

WARM UP

1 Put these US Presidents in chronological order.

- John F. Kennedy
 Barack Obama
 Abraham Lincoln
 Franklin Delano Roosevelt
 Ronald Reagan

FAMOUS POLITICAL SPEECHES

John F. Kennedy

At the age of 43, Kennedy (35th US President, 1961-1963) was the youngest US President and the first Roman Catholic. In his inaugural speech in January 1961 he spoke at length about the tension between the US and the Soviet Union and how to find a way forward. He also called for the participation of all Americans in getting the country moving again.

Speech

Ronald Reagan

One of the most memorable speeches from Reagan (40th US President, 1981-1989) was one given on 12th June 1987 at the Brandenburg Gate in West Berlin towards the end of the Cold War.

Speech

Abraham Lincoln

Lincoln (16th US President, 1861-1865) gave a short but extremely memorable speech at Gettysburg, the location of one of the most important Civil War battles, when he was dedicating a cemetery to the fallen soldiers in November 1863. He reminded American citizens about the nation's founding principles.

Speech

Franklin Delano Roosevelt

F.D. Roosevelt (32nd US President, 1933-1945) was elected in the middle of the Great Depression. At his inaugural address in January 1933, he gave Americans the promise that the country would recover.

Speech

Barack Obama

In his first inaugural speech in January 2009, Obama (44th US president, 2009-) spoke about the severity of the economic and social crisis facing the nation. He also mentioned the greatness of the nation which had allowed him to become the first African American president of the USA.

Speech

A *This is the meaning of our liberty and our creed — why men and women and children of every race and every faith can join in celebration across this magnificent mall, and why a man whose father less than sixty years ago might not have been served at a local restaurant can now stand before you to take a most sacred oath.*

B *And so, my fellow Americans, ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country. My fellow citizens of the world, ask not what America will do for you, but what together we can do for the freedom of man.*

C *Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.*

D *General Secretary Gorbachev, if you seek peace, if you seek prosperity for the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, if you seek liberalisation: Come here to this gate! Mr. Gorbachev, open this gate! Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!*

E *This great Nation will endure as it has endured, will revive and will prosper. So, first of all, let me assert my firm belief that the only thing we have to fear is fear itself — nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzes needed efforts to convert retreat into advance.*



Find the recordings or videos of one or two of these speeches online and say what you think of them.

READING COMPREHENSION

2 Read the texts and match each US President with the correct excerpt.

SPEAKING

3 In pairs, discuss which of the following aspects make a speech great and interesting to listen to and why. Add your own ideas too.

- tone of voice
- rhetoric
- humour/sadness
- repetition
- easy to understand/intellectual language
- an important occasion/event
- personal anecdotes
- use of statistics and data
- short sentences
- body language