for its reasoning, an example of CCSS Integration of Knowledge and Ideas 8.

Each passage is preceded by a very short biography of the author, followed by a few paragraphs explaining what students should look for in the piece. Sometimes, this explanation is dominated by ideas about the text, sometimes by syntax, and other times, by the author's rhetoric. We frequently ask open-ended questions about the passages in order to provoke thinking about subtopics, whether the statements have come true, the logic of the conclusions drawn, etc. These criteria correspond to CCSS Key Ideas and Details 1-3, and Craft and Structure 4, 5.

Throughout the book, the passages reflect Common Core State Standards of Integration of Knowledge and Ideas 8, 9 for 9-10 grade students. Additionally, *Essential American Documents and Speeches* is aligned with Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts: Reading Informational Text for these grades. The selections are specifically applicable to all three Standards in Key Ideas and Detail, as well as in Craft and Structure. They are also aligned with—and some are mentioned as exemplars—in Integration of Knowledge and Ideas 8, 9.

These documents and speeches reach beyond the need for texts that are aligned with and fulfill Common Core State Standards; if treated strictly as literature, they are fascinating reading, as well as striking examples of nonfiction writing.

Note: All speeches and documents are presented in their entirety, except for the Monroe Doctrine, which was a small, albeit highly significant, part of James Monroe's Seventh Annual Message to Congress.



PATRICK HENRY:

SPEECH TO THE SECOND VIRGINIA CONVENTION (1775)

PATRICK HENRY (1736-1799) was a member of the Virginia House of Burgesses and a well-known crusader for Colonial independence from Great Britain. Henry served as a delegate to the First and Second Continental Congresses. In 1787, he was chosen as a member of the Constitutional Convention, but did not attend. He initially opposed the adoption of the U.S. Constitution because he believed that it put too much power in a central government and severely limited the rights of individual states; his reasoning was that the president could become something similar to a king, and he stated that he “smelt a rat in Philadelphia, tending toward the monarchy.” He did support the adoption of a Bill of Rights as a measure that would keep the power of the federal government in check.

This speech, which is most famous for its forceful declaration at the end, urged military action against the British. Note the politeness with which he begins. Immediately, though, Henry states that he will not be bound by “ceremony.” Some of the words he uses have meanings that are different from their modern usage: awful, solace, election, suffer, disposed, etc. The speech includes numerous allusions—biblical (“betrayed with a kiss”) and literary (“song of that siren”). See if you can locate and identify others. In addition, pay attention to the frequent motif of slavery that he uses.

Henry asks a few rhetorical questions, then asks and answers a few others; the second technique is called hypophora. The tempo of the speech increases when he repeats sentences beginning with, “We have,” instances of both anaphora and asyndeton. He wants the Convention to take action and presents the attendees with sharp antithetical choices: freedom or slavery, calm or storm, and war or

“the fond hope of peace and reconciliation.” One of Patrick Henry’s—and many other Americans’—greatest complaints against the British was the quartering of soldiers in colonists’ homes. He refers to this, and James Madison made sure the prohibition was included in the Bill of Rights. At various times throughout the speech, Henry employs personification, apostrophe, metaphor, parallelism, and metonymy. He uses elements of logical progression, moving easily from a premise to the inevitable conclusion. Notice how the speech builds to its powerful concluding sentence, which includes antithesis and anaphora.

SPEECH TO THE SECOND VIRGINIA CONVENTION (1775)

MR. PRESIDENT: No man thinks more highly than I do of the patriotism, as well as abilities, of the very worthy gentlemen who have just addressed the House. But different men often see the same subject in different lights; and, therefore, I hope it will not be thought disrespectful to those gentlemen if, entertaining as I do, opinions of a character very opposite to theirs, I shall speak forth my sentiments freely, and without reserve. This is no time for ceremony. The question before the House is one of awful moment to this country. For my own part, I consider it as nothing less than a question of freedom or slavery; and in proportion to the magnitude of the subject ought to be the freedom of the debate. It is only in this way that we can hope to arrive at truth, and fulfill the great responsibility which we hold to God and our country. Should I keep back my opinions at such a time, through fear of giving offence, I should consider myself as guilty of treason towards my country, and of an act of disloyalty toward the majesty of heaven, which I revere above all earthly kings.

Mr. President, it is natural to man to indulge in the illusions of hope. We are apt to shut our eyes against a painful truth, and listen to the song of that siren till she transforms us into beasts. Is this the part of wise men, engaged in a great and arduous struggle for liberty? Are we disposed to be of the number of those who, having eyes, see not, and, having ears, hear not, the things which so nearly concern their temporal salvation? For my part, whatever anguish of spirit it may cost, I am willing to know the whole truth; to know the worst, and to provide for it.

I have but one lamp by which my feet are guided; and that is the lamp of experience. I know of no way of judging of the future but by the past. And judging by the past, I wish to know what there has been in the conduct of the British ministry for the last ten years, to justify those hopes with which gentlemen have been pleased to solace themselves, and the House? Is it that insidious smile with which our petition has been lately received? Trust it not, sir; it will prove a snare to your feet. Suffer not yourselves to be betrayed with a kiss. Ask yourselves how this gracious reception of our petition comports with these war-like preparations which cover our waters and darken our land. Are fleets and armies necessary to a work of love and reconciliation? Have we shown ourselves so unwilling to be reconciled, that force must be called in to win back our love? Let us not deceive ourselves, sir. These are the implements of war and subjugation; the last arguments to which kings resort. I ask, gentlemen, sir, what means this martial array, if its purpose be not to force us to submission? Can gentlemen assign any other possible motive for it? Has Great Britain any enemy, in this quarter of the world, to call for all this accumulation of navies and armies? No, sir, she has none. They are meant for us; they can be meant for no other. They are sent over to bind and rivet upon us those chains which the British ministry have been so long forging. And what have we to oppose to them? Shall we try argument? Sir, we have been trying that for the last

ten years. Have we anything new to offer upon the subject? Nothing. We have held the subject up in every light of which it is capable; but it has been all in vain. Shall we resort to entreaty and humble supplication? What terms shall we find which have not been already exhausted? Let us not, I beseech you, sir, deceive ourselves. Sir, we have done everything that could be done, to avert the storm which is now coming on. We have petitioned; we have remonstrated; we have supplicated; we have prostrated ourselves before the throne, and have implored its interposition to arrest the tyrannical hands of the ministry and Parliament. Our petitions have been slighted; our remonstrances have produced additional violence and insult; our supplications have been disregarded; and we have been spurned, with contempt, from the foot of the throne. In vain, after these things, may we indulge the fond hope of peace and reconciliation. There is no longer any room for hope. If we wish to be free, if we mean to preserve inviolate those inestimable privileges for which we have been so long contending, if we mean not basely to abandon the noble struggle in which we have been so long engaged, and which we have pledged ourselves never to abandon until the glorious object of our contest shall be obtained, we must fight! I repeat it, sir, we must fight! An appeal to arms and to the God of Hosts is all that is left us!

They tell us, sir, that we are weak; unable to cope with so formidable an adversary. But when shall we be stronger? Will it be the next week, or the next year? Will it be when we are totally disarmed, and when a British guard shall be stationed in every house? Shall we gather strength by irresolution and inaction? Shall we acquire the means of effectual resistance, by lying supinely on our backs, and hugging the delusive phantom of hope, until our enemies shall have bound us hand and foot? Sir, we are not weak if we make a proper use of those means which the God of nature hath placed in our power. Three millions of people, armed in the holy cause of liberty, and in such a country as that which we possess, are invincible by any force which our enemy can send against us. Besides, sir, we shall not fight our battles alone. There is a just God who presides over the destinies of nations; and who will raise up friends to fight our battles for us. The battle, sir, is not to the strong alone; it is to the vigilant, the active, the brave. Besides, sir, we have no election. If we were base enough to desire it, it is now too late to retire from the contest. There is no retreat but in submission and slavery! Our chains are forged! Their clanking may be heard on the plains of Boston! The war is inevitable and let it come! I repeat it, sir, let it come.

It is in vain, sir, to extenuate the matter. Gentlemen may cry, Peace, Peace but there is no peace. The war is actually begun! The next gale that sweeps from the north will bring to our ears the clash of resounding arms! Our brethren are already in the field! Why stand we here idle? What is it that gentlemen wish? What would they have? Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God! I know not what course others may take; but as for me, give me liberty or give me death!

FURTHER READINGS

Abraham Lincoln. James M. McPherson. Oxford University Press

American Speeches: Political Oratory from the Revolution to the Civil War. Ted Widmer, ed. Library of America

An American Life: The Autobiography. Ronald Reagan. Simon and Schuster

Eisenhower: The White House Years. Jim Newton. Anchor

FDR. Jean Edward Smith. Random House

Great Speeches by Native Americans. Blaisdell, ed. Dover Thrift Edition

History of Woman Suffrage. Susan B. Anthony. Fowler & Wells

Lyndon Johnson and the American Dream. Doris Kearns Goodwin. St. Martin's Griffin

Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass. Frederick Douglass. Prestwick House
Literary Touchstone Edition

Richard M. Nixon: A Life in Full. Conrad Black. PublicAffairs

The Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States of America. Roger Pilon. Cato Institute

The Essential American: 25 Documents and Speeches Every American Should Own. Jackie Gingrich Cushman. Regnery Publishing

The Founding Fathers Guide to the Constitution. Brion McClanahan. Regnery Publishing

The Nine: Inside the Secret World of the Supreme Court. Jeffrey Toobin. Anchor

The Penguin Guide to the United States Constitution: A Fully Annotated Declaration of Independence, U.S. Constitution and Amendments, and Selections from The Federalist Papers. Richard Beeman. Penguin Books

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

KEY IDEAS AND DETAILS

- [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.1](#) Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information.
- [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.2](#) Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.
- [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.3](#) Analyze in detail a series of events described in a text; determine whether earlier events caused later ones or simply preceded them.

CRAFT AND STRUCTURE

- [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.4](#) Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary describing political, social, or economic aspects of history/social science.
- [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.5](#) Analyze how a text uses structure to emphasize key points or advance an explanation or analysis.
- [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.6](#) Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text in which the rhetoric is particularly effective, analyzing how style and content contribute to the power, persuasiveness or beauty of the text.

INTEGRATION OF KNOWLEDGE AND IDEAS

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.8 Delineate and evaluate the reasoning in seminal U.S. texts, including the application of constitutional principles and use of legal reasoning (e.g., in U.S. Supreme Court majority opinions and dissents) and the premises, purposes, and arguments in works of public advocacy (e.g., *The Federalist*, presidential addresses).
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.9 Analyze seminal U.S. documents of historical and literary significance (e.g., Washington’s Farewell Address, the Gettysburg Address, Roosevelt’s “Four Freedoms” speech, King’s “Letter from Birmingham Jail”), including how they address related themes and concepts.

RANGE OF READING AND LEVEL OF TEXT COMPLEXITY

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.10 By the end of grade 9, read and comprehend literacy nonfiction in the grades 9-10 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range. By the end of grade 10, read and comprehend literacy nonfiction at the high end of the grades 9-10 text complexity band independently and proficiently.